

Congress government in Telangana borrows Rs.72,500 crore in 300 days

Hyderabad: The Congress-led State government has been on an unprecedented borrowing spree. Since coming to power in December last year, the State government has borrowed an average of Rs.241 crore per day in the last 300-odd days. Currently, the State debt stands at around Rs.72,500 crore since the Congress came to power, while the market borrowings are at around Rs.32,500 crore in the first two quarters of the current fiscal year.

The borrowing began with a Rs.500 crore loan on December 12, 2023, and has continued at an alarming rate, with loans averaging Rs.5,000 crore per month. As of September 30, Rs.47,618 crore of the debt was directly sourced from the Reserve Bank of India through market borrowings. During the last month alone, the State government secured Rs.2,500 crore on September 3, Rs.1,500 crore on September 10, Rs.500 crore on September 17 and another Rs.1,000 crore in the last week of September.

The State government is likely to raise another Rs.7,400 crore through market bor-

rowings in the third quarter (October to December) of 2024-25. As per the indicative calendar of market borrowings announced by the RBI, Telangana would raise Rs.4,400 crore in October, Rs.2,000 crore in November and Rs.1,000 crore in December on seven different dates. After criticising the previous BRS government for pushing the State into a debt trap during the elections, the Congress government has now exceeded its own debt targets. In the 2023-24 budget, the BRS government had proposed raising Rs.52,576 crore in debt. However, the Congress raised the target to Rs.62,012 crore for this fiscal year i.e. around Rs.10,000 crore more than the previous administration. Of the total debt target, the State government has already obtained Rs.32,500 crore.

Additionally, the government has extended guarantees worth Rs.24,877 crore to various corporations, pushing the total burden on the State's population of four crore people to Rs.17,873 per individual. Experts warn that these guarantees could lead to increased taxation or service charges, further impacting the



public. Despite obtaining such huge loans, the State government did not implement any major scheme or project excluding partial implementation of the crop loan waiver. Typically, government loans are used for major infrastructure or utility projects, and hence, financial analysts are

seeking clarity on which projects, if any, have been initiated by the Congress administration. They caution that if the current rate of borrowing continues, the debt burden could spiral further, leaving future generations to shoulder the consequences.

Unpaid dues, slow approvals, bureaucratic hurdles plague rooftop solar program in Telangana



Hyderabad: Though the grid connected rooftop solar programme has been promoted as a source for additional income generation by the Centre, the scheme which is being promoted under the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana implementation in Telangana is being affected by official apathy. A large section of people who have installed rooftop solar panels on their residences are complaining that though they have opted to get payments for the additional solar power supplied to the grid they are not being paid in time.

According to Telangana Solar Energy Association (TSEA) president B Ashok Kumar Goud, whenever a new solar panel was installed on a residential building the

first priority was given to adjust the reserve unit with the next month's usage and after six months, the discom had to pay for the buffer units, for which it entered an agreement with the customer. A customer could earn Rs 4.50 per kW by selling the additional solar power, he said, adding that the TSEA had already asked the Discoms to automatically start paying the customers supplying additional solar power to the grid after six months so that they could get the benefit of installing solar panels. "Paying the consumers for additional solar power will encourage people to go for rooftop solar panels. This will also help in increasing the power generation capacity of the State," he said. Even the commercial solar

power generators are not so happy with the State run power utilities as it is not paying them regularly. Recently, Telangana State Electricity Regulatory Commission (TGERC) has imposed a penalty of Rs. 2.50 lakh on Southern Power Distribution Company of Telangana (TGSPDCL) for failing to comply with a previous order mandating the settlement of unpaid energy bills and Late Payment Surcharges (LPS).

There are also complaints of delay in receiving the feasibility report, inspection report and installation of the net meter.

People are complaining that the local Assistant Engineer knowingly delayed the process of installing solar panels on houses. The people argue that on one hand the government claimed that it wanted to encourage installation of solar panels on all the residential buildings and on other the Discom officials were creating hurdles for the interested consumers by delaying the process. People are blaming authorities of the concerned government departments for hindering the success of the clean energy programme.

Secunderabad - Vasco - Da- Gama Express to be flagged-off on October 6

Hyderabad: The inaugural Secunderabad -Vasco-Da- Gama Express train will be flagged off by the union Minister for Coal and Mines, G. Kishan Reddy from Secunderabad station on October 6. The train will connect Secunderabad, Mahabubnagar, Gadwal, Kurnool City, Dhone and will be operated for two days in a week in both the directions.

According to the SCR officials, the train will provide an exclusive and direct

train facility for those travelling towards Karnataka and Goa, catering to both reserved and unreserved segment passengers. It provides cost-effective transportation when compared with other modes of the transport and offers scope for rail users to plan their itinerary more conveniently. This service will be helpful for people travelling on different purposes like recreation, entertainment, tourism, education, healthcare and business, the SCR said in a press release.

Haryana, where myth and history mingled to make for epic battles

It may be election season now, but Haryana always evokes a set of images: wrestlers, fertile crops and the khaps known for passing bizarre orders. One of the tiniest states in India, Haryana is roughly the size of Denmark. Formed out of areas that formerly lay within other kingdoms that became a part of PEPSU (Patiala and East Punjab States Union), which lasted for less than a decade (1948- 1956). The new state came into being as an offshoot of the 1960s movement for an independent state of Punjab that was led by Sikh religious leader Master Tara Singh. Constituted of Hindi-speaking areas north of Delhi and south of Punjab, this region is replete with history going back to the Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC). "The word Hariana occurs in the Delhi Museum Inscription of 1328 CE found near modern Rajpath in Delhi, and its variant Hariyanaka figures in the Palam Baoli Inscription. In the list of pradesas in the Kumarika khanda of the Skanda Purana, which was composed in the 9th or 10th century CE, we come across the territorial designation Harijala or Haripala which manifestly stands for Haryana. It is said to be a populous region consisting of five lakh villages", writes scholar Buddha Prakash in Haryana: Studies in History and Culture. Less than 150 km from Delhi, Rakhigarhi in the Hisar district of Haryana, is an IVC or Harappan site that dates back 10,000 years. Archaeologists believe that it would have once been much closer to the Ghaggar river which now flows nearly 30 km away and was located in the valley of a pre-historic river. Rakhigarhi has become particularly famous in recent years because the DNA of a skeleton found here do not show a link with steppe people or Indo-Aryans, based on this, the Aryan migration theory is denied. Findings at Rakhigarhi include terracotta jewellery, gold and semi-precious stones. Excavations at Sinauli, another Harappan site, now in Uttar Pradesh, have produced an ox-driven cart with solid disk wheels; some scholars have unsuccessfully posited them as chariots, copper helmets, bronze swords and wooden coffin burials. These two sites have strengthened the textual history that describes the region of Haryana as the ancient Iron Age (1200-900 BCE) kingdom of Kuru which was formed by the merger of Bharata and Puru tribes, and which is said to be one of the first recorded instances of an organised society. The Kuru kingdom's sovereignty weakened over the ages as it split into two kingdoms, and was displaced due to massive floods. However, it is credited with the transformation of Vedic religion into Brahmanism and eventually Hinduism.?

An ancient land of epic battles Even those uninterested in history would know about the Indian epic Mahabharat, which is a saga of war between cousins, Pandavas and Kauravas. According to the epic, the 18-day war took place in Kurukshetra near Delhi and ended in the destruction of both Pandavas and Kauravas as well as the death of lord Krishna, and the beginning of the Kali age. The war was gory and brutal, it has remained an allegory of internecine dispute between members of the same clan.?



In the historical period, the most illustrious king of this region was Harshavardhan (607-647 CE), who reigned from Thanesar before shifting his kingdom to Kannauj. Excavations at Thanesar have revealed artefacts dating back to the Painted Grey Ware (1300-700 BCE) and Red Polished Ware in the post 300-400 CE period. Another noted site at Thanesar is the tomb complex of Sheikh Chilli (Abd-ur-Rahim Abdul-Karim Abd-ur-Razak), a Sufi saint of the Qadiriya school and one of the teachers of Mughal prince Dara Shikoh. The Battles of Panipat

Panipat etymologically traces its roots to Pandu Prastha or the land of Pandu, the ancestor of Pandavas. The plains around Panipat have been witness to three of the most historic battles fought for the throne of Hindustan. Nearly 500 years ago, the first battle of Panipat was fought between the reigning emperor, Ibrahim Lodi and his Timurid challenger, Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur, on April 12, 1526. ?

Babur had marched rapidly from Lahore to Panipat, capturing outposts on the way and defeating two contingents sent by Lodi in advance. However, Lodi outsize Babur's army considerably, according to historian Sir Jadunath Sarkar in Military History of India. While estimates place Babur's forces at about 12,000- 25,000 men, Lodi's army was popularly rumoured to be one lakh men and one thousand elephants. Babur handed Lodi a decisive defeat, by using innovative techniques such as mobile artillery, use of firearms and cavalry charges. This victory alone didn't ensure Babur's complete triumph though; he had to subdue other kings like Medini Rai of Chanderi, Rana Sanga of Mewar and the Afghan chiefs of eastern India. But with this victory, Babur laid down the foundation of Mughal rule which would last till 1857 when emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar was deposed and exiled to Burma by the British East India Company. In 1556, three

decades after Babur's victory, the Second Battle of Panipat was fought between armies that were hard to distinguish on religious lines. On the southern side was a vast army of Afghans led by Hemachandra, popularly memorialised as Hemu, a Hindu minister in the court of Muhammad Adil Shah Sur, the seventh and final ruler of the Sur empire, and arrayed against was 14-year-old Akbar (Babur's grandson) and his regent and general Bairam Khan.

In the words of contemporary Mughal courtier and chronicler Abul Fazal, "Hemu...rode proudly on an elephant named Hawai (wind), which was one of his best. He beheld with apprehension the combats of the warriors of fortune's army (Akbar's), and gathering together a band of fierce elephants he showed every stratagem which his powerful capacity could conceive and every daring deed which lurked in his seditious soul. He made powerful onsets and performed many valorous acts, and dislodged many strenuous soldiers of the sublime army." Hemu was a soldier of fortune who came extremely close to becoming the emperor. From a small village in Haryana's Rewari district to the de facto ruler of Delhi in 1556 after winning a spate of 22 battles, Hemu could have become the emperor of Hindustan if he had not been struck in the eye by a stray arrow during the second Battle of Panipat. Soon after being hit, he was captured and executed by Bairam Khan. Noted historian Satish Chandra assessed Hemu as a tolerant ruler, he writes in Hemu- his ancestry and place in history, "If Hemu had remained in power, the close association of Hindus and Muslims brought about by Akbar may have developed much earlier. The alliance of Hemu and Adil should thus be regarded as one of the portents of the future"

Third battle of Panipat The most visibilised battle at Panipat saw the dis-united Maratha confederacy lose to Afghan

Durrani king Ahmed Shah Abdali in 1761. Spun out in a communal yarn, a slew of portrayals in recent years have shown Abdali as the quintessential Islamic tyrant out to destroy 'Hindu India' while showing the Marathas as fighting for the protection of Hindus. Nothing could be farther from the truth. In the decades following emperor Aurangzeb's death in 1707, the Marathas had reached the pinnacle of their power, their rule extending up to Lahore in the West and the borders of Awadh in the East. But their loss to Abdali's army was not only because of staid military moves such as static artillery and their opponent's clever tactic of camel mounted small artillery guns. Sadashiv Rao Bhau, the arrogant leader of the Maratha army, had made few allies and ignored the handful he had, like the Jat ruler Suraj Mal whose plea to march light and leave the thousands of camp followers especially women in safe forts was ignored by Sadashiv.

Kaushik Roy writes in India's Historic Battles, "Bhau dismissed Suraj Mal's sage advice as merely the chattering of a Jat zamindar. The Maratha chiefs differed among themselves regarding the combat technique to be adopted against Abdali. While Malhar Rao Holkar wanted to harass Abdali with guerrilla warfare, Bhau was for a pitched battle". The Marathas lost everything on that cold January day in Panipat. They lost close to 3,000 men on the battlefield and more than 50,000 camp followers the next day. Roy writes, "In a span of seven hours, the Marathas had lost everything they had gained in seventy years. After being defeated by Abdali they retreated behind the Chambal. The only positive effect of the battle was that the Maratha Confederacy was able to get rid of the inefficient and incompetent Balaji Baji Rao. He died either of a cerebral haemorrhage or a heart attack." HistoriCity is a column by author Valay Singh that narrates the story of a city that is in the news,

MG Windsor becomes India's First Passenger EV to record 15,176 Bookings on the First Day

MG Windsor EV, India's 1st Intelligent CUV, received a significant customer response minutes after the bookings commenced on Thursday, October 3, 2024, at 7:30 am. Within 24 hours, the company secured bookings for 15,176 units, making MG Windsor India's 1st Passenger EV to achieve such a feat. This milestone highlights the growing demand for four-wheeler EVs in the Indian market and underscores the shift toward electric mobility.

Commenting on this Satinder Singh Bajwa, Chief Commercial Officer, JSW MG Motor India, said, "We are grateful to our customers who have embraced the MG Windsor wholeheartedly and enabled it to reach the milestone of 15,176 bookings in just one day. This achievement solidifies the MG Windsor's position as a progressive force in India's electric vehicle market. As the first EV to reach this benchmark, the MG Windsor's popularity underscores the increasing demand for sustainable, cost-effective, and rider-friendly transportation choices among Indian car buyers. We are delighted to contribute to this evolution, and remain committed to delivering innovative, intelligent, and eco-friendly mobility solutions."

The Windsor EV combines the comfort of a sedan and the expanse of an SUV. The Intelligent CUV sports an aerodynamic design, spacious and opulent interiors, imposing stance, reassuring safety, smart connectivity, driving comfort, and many hi-tech features. It is available for car buyers at an attractive starting price of INR 9.99L + INR 3.5/km*, under the BaaS program. The option for an outright purchase is also



available, with prices starting from INR 13,49,800 (ex-showroom). Powering the MG Windsor EV is a 38 kWh Li-ion battery pack, which is IP67 certified, and delivers an impressive performance of 100kW (136ps) power and 200Nm Torque through four driving modes (Eco+, Eco, Normal and Sport), resulting in 332** km ARAI certified

range on a single charge. The CUV is available in three variants: Excite, Exclusive, and Essence; and four vibrant colour options: Starburst Black, Pearl White, Clay Beige, and Turquoise Green. The Windsor EV comes with several industry-first initiatives to make the ownership experience seamless. It is offered with a lifetime bat-

tery warranty to the first owner, one-year free charging at public chargers through the eHUB by MG app, assured 60% buyback after 3 years/45,000kms*** and MG e-Shield: A 3-3-3 package for complete peace of mind (3 years unlimited km warranty on vehicle/3 years RSA coverage/3 labour-free services).

A contest to frame the contest: Harris wants it to be on abortion; Trump wants it to be on immigration

With exactly 30 days to go before Election Day in the United States, the two principal contestants for the post of the 47th President of the country are trying to frame the election on the single issue that favours them – for Democrat Kamala Harris, that is abortion rights, and for Republican Donald Trump, that is immigration. Simultaneously, both are trying to reposition themselves on the issue that put them on the defensive – Ms. Harris wants to appear tougher than she has been on the issue of illegal immigration and Mr. Trump wants to appear softer than he used to be on the question of abortion. This contest to frame the contest remains deadlocked as neither has been able to completely overwhelm the American public discourse. Opinion polls point to a photo-finish on November 5. Both Ms. Harris and Mr. Trump would like to sharpen polarisation on one, and diffuse the debate on the other. Mr. Trump was President from 2017 to 2021; and Ms. Harris has been Vice President since 2021. Both of them have to disown part of their legacies, and amplify parts to present a curated image that they think suits them the most. Both sides misrepresent each other in pursuit of a favourable framing of the contest. In the chaotic mess of issues

that confuse Americans – from inflation to global wars to fracking and climate – these are two issues that both parties hope can help them build clarity in their favour. The abortion debate has been politically rewarding for the Democrats and costly for the Republicans in recent past. In the 2022 mid-term elections that followed the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that abortion was not a constitutionally guaranteed right, Democrats retained control of the Senate and performed above expectations in House of Representatives contests. This was attributed largely to an increased support among women for the Democrats. According to an American University poll this week, Ms. Harris is increasing her favourability lead over Mr. Trump among women voters, and 86% of women disapprove of any government intervention in reproductive choices. Mr. Trump who had earlier claimed credit for the overturning of the constitutional right to abortion by the SC, is now trying to mellow down. His running mate J.D. Vance, appearing in a debate with his opponent Tim Walz this week, admitted that the Republicans need to do "so much better... at earning the American people's trust back on this issue, where they frankly just don't trust us". Mr. Vance

said he no longer supported any nationwide regulation of abortion and shared with his opponent the anguish over the death of two women due to limited access to abortion. Mr. Trump's wife Melania is reportedly in support of protecting abortion in her memoir slated for release on October 8. A recent New York Times-Siena College Poll found abortion rights are one question that Ms. Harris has a significant advantage over Mr. Trump. While Mr. Trump and Mr. Vance are trying to moderate their position on abortion, the Harris campaign accuse them of planning to enforce a nationwide ban or regulation of abortion. "Their Project 2025 is going to have a registry of pregnancies," Mr. Walz said in the debate. Project 2025, an ultra conservative vision document, has been disowned by the Trump campaign and according to a CNN fact check, it does not propose such a registry. The Trump campaign seeks to link nearly all problems of America to the influx of unauthorised people. Mr. Vance said: "...in communities all across this country, you've got schools that are overwhelmed, you've got hospitals that are overwhelmed, you've got housing that is totally unaffordable, because we've brought in millions of illegal immigrants to compete

with Americans..” According to official estimates, around 10 million people entered the U.S. illegally during the Biden-Harris administration. The Trump campaign alleges this number is 22 million and tries to pin the entire blame on Ms. Harris, who they wrongly say was in charge of securing the border. Ms. Harris has been promising a strong border policy besides blaming Mr. Trump for blocking border management measures proposed by the Biden administration. Balancing her position on this is perhaps the most difficult act for Ms. Harris as a majority of Americans want regulated admission of new people, but a strong segment of Democrats oppose controls vehemently. In reality, both abortion and immigration are questions of detail than principle for most Americans, multiple polls show. Polls show that an overwhelming majority of Americans support some sort of access and some sort of restrictions with regard to both abortion and immigration. Public views on both these issues are spread over a wide spectrum and the disagreements are essentially about details. For instance, until what stage of pregnancy should abortion be legal or how to manage the admission of new entrants into the U.S., and how many of them should be allowed.

Continental Hospitals Bags Top Hospital Excellence Award at G-SPARC 2024

Continental Hospitals has been awarded the Best Hospital Excellence Award at the valedictory function of the prestigious G-SPARC 2024, held at Shilpakala Vedika, Hyderabad. The hospital was recognized for its excellence in Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) and Antimicrobial Stewardship (AMS), marking a significant achievement in its commitment to implementing world-class healthcare standards. The award was presented to Dr. Guru N Reddy, Founder Chairman of the Continental Hospitals, and Dr. Raghu N Reddy, Director of the Continental Hospitals, by Dr. Ranga Reddy - Chairman, G-SPARC 2024, Prof. BJ Rao - Vice Chancellor, University of Hyderabad, Dr BR Shamanna - Co-Chair, G-SPARC, and R Govind Hari - Co-Chair, G-SPARC, along with other G-SPARC members. Expressing his delight at the recognition, Dr. Guru N Reddy, Founder Chairman of the Continental Hospitals, said, "We feel proud to receive The Best Hospital Award in Infection Prevention control and Antimicrobial Resistance across India along with the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi. Since we established Continental Hospital, we have been taking preventive measures to control infections for the past 11 years.

As a result, our Surgical Site Infection rate was zero for 6 years, for which we have also received various accreditations. We are now recognized with this award for maintaining an infection rate of 0.02%. We are committed to taking maximum precau-



tions to prevent infections in the hospital."

The Global South G-SPARC convention represents 140 countries from the Global South region and focuses on fostering

innovation, research, and collaboration in healthcare and sustainability. This recognition is particularly important as it highlights the role of infection control and anti-

microbial resistance as major global health challenges, which Continental Hospitals has successfully addressed through its cutting-edge healthcare practices.

Rahul Gandhi Stands for All Religions, Pawan Kalyan Should Focus on Andhra's Issues" Says AICC Leader Chaitanya Reddy

The recent comments made by Pawan Kalyan, the founder of the Jana Sena Party, have caused a stir among the political landscape in Andhra Pradesh. Chaitanya Reddy, leader of the Kissan Congress Committee (AICC), has strongly condemned Kalyan's remarks regarding Rahul Gandhi, Opposition leader in the parliament.

Chaitanya stated, "Pawan Kalyan has no right to comment on Rahul Gandhi, who is a strong devotee of Hindu gods and all other religious gods. Rahul Ji's criticism of the BJP and Prime Minister Modi regarding the Ayodhya issue was a factual assessment, as evident from the BJP's failure in the matter." Chaitanya also urged Pawan Kalyan to tell the people what reforms he has made to secure forests and protect wild animals in order to save the environment. Kalyan's recent attempt to use the Tirumala Laddu issue as a political ploy to sway voters ahead of the upcoming state assembly elections has been widely criticized. Chaitanya labeled this move as a "big drama" aimed at diverting public attention from the Andhra Pradesh government's failure to fulfill its promises, particularly in the aftermath of the devas-

tating floods. "The government has failed to provide a clear account of the damages and losses caused by the floods. We don't know how many people died, how many were injured, how much crop damage occurred, or how many cattle were lost. The government has also not disclosed the full extent of its relief efforts and the number of beneficiaries," Chaitanya said. Chaitanya further emphasized that Kalyan's comments on Rahul Gandhi were unwarranted, as the Congress leader has always stood for the rights of all religious communities, including Hindus. He urged Kalyan to withdraw his remarks and instead focus on addressing the pressing issues faced by the people of Andhra Pradesh. According to the press release, the Andhra Pradesh government has failed to provide comprehensive data on the impact of the recent floods, with no clear information on the number of casualties, injuries, crop damage, or livestock losses. The government's relief efforts and the number of affected citizens who have received aid also remain unclear. Chaitanya called on Pawan Kalyan to prioritize the state's development and address the concerns of the people, rather than engaging in divisive politics.



The fight against sickle cell disease: how one hospital in rural Maharashtra is making a difference

I know sickle cell disease (SCD) less from medical textbooks and more from the suffering of patients I've treated. Over time, this disease has ceased to be just a diagnosis on a chart. It has become something I deeply despise from the core of my being. It has drawn many of my young, tender-looking patients into painful crises, causing me to cry out in desperation, hoping to see it eradicated — though I know that's just a daydream. Because it's a genetic illness with no definitive cure to date. But desperation and hopelessness cannot be the final word. In Agatha Christie's words, "I like living. I have sometimes been wildly, despairingly, acutely miserable, racked with sorrow, but through it all, I still know quite certainly that just to be alive is a grand thing." For the sake of patients, the fight continues, no matter the adversity. We cannot lose. I have witnessed first hand the plight of young people afflicted by sickle cell disease at three mission hospitals. Patients come in with intense pain, high fever, chest infections, or severe anaemia, needing blood transfusions. Whether in southern Odisha, north Maharashtra, or western Uttar Pradesh, the patients are almost always poor, young, rural, and from the same family.

Sickle cell disease shortens your life by at least twenty years. Slow-progressing organ failure is common in older patients, and acute chest syndrome, a form of lung injury, is a significant cause of death among the young. The disease's symptoms vary widely among patients, leading to a wide range of complications from anaemia due to the destruction of blood cells, to blockage of blood vessels in limbs, causing both severe pain and death due to organ failure. Practising medicine is generally hard, but over time, you learn to trust in your skills, hoping that drugs and interventions will relieve suffering. However, sickle cell disease has the reputation of defeating even the most courageous healthcare professionals. The disease often laughs at our best efforts and stops at nothing short of taking precious young lives with its painful and choking grasp. I attribute much of my knowledge about managing this disease to Dr. Ashita Singh, with whom I worked at Chinchpada Christian Hospital in Maharashtra. She has seen this dreaded disease up close and has not shrunk back in horror, but has loved her patients, looking for ways to relieve their suffering and improve their quality of life. She has dealt with several practical challenges in the management of the disease. Since sickle cell disease is a genetic condition, its treatment is lifelong. Only gene therapy or bone marrow transplant can cure it, but these treatments are out of reach for many in India because of the costs. But Dr. Ashita, who works in a resource-poor setting, has moved mountains to introduce measures that can help control the disease's symptoms, making it bearable for the poor patients who receive treatment from her. Her hard work has upheld the health and dignity of many of her patients through various hospital initiatives that deal with the reality of living with sickle cell disease. One of Chinchpada Hospital's most significant initiatives is that the hospital secured State



Blood Transfusion Council (SBTC) cards for around 250 of the 350 sickle cell disease patients. These took two years to procure. The cards guarantee that patients will receive free blood transfusions across Maharashtra, a vital service that can be life-saving for those suffering from severe anaemia. Recognising that sickle cell disease patients are highly prone to infections like bacterial pneumonia, influenza, and meningitis, the hospital has also provided these patients free preventive vaccinations for all these diseases. This challenging but crucial task will prevent patients from developing life-threatening infections.

The hospital has also subsidised the cost of hydroxyurea, a drug that reduces the defective haemoglobin entity (Hb S) and increases normal haemoglobin by using hospital funds and donations. Hydroxyurea is a drug that reduces the number of times a patient has worsening symptoms or life-threatening crises. It also minimises the need for blood transfusions. Subsidising this drug has significantly improved patient compliance, as patients can afford to take it for as long as their disease requires, increasing their quality of life. The government, too, should recognise hydroxyurea's benefits and make it cost-free. The hospital also works to enrol SCD patients in government disability schemes, ensuring they receive regular pensions and other essential benefits. With the help of donors and well-wishers, the hospital treats life-threatening infections and anaemia episodes at low costs or even writes off bills. They also provide free food to patients and their families, thus meeting their nutritional needs during treatment, especially during extended hospital stays. The hospital's experience in palliative care has been instrumental in providing effective pain relief and symptom management for SCD patients. The hospital organises events like World Sickle Cell Day and sends personalised birthday cards to patients.

These efforts help patients feel valued and supported, reinforcing the hospital's commitment to their well-being. On a community basis, the hospital conducts awareness programs in villages and schools to educate the community about SCD, its symptoms, and the importance of early diagnosis and treatment. Teachers, some of whom are patients of the disease, play a vital role in identifying children with symptoms and ensuring they receive appropriate care. The hospital opposes policies promoting the diagnosis of sickle cell disease in a child during pregnancy, which might lead to abortions.

Despite these remarkable efforts, the battle against sickle cell disease is far from over. The disease remains a significant challenge, mainly where medical students and young doctors need adequate training to recognise and treat it. The lack of awareness and testing facilities further exacerbates the problem, leading to many undiagnosed and untreated cases. My experiences in Uttar Pradesh highlight the widespread ignorance about SCD. Many

patients had been receiving iron supplements for years before being correctly diagnosed with SCD. We must work hard to educate, manage, and give hope to these lives because it's our collective pain. This message Dr. Ashita sent me after losing a young lady to a recent SCD crisis reminds us why we can't lose. "Twenty-year-old J had been off hydroxyurea treatment for the last few years and came to the hospital with acute chest syndrome following a severe vaso-occlusive crisis. Despite our best efforts, she passed away, joining her sister, who had died from a sickle cell crisis a few years earlier. This loss, like so many others, compels us to continue our fight against this terrible disease." In conclusion, our experience from Chinchpada Hospital shows that our approach to tackling SCD must be comprehensive, addressing not just the medical aspects but also the socio-economic factors perpetuating suffering. We must continue to fight for the lives of those suffering from SCD because every life is worth saving, and we can't afford to lose this battle.

JNTU-Hyderabad contract teachers protest demanding pay revision, arrears

Hyderabad: Demanding pay revision and arrears besides implementing the GO MS No.11 in toto, the Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (JNTU) – Hyderabad assistant professors on contract held a protest here on Saturday. Stating that GO was issued in 2018, the teachers said the university did not yet implement fully and administration has not responded on the issue despite representations.

The order enforces proper working conditions and pay revision for the assistant professors on contract, said Rajesh

Khanna, Faculty JNTUH & Convenor TAUCTA. While other universities in the State implemented the GO MS No.11, the JNTU-Hyderabad has not enforced it fully, resulting in pending of salary revision and arrears, he said. With this demand, the teachers have decided to continue their protest in two phases. In the first phase, they will be holding the relay strike for 15 days, without causing disruption to classes. If the issue was not resolved still, the teachers decided to go for a full-fledged protest, suspending the classes as well.

Why every party is mobilising Dalit support

The Haryana Assembly elections for a 90-member House are slated for October 5, and as the campaign intensifies, the State's political dynamic is undergoing significant changes.

Are smaller parties stitching up alliances?

A party like the Jannayak Janta Party, a regional party, which traditionally relies on Jat support, has this time made an alliance with Chandrashekhar Azad's Azad Samaj Party (ASP), which is a new entrant in Haryana politics. In the wake of declining Jat support, the JJP is compelled to look for other communities to draw support from, in order to maintain its political relevance in Haryana. Because of his charisma, Chandrashekhar Azad, a first time MP from Nagina, is definitely gaining popularity among sections of Dalit voters, particularly among young voters who are attracted to his personality and good oratory skills. However, his appeal among Dalits is not similar across all sections of the community, and the deprived or marginalised sections among the Dalits still seem to be looking towards national parties like the Congress and the BJP. During Dushyant Chautala's door to door campaign in a village in Uchana Kalan, we found that he enthusiastically laid out his extensive campaign schedule with Chandrashekhar Azad as if to engage his Dalit supporters.

Is Mayawati's BSP a factor?

The direct outcome of increasing popularity and a possible increase in electoral support for Chandrashekhar Azad seems to be at the cost of support to Mayawati and her Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), which is in alliance with the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD). The BSP has always enjoyed some portion of the Dalit votes in Haryana but never reached any electoral significance in the State; and now, with the ascendance of the ASP, even that portion of the Dalit vote is up for grabs. The Jat-Dalit coalition is projected by regional alliances such as the JJP-ASP and INLD-BSP in a more amplified manner than the kind of coalitions being harboured by the Congress or the BJP. An overt reliance on the Jat community, visible in the Congress campaign led by Bhoopinder Hooda, hinders the Jat-Dalit alliance that the Congress is trying to project. On the other hand, the BJP's support for the recent verdict on sub-categorisation among the Dalits by the Supreme Court has also disenchanted some of the dominant Dalit communities away from the party, while retaining the deprived sections among the Dalits.

What explains the decline of regional players like the INLD and JJP?

The decline of regional parties such as the INLD and JJP can be attributed to strategic missteps and shifting voter perceptions. The INLD's decline stems from complex coalition decisions that failed to deliver anticipated political gains. Internal leadership struggles and an inability to adapt to changing political landscapes have weakened the party's influence. With a highly centralised leadership confined

to a single family, the internal feuds within family members have meant that the core of the party has been weakened from within, leading to the peripheries becoming rudderless. This decay in the organisation has cost the party dearly in a field which has been dominated by well organised parties like the BJP and to some extent a rejuvenated Congress. While the INLD may secure a few seats due to its alliance with the BSP, which attracts Scheduled Caste (SC) votes shifting from the Congress, its overall impact remains limited. As for the JJP, it initially gained traction by consolidating Jat votes and positioning itself against the BJP. However, its decision to ally with the BJP in the last election alienated a significant portion of its Jat voter base, with many supporters feeling betrayed by the alliance. The party's inactivity during significant events like the farmers' protest and the wrestlers' protest further eroded its credibility among constituents who expected vocal support on these issues. Leadership challenges compound the JJP's troubles. Dushyant Chautala, a prominent figure in the party, is reportedly facing stiff competition in his constituency Uchana Kalan, and may finish only in the third or fourth position. The exodus of party legislators, with seven out of 10 MLAs joining the BJP or Congress, indicates internal instability and declining fortunes. In a candid conversation, during the course of his door-to-door campaign in a village in Uchana Kalan, Dushyant called these defectors "migratory Russian birds, who come only in good weather, and fly away when the heat increases." In summary, the decline of regional parties like the INLD and JJP is due to strategic alliances that alienated core supporters, leadership issues, and a failure to address key voter concerns.

What about AAP?

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)'s presence in Haryana is minimal and not a significant factor across most constituencies. In approximately 80 out of 90 seats, AAP lacks substantial influence. Where the party shows some promise, it is largely due to individual candidates with strong personal followings rather than organisational strength or widespread support for AAP itself. For instance, in the Kalayat constituency, Anurag Dhanda, the State vice-president of AAP, is expected to perform well. Then in the Jagadhri constituency, there is Adarsh Pal, a former BSP candidate with a substantial personal voter base, who has joined AAP after being denied tickets by other parties. These examples highlight that AAP's impact is dependent on individuals rather than a robust party presence.

How have social movements influenced voter perceptions?

Significant social movements such as the farmers' protest and the wrestlers' protest have profoundly influenced voter perceptions of political parties in Haryana. The farmers' protest, in particular, was a pivotal event in Haryana, with many constituents expecting strong advocacy from their representatives. The JJP's alliance with the BJP, against whom much of the protest was directed, put the party in a difficult spot. Its



reluctance to actively support the farmers was seen as a betrayal by its core rural and Jat voter base. After much hesitation, Dushyant Chautala, JJP chief, apologised publicly. However, it may have been a tad too late. Similarly, the wrestlers' protest, which centred around allegations of misconduct within a sports federation, garnered national attention. The failure of the JJP to take a stand during this protest further contributed to perceptions of detachment from critical social issues. These movements highlighted the importance of a responsive and empathetic leadership. The JJP's failure to align with the sentiments of its constituents during these significant events has led to disillusionment among voters, contributing to the party's declining fortunes. Furthermore, the deft articulation of many of the voters we encountered in our fieldwork indicate a concerted approach towards voting and the importance of aggregational support to parties and candidates that can unseat the incumbent government.

What lies ahead?

Haryana's upcoming Assembly elections are characterised by fluid political alignments and the pivotal role of caste dynamics, internal party cohesion, and responsiveness to social movements. The rural-urban divide underscores differing political priorities, with urban areas favouring national parties over regional ones. The battle for OBC support is inten-

sifying as both the Congress and the BJP offer competing promises to this crucial demographic. The Congress faces the challenge of uniting Jat and Dalit voters amid internal discord and incidents that strain relationships with these key voter groups. The decline of regional parties like the INLD and JJP, coupled with the emergence of figures like Chandrashekhar Azad, suggests a realignment of the political landscape which could be the beginning of a new churning in State politics. Social movements have demonstrated the electorate's expectation for parties to actively engage with pressing issues.

The party that successfully navigates these complexities — addressing internal challenges, engaging with social movements, and resonating with a diverse electorate — is likely to emerge victorious. These changing dynamics in State politics once again reaffirm the centrality of voters in Indian elections and puts the voters in the driving seat forcing political parties to renew their social positions, whether that is seen in the multiple apologies offered by BJP leaders in their mishandling of the farmers' protests or in the multiple readjustments done within the Congress leadership to ensure a cohesive Jat-Dalit coalition or a former deputy chief minister promising his young supporters to bring a charismatic Dalit alliance partner on his campaign tour next time. In that view, it won't

India were superb, but don't forget how officials nearly messed it up

Perhaps they should have given the Person of the Match Award to Rohit Sharma. And he could have been asked to share it with Gautam Gambhir. Captains and coaches cop flak when a team does badly, but seldom get enough credit when a team plans a win with such elan. India shook a dying game alive with an attitude that has been the hallmark of their cricket in recent times. Like modern captains, Rohit is allergic to draws. More importantly, India are keen on booking their spot in the World Test Championship (WTC) final before they arrive in Australia later in the year for a five-Test series. They need to win three more Tests, the number they play at home next against New Zealand.

From the time the captain came out and struck his first two deliveries for six, it was clear India were attempting to force a win. Yashasvi Jaiswal was brilliant, and every batter played unselfishly. The Test lasted fewer than 180 overs, or under two days; India needed just 52 overs.

Mere political talk And yet, they nearly found themselves in a mess thanks to the inefficiency of the Uttar Pradesh Cricket Association (UPCA). Green Park Kanpur is a few decades behind India's best stadiums. Surely there has to be some minimum requirements before a centre is allotted a Test match? To say that Kanpur is a "heritage centre," has been around as a venue for 80 years and therefore deserves

a Test, as Rajiv Shukla, Vice President, Board of Control for Cricket in India, has said is merely political talk. Convenient, no more. Two days were lost even with minimal rain because the drying facilities were primitive. Had India lost WTC points, would the BCCI — the richest cricket body in the world — have taken the blame for it? Not for the first time, the players saved the governing body's bacon. Victory dissipates ineptitude. It would be interesting to see how the UPCA spends the huge amounts of money it receives from the BCCI. A new stadium is being built in Varanasi which means the "heritage centre" might have seen its last Test anyway. It was here that India beat Australia for the first time in a Test in 1959-60. Off spinner Jasu Patel claimed 14 wickets then. A decade later, Gundappa Viswanath made his debut here with a century. If "heritage" is the argument, we'd still be watching Tests at the Bombay Gymkhana, where India played their first-ever home Test 90 years ago!

Positive attitude But in the end, the official failures are likely to be forgotten, thanks to the players whose positive attitude has brought lustre to Test cricket. There will be a temptation to speak of such nonsense as the "Gamball" style of cricket, after England's "Bazball" named after their coach. But it must be resisted. No team in history has scored as quickly as India did — at over eight runs an over — to set up



the game. Their philosophy was brilliantly summed up by Jasprit Bumrah who said after the match, "Do your best, and then accept whatever happens." India's best was good enough. It is one thing for the skipper to say, "Go for it," but quite another to have ten colleagues who have both the skill and the temperament to pull it off. That is India's strength. Jaiswal, at 22, has emerged as a special talent; his first innings 72 ensured that Rohit falling didn't matter. The confidence with which India bowled meant that a close finish — one that might have seen the match end, say,

minutes before the close — was never on the cards. Had the game stretched for that long, it might have been one of the finest played. Think as one, play as one. This is an Indian team that thinks as one, and plays as one. Amazingly, it has five men who have led in various formats — a recipe for disaster in the old days when the unstated job of an ex-captain (and a future captain too) was to undermine the current one! No captain has ever been a hero to his vice-captain in the past, and although there is no designated vice-captain in this team, it has made no difference.

Monsoon pattern changing with Himalayas, west coast recording more extreme rain

The 2024 monsoon is one of the wettest recorded in India's history with 927 mm of rainfall recorded as against normal of 861 mm, a positive departure of 7.7%, until September 28. While the number of deaths has not been high because of timely intervention by relief agencies, the impact on physical infrastructure has been huge with states seeking relief worth thousands of crores of rupees from the National Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF). Rainfall data analysis by the Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar (IIT-G), however, showed a localised increase in extreme rainfall, indicating that unusually heavy rainfall was occurring and impacting some places more than others. Even though an area's annual total rainfall may remain within expected levels, it could see more concentrated and extreme rainfalls over shorter periods, leading to flash floods and overwhelming drainage systems. "We are observing shifts in weather patterns and extremes that challenge the assumptions based on historical data," said Udit Bhatia, who leads the Machine Intelligence and Resilience (MIR) Laboratory at IIT Gandhinagar, adding that relying too much on historical rain patterns might no longer be the safest approach. Infrastructure designed using outdated data may not be fully equipped to handle the intensity of future extremes, he said. The lab has developed

the Precipitation Extremity Volatility Index (PEVI) which measures the ratio between the magnitudes of return periods and provides a clearer picture of where additional investment in infrastructure resilience is needed. It identifies areas more vulnerable to extreme rainfall based on historical rainfall data. Nationally, the analysis said, the trends in PEVI from 1901-1960 to 1961-2023 suggest a nationwide increase in vulnerability to extreme precipitation events. The median PEVI value for India has risen from 1.27 to 1.31, reflecting a growing risk of extreme weather events across the country, according to the study. Coastal regions, especially in Gujarat and Kerala, have seen the largest increases in PEVI, with significant rises in both the frequency and intensity of extreme rainfall. In Kerala, an increase in extreme precipitation events over time is more profound in the central and southern regions of the state. Up to a 30% increase in PEVI values has been observed across multiple districts including Wayanad and Kozhikode. The IIT identified areas in parts of Idukki, Kottayam, and Pathanamthitta districts as hotspots for increased precipitation volatility. In the 1901-1960 period, Kozhikode showed mostly low to moderate PEVI values (light blue to green), ranging approximately from 1.20 to 1.30, which

increased to 1.40 in the period 1961-2023. Similarly, PEVI in Wayanad increased to 1.35, in some places even to 1.45, indicating high extreme rainfall vulnerability.

In Gujarat, an analysis of PEVI across two periods—1901-1960 and 1961-2023—showed that there was a sharp increase in the index in coastal areas such as Kachchh, Devbhumi Dwarka, Jamnagar, and Porbandar. In contrast, inland areas like Vadodara and Bharuch show decreased PEVI values, indicating that flooding in these regions may be more a consequence of poor urban planning and drainage infrastructure than extreme rainfall events. The northern plains, covering states like Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, exhibit positive changes in PEVI values, particularly in many districts where increases of 10-30% have been observed. In contrast, regions such as Haryana, Punjab, and Delhi show mixed signals, reflecting varied patterns of weather extremes. This variability suggests that local factors, including land use changes, irrigation practices, and urbanisation, could be driving these mixed results. Similarly, Maharashtra—both its coastal and inland regions—has seen a significant increase in PEVI values, with changes of up to 35%. This indicates a growing intensity of extreme weather events across the state, pre-

senting new challenges for its infrastructure systems. Coastal Maharashtra, in particular, has become increasingly vulnerable to extreme rainfall, exacerbating the risk of urban flooding, especially in densely populated cities like Mumbai, the analysis said. Among the Himalayan states, the PEVI value has increased by 24-32% all across from Himachal Pradesh to northeastern states. In recent years, extreme rainfall events have occurred in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Sikkim causing huge loss of life and damage to hydel projects such as Rishi Ganga in Uttarakhand and Teesta IV and V in Sikkim in 2023 and 2024 respectively. However, the eastern states have witnessed low PEVI values showing minimal changes in rainfall patterns even though parts of northern Bihar have witnessed frequent floods of heavy rainfall in the catchment area of the Kosi river originating from Nepal. The Indo-Gangetic Plain, stretching from Punjab to West Bengal, shows a mixed pattern of change. While some areas (e.g., parts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar) show slight decreases in PEVI, others (e.g., parts of Punjab and Haryana) show moderate increases. "This heterogeneity suggests localized factors may be influencing precipitation patterns in this densely populated and agriculturally important region," the analysis said.

Surat's diamond industry struggles to spark amid geopolitical tensions

Surat-based 45-year-old Mahesh Poriya was readying his family to visit his native in Gir Somnath district before Janmashami in August this year when he received a call from his employer—the owner of a small diamond polishing factory. The owner informed him that the factory had been shut and that he and about 30 others, working in the small unit, cutting and polishing rough diamonds were not required to return to work. Now, Mr. Poriya helps his wife's business of stitching sarees and sewing. "I have three children and dependent parents. We are a family of seven living in a small rented apartment. We pay almost ₹9,000 per month, while school fees for each kid is around ₹25,000 per year. I tried finding a job in other diamond factories, but in vain. I finally decided to join my wife's business and we both are struggling to make ends meet," he told The Hindu, explaining how the diamond industry has descended into a major crisis.

Mr. Poriya is not alone. Surat, in Gujarat, is the hub of the global diamond polishing industry and the home State of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. For the past few years, Surat's diamond industry has been grappling with a severe downturn. This has left thousands of workers and artisans unemployed and their families in despair. More than 50,000 workers have lost their jobs in the past eight to nine months while more than 70 people have died by suicide in the past year in Surat, unable to cope with job loss and family responsibilities. The sector has lost its sparkle amidst global geopolitical factors such as the Russia-Ukraine war and escalating tensions in West Asia.

Surat-based Diamond Workers' Union (DWU), a group representing polishers and artisans, has been mobilising resources to support families of workers who lost their jobs. "It's an acute crisis and unfortunately neither the government nor the industry have done anything substantial to help the workers who are in a financial emergency," said Bhavesh Tank, the Union's vice president. "Job losses have led to workers committing suicides or withdrawing their children from schools because they cannot afford the fees. They are unable to bear the cost of their parent's medical expenses. So far, despite repeated calls and prayers, the government at the state or the Centre has not extended any help," Mr. Tank said. He said job losses are not limited to small and medium scale factories employing between 20 and 200 people, but even large ones employing thousands have let go of people this time. "In a quiet way, some of the top factories have reduced their head counts in a few months."

"In most factories, wages of workers have been reduced leading to a drop in incomes for families. In Gujarat, diamond factories are located in Ahmedabad, Amareli, Botad, Bhavnagar, Junagadh and other places besides Surat. The factories located outside are in a way, catering to the main centre that's Surat. The decline in wages and job losses have had a cascading



effect," said Bharat Patel, who runs a small diamond unit in the Saurashtra region. "In 2021, I used to earn anywhere between ₹45,000 to ₹55,000 per month and now it has come down to ₹25,000 to ₹30,000. This can also go down if the trend continues for a few more months," said Jagdish Waghani, a 40-year-old diamond polisher in Surat. As the crisis unfolds, many workers have turned to other jobs like selling snacks on streets or driving cabs or working odd jobs in the markets, while others have returned to agriculture at their native homes in Saurashtra.

Surat processes 90% of the world's diamonds, employing approximately a million workers across more than 5,000 units located in and around the city. That the crisis has gripped the sector can be gauged from the official figures of India's diamond exports that have plummeted, with cut and polished stone exports dropping from \$23 billion in 2022 to \$16 billion in 2023, and a further decline to \$12 billion expected by the end of 2024. Also, prices for polished diamonds fell between 5% and 27% in 2023 due to lower global demand and an oversupply in the market.

"The crisis that has engulfed Surat's diamond sector is unprecedented and nobody has any idea about when the tide will turn," said a diamond baron, whose turnover runs into several hundred crores per year and has operations in Surat, Mumbai and Antwerp. A worker in one of the oldest and largest diamond polishing units of Surat checking its dazzle. According to experts tracking the sector, the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Gaza wars have severely hit the supply chain of raw stones and cut and polished diamonds. Falling demand in key markets like USA, China and Europe have adversely impacted the industry and bearing the brunt of these global factors are tens of thousands of work-

ers and artisans who work largely in the unorganised sector with hardly any social security benefits or institutional support. The crisis began with Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the West's sanctions on Russia's mineral-rich economy. Russia is one of the largest suppliers of rough diamonds in Surat. India imports a little over 30% of its rough diamonds from Russian mines, now under Western sanctions due to the war. The imported stones are brought to Surat for cutting and polishing. Then they are exported mostly to Western markets, China and Hong Kong as finished products. In March this year, the European Union and G7 countries tightened their ban on Russian origin stones and on the import of Russian polished diamonds, including those processed in Surat and sold via third countries like Hong Kong or Dubai.

As a result, for every piece of diamond or jewelry exported to the U.S. from India, the exporter must provide a certificate that the rough has not been imported from Russia. In May 2024, the U.S. had indicated that it would reconsider its ban's strictest elements since it was hurting the industry, but no relaxation has been offered yet. In Surat, the factory owners privately admit the enormity of the crisis but so far, except

the DWU, no one like the Surat Diamond Association or the Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council has turned to the state or the Centre seeking help for the workers. They say India is at the low end of the value chain of the diamond industry. The country is highly dependent on the global market, both for raw materials and for selling the finished products and therefore the G7 countries would upend India, rather than the supplier of raw material, which is Russia. And the war in Gaza has also contributed in aggravating the crisis because the gemstones form a sizeable chunk of India's trade with Israel.

The DWU has demanded a special welfare package for the workers and support to educate their children. On Monday, dozens of small diamond traders in Surat were literally in tears after defaults by a diamond merchant based in Hong Kong, who operates through an office in Mumbai. The merchant failed to honour payments amounting to more than ₹55 crore. Confirming the distressing situation, Dinesh Navadia, former Surat Diamond Association president, highlighted both Surat and Mumbai-based diamond traders are reeling under severe financial pressure due to the broader economic downturn.

NCC Group Hyderabad cadets undergo parasailing training

Hyderabad: NCC Group Hyderabad cadets underwent an intensive parasailing training at Parade Ground, Secunderabad, here on Wednesday. The training was aimed at developing leadership skills, teamwork and physical fitness, challenging the cadets to conquer their fears and

test their limits. The cadets, drawn from various educational institutions across Hyderabad, took part in the training organised in association with the Army Adventure Wing Parasailing Node of the Army Ordnance Corps Centre, Secunderabad. Under the guidance of certified trainers,