

# Hyderabad's real estate shows signs of slowdown, unit sales dip significantly

Hyderabad: Hyderabad's real estate market has shown signs of slowing down in 2024, as unit sales in the first half of the fiscal year experienced a notable decline. According to the latest ANAROCK data, between April and September 2024, the city saw a drop of nearly 7 per cent in the number of homes sold compared to the same period in 2023. Despite a sharp rise in the average ticket size of homes sold — up by 37 per cent, from Rs 84 lakh to Rs 1.15 crore — the total volume of units sold fell from nearly 30,000 to just over 27,800. This drop in sales volume suggests that the once-booming luxury real estate market in the city may be facing a cooling period.

The city's performance stands in contrast to the ongoing boom in other major cities. Bengaluru, for instance, recorded a 44 per cent increase in the average ticket size of homes sold, while NCR saw a staggering 56 per cent rise. Hyderabad, while witness-

ing a substantial growth in the value of homes sold, lagged behind in terms of the pace of growth. According to data, the total sales value in the city rose from Rs 25,059 crore to Rs 31,993 crore, yet this did not fully compensate for the decline in volume. The slowdown in Hyderabad's real estate sales is further highlighted when compared to other cities in the top seven real estate markets across India. NCR and Bengaluru have maintained strong growth in the luxury segment, driven by steady demand for high-value properties. NCR saw the highest growth in ticket size, rising from Rs 93 lakh to Rs 1.45 crore between April and September 2024. Bengaluru, with a similar rise, moved from Rs 84 lakh to Rs 1.21 crore. Meanwhile, cities such as Pune and Chennai have also reported growth in the average ticket size of properties sold, though the increases were more modest compared to those in Bengaluru and NCR.



## Delay in completion of super specialty hospital puts pressure on MGM Hospital



Warangal: Due to the immense responsibility of catering to large populations, the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial (MGM) hospital is struggling with overcrowded facilities and overwhelmed staff, adding to the difficulties of providing timely and effective healthcare. MGM Hospital currently serves as the largest government hospital for six districts in Northern Telangana. Patients from remote villages continue to travel to the hospital, which, as a teaching facility, treats over 1000 outpatients daily and provides in-patient services for 1,000 beds. However, the hospital currently accommodates 1,200 inpatients, stretching resources and infrastructure beyond its capacity.

With the construction of the 24-storey multi-super specialty hospital on a 56-acre

campus on the Old Central Jail premises at Warangal city at a cost of Rs.1,200 crore, likely to be completed by next March, there is a lot of pressure on MGM hospital. The new hospital is supposed to lessen the burden of MGM hospital by providing quality services to the people of Northern Telangana and bordering districts of Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh States. The hospital was the dream project of former Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao, who laid the foundation for the super specialty hospital on June 21, 2021. He wanted the hospital to be built on the lines of the multi-storied Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre in Canada. However, going by the present pace of the construction works, it could take over six months to complete the project. Till then the people of Northern Telangana have to depend on

MGM hospital for treatment.

A major part of the construction was completed during the previous BRS government tenure and it was supposed to be completed last year, but due to the Assembly polls and other developments, it could not be completed. After the Congress came to power in the State, the work of the hospital has slowed down. Though the government is going to complete one year in power, it has failed to complete the work of the

hospital. The multi-super specialty hospital will have a bed strength of 2,250 with 35 departments. As part of the hospital, a 420 seating capacity lecture hall will be set up on the 23rd floor. The hospital will have 36 super speciality divisions, along with around 500 doctors, more than a 1,000 nurses, paramedics and other staff. Upon completion of the hospital construction, the hospital is expected to attract medical tourism and develop Warangal into a health city.

## Fine rice distribution under PDS likely to face delays

Hyderabad: The State government has announced plans to start supplying fine rice to white cardholders under the Public Distribution System (PDS) from January 2025. However, this plan is likely to be deferred by a few months, as the government is yet to take a final decision on the issue.

The Civil Supplies Corporation, which spearheads the food security programme under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), has proposed initiating the fine rice distribution on Telugu New Year's Day, Ugadi, which falls on March 30, 2025. This proposal is pending consideration by the State government.

Fine rice requirement To meet the needs under the PDS, welfare hostels, and other government-sponsored initiatives, the State government would require at least 24 lakh metric tonnes of fine rice annually. The highest fine rice procurement ever achieved by

the Corporation was only 19 lakh metric tonnes in 2021-22. However, officials are optimistic about achieving the necessary fine rice procurement, given the record paddy production. Grade A paddy, comprising 32 varieties, was cultivated on over 40.44 lakh acres out of the total 66.77 lakh acres of paddy area.

Procurement problems despite this optimism, the fair average quality specifications set by the Corporation have placed it at a disadvantage compared to private traders and rice exporters from within the State and regions like Tamil Nadu and northern States. This season, private traders from outside the State dominated the purchases in the market. The Rs.500 per quintal bonus announced by the State government for fine varieties failed to deter farmers from selling their Grade A paddy to private millers and traders.

# There is nothing like a difficult child

He is a very difficult child." I come across this statement so often in my conversations with teachers, parents and carers. At times, even from children themselves, as if they have heard it so often that they have made it their truth, "I am difficult." In my experience as a therapist, I have seen all kinds of "difficult". Children who scream, hit, bite, lie, steal, bully, fail in their exams, refuse to go to school, smoke, drink, and take risks. The list is endless and so is the pain that it brings to their families. Therefore when I say, "There is nothing like a difficult child," I do not want to diminish the struggles of the parents and teachers. But I would like to unpack the word "difficult" which is thrown around so easily for children. Rohan is being told repeatedly that he "does not want to do anything," that he is "lazy", "is stubborn and does not listen." His teachers are saying it, his parents are saying and he has started saying it to himself. He sits across me, eyes trained on the opposite wall, shrugs and adds his own conclusion, "I guess, I am a loser." If we were to go back in time to the time Rohan was a toddler, we would have met a little boy who was proudly described as, "enthusiastic and full of curiosity." So what happened in the past 12 years that changed his story so much? What snuffed the curiosity and the enthusiasm? Maybe it was the struggle to keep up with classes, maybe it was the comparison, maybe it was that nobody picked up the neurodivergence that was coming in the way of his learning. If the child does not fit in the tightly defined grooves of our educational system, we are quick to label the child "difficult" or "unmotivated", or chastise or even punish them. I wonder if you had a phase in your life when you "did not want to do anything." Maybe you are going through it now. Did you one day decide that you were done wanting to do things or did it come slowly to you? Did you reach that point after months, maybe years of trying and then giving up? Was it painful to reach that point? Did you keep silent and not share it with anyone as you were scared of being judged? What if someone brushed off your pain as, "such a difficult person" or "attention seeking"?

There is a notion that if children are "not behaving" then they are doing this on purpose, that they are "difficult", "defiant" or maybe even "doing drama." My intention is not to blame but for us to explore these problematic ideas that end up damaging our children and our relationships. We are all part of the problem. I have ended up slipping into this narrative of "this child is difficult" so often as a parent and a therapist. These are the five principles that have steered me back into a more intentional and expansive position. Every time. Children do well if they can\* I have never met a child who does not want to do well. They want to learn, make friends, play, explore and be appreciated. If a child, like Rohan, is struggling, we have to make a paradigm shift from "doesn't want to" to "is struggling to." It is about skill and not will. Maybe there might be a learning difficulty, a mental health struggle, bullying in school or family conflicts at home. Children's behaviour always makes sense. What if Rohan found a safe space at home or in school to talk about what he was struggling with? Where he was not judged and his difficulties were dismissed as "making excuses." We might find that behind the labels of "difficult", "stubborn" and "lazy" is a child who had really tried hard for years to keep up despite a learning

difficulty but was now giving up as his efforts were belittled as "not good enough." It is not a surprise when he sighs and adds, "What's the point?" What we focus on grows. Rohan's statement, "I guess I am a loser," speaks of our obsession as a society to push our children to oppressive standards of performance. What if most conversations with Rohan were not just about his "failing" to keep up with the academic race? Where if he could start exploring his love for sports and trekking. Maybe we would get to know more about his spirit of adventure, about his endurance, his ability to be a team player and so much more.

We have to work with our children and not against them. "What about his academics?", some of you might ask. I am not in any way suggesting that we ignore that. But what if we took a more collaborative position rather than one of, "I am right, you are wrong!" We could take what I call — the "You-Me-We approach." You — I listen to you from my heart even though I might not agree with you. Me — You listen to me even though you might not agree with me. We — then together we find a tentative understanding (there is no perfect solution for parenting) that works for all of us. Children want to be seen and heard and to know that their parents and teachers appreciate what they are up against. The way we talk about our children becomes their life stories. From the time children are little, they hear stories being told about themselves. These stories do not just



describe their lives but they impact their lives. They shape their identities, what they will think of themselves, and what choices they will make. Do we want Rohans of our world to believe that they are difficult, losers, and failures or do we want them to acknowledge their difficulties but not lose sight of their abilities, what is precious to them, what excites them, what their hopes and dreams are and how they want to be in this world? Let me clarify that building richer stories is not about gold-plating difficulties. Not at all. That position minimises the pain that children go through.

We cannot iron out their struggles with the problematic idea of "let's be positive." However, our power over our children's lives can invisibilise how we have to be accountable for them and to them. It is our obligation to not let them be defined by labels that rob them of their dignity.

Or to be complicit in the humiliation, punishment, systemic violence that is carried out in the name of discipline. Maybe next time you hear the words, "difficult child" (or the multiple synonyms), pause, reflect and speak up for our children.

## The man who gave us the mouse

When using a desktop computer at school or at home, what are the two most common devices that you use to provide inputs? The answer is quite easy: keyboard and mouse. Even though American inventor Douglas Engelbart is best remembered as the inventor of the mouse, he was much more than just that. Born in 1925, Engelbart grew up on a farm near Portland, Oregon, U.S. As a boy in rural Oregon during the Great Depression, much of Engelbart's childhood was spent roaming the woods and fiddling with things in the barn.

By 1942, Engelbart had finished his high school and took to studying electrical engineering at the Oregon State University. World War II forced a break in his studies as he spent two years of enlisted service as a radar technician for the U.S. Navy. Returning from service in the Philippines, he completed his bachelor's degree in 1948 before heading to work for NACA Ames Laboratory, a forerunner of NASA, in Mountain View, California. Finding a "complex problem" Driving to work on a Monday morning in December 1950, just two days after getting engaged, it occurred to him that he was about to achieve both goals that Depression era kids grew up with. He was going to be happily married and he already had a nice steady job. He realised that he didn't have any specific goals. Or, as he put it in his own words, "it just seemed so strange to me that, at 25 going on 26, I had no more mature goals than that." He decided to figure out his professional goals, realising along the way that "it's a complex problem to pick a goal for your meaningful crusade." "Handle complexity and urgency"

And then, not long after, it hit him in a flash. "If in some way, you could contribute

significantly to the way humans could handle complexity and urgency, that would be universally helpful." In the early spring of 1951, Engelbart had what he wanted to go after. Intuitively, it occurred to him that computers were the future. "If a computer could punch cards or print on paper, I just knew it could draw or write on a screen, so we could be interacting with the computer and actually do interactive work." He planned to devote himself to facilitate handling all that complexity. Remember that all this was in the early 1950s, when the world had very few computers, and none like what we have everywhere these days. He went to University of California, Berkeley — one of the places that was building its own computer — and obtained his MS in 1953 and PhD in 1955. After staying on as an acting assistant professor for a year, he went to work at the Stanford Research Institute (now SRI International).

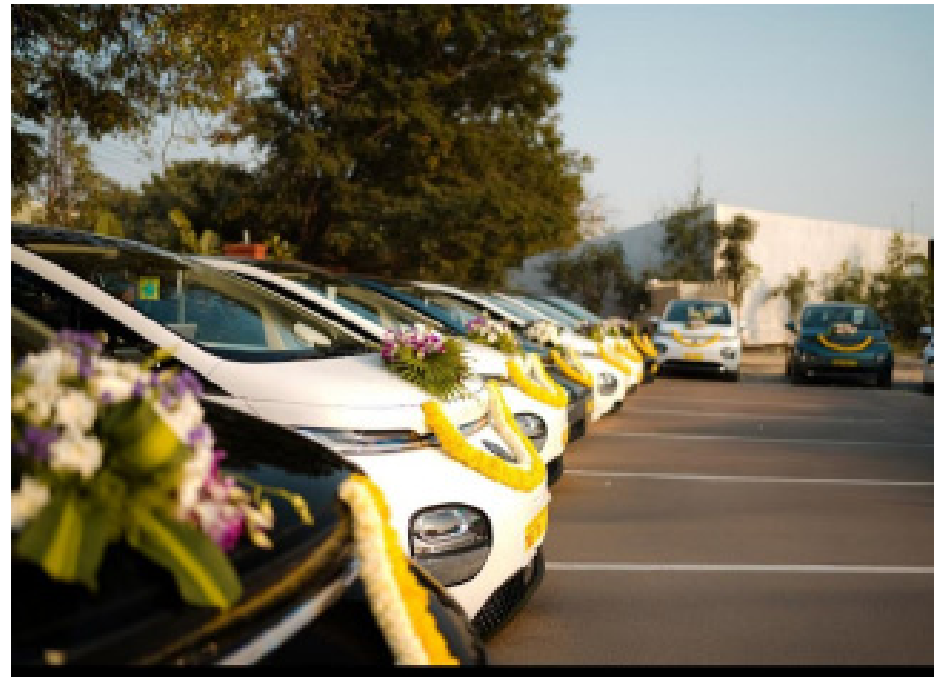
Augmenting human intelligence He earned plenty of patents in the years that followed, before publishing his seminal work in 1962, a paper titled "Augmenting Human Intellect: A Conceptual Framework." At its core were his visionary ideas as he saw computers as a way to augment human intelligence. While many shrugged at his ideas and many more failed to grasp it completely, Engelbart went about delineating ways of viewing and manipulating information, which could then be shared over a network to enable collaborative work. By 1967, Engelbart's laboratory became the second site on the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET) — one of the main precursors to the internet. At the Fall Joint Computer Conference in San Francisco on December 9, 1968, Engelbart wowed the audience with an

unprecedented demonstration that could have served as a gateway to some of his futuristic ideas. Ideas beyond his time While he did receive a standing ovation from the gathered awestruck audience at the end of the 100-minute presentation, few actually took to working on it right away — showing that most of Engelbart's vision was a big leap for even some of the brightest minds of the day. He was a great proponent of collaboration, but his refusal to compromise as a colleague meant that he himself was unable to collaborate to further his ideas. "I don't know why we call it a mouse," Engelbart had said during that demonstration when showing the tracking device that he had invented which helped move a small dot on the screen based on how he moved the mouse. A patent titled "X-Y position indicator for a display system" was applied for this device on June 21, 1967 and the patent was received on November 17, 1970. While it didn't earn him much financially, the mouse was the one invention that earned him a lot of recognition. Even though budget cuts at SRI meant that most of his research staff left for other institutions, Engelbart stayed on until 1977-78, when the lab was closed due to lack of funding. He joined Tymshare, which was acquired by McDonnell Douglas Corporation in 1984, and worked there till his laboratory was terminated in 1989. In that year, Engelbart founded the Bootstrap Institute, a research and consulting firm, with his daughter, focussing on R&D, speaking engagements, and workshops. Delayed recognition In the years that followed up until his death in 2013, and even after, Engelbart finally started getting much due recognition for all his brilliant innovations. He received over 40 awards, including the Turing Award and the Lemelson-MIT Prize, both in 1997.

# 100 MG Windsor Delivered in Hyd

Hyderabad .Continuing its momentum, JSW MG Motor India announced the mega delivery of 100 units of India's First Intelligent CUV, MG Windsor in Hyderabad. The top-selling EV was delivered by RAAM MG, reflecting the growing enthusiasm for this electric CUV across the country. To further enhance the demand for EVs in Telangana, the State government has officially incorporated the 'Telangana Electric Vehicle & Energy Storage Policy 2020-2030'. Under the new EV policy, the Telangana government will be providing 100% road tax exemption for EVs purchased and registered in the State for the first two years up to December 31, 2026. As per the government order, this exemption will be applicable to electric 2-Wheelers, 4-Wheelers and commercial vehicles. MG Windsor recorded remarkable sales in October 2024, becoming a best-seller within the first month of its delivery. The company sold 3116 units of the CUV, contributing nearly 30% of total Passenger Electric Car sales in October. MG Windsor also created a milestone of becoming the first passenger EV in India to garner 15,176 bookings within 24 hours of booking announcement. Speaking on the occasion, Amith Nalla Reddy, Dealer Principal, RAAM MG said, "The entire team at RAAM MG is delighted with the response that the MG Windsor has been receiving since its launch. The MG Windsor is proving to be a disruption in the EV market with its unique product proposition and attractive ownership packages. Delivering 100 EVs in a single day, speaks volumes about Windsor's popularity in a very short time. In addition, the State Government's recent policy to incentivise EV

purchases by providing a 100% road tax exemption, is indeed a progressive step towards rapid adoption of EVs." MG Windsor combines the comfort of a sedan and the expanse of an SUV and is offered with an innovative aerodynamic design, spacious and opulent interiors, reassuring safety, smart connectivity, driving comfort, and many other hi-tech features. It is built on a 'Pure EV Platform' and offers a business-class experience. It has a certified range of 332 km\* on a single charge. The MG Windsor starts at INR 13,49,800 (Ex-Showroom). Under the unique Battery as a Service (BaaS) program, it is available at INR 9.99 Lakhs + battery rental @ ₹3.5/Km.\*\* In addition, a lifetime warranty on the battery for the first owner, assured 60% buyback after three years\*\*\*, and one-year free charging at public chargers using the eHUB by MG app is being offered to customers. The MG Windsor is packed with a host of industry-first features, designed to enhance both comfort and technology for drivers and passengers alike. Its first-in-segment Aero Lounge seats offer unmatched relaxation with their 135° recline capability, while the expansive 604-litre boot space provides ample room for luggage. The Windsor also features an IP67-certified 38kWh battery, ensuring durability and safety, coupled with four driving modes, Eco+, Eco, Normal, and Sport to cater to different driving preferences. Additionally, its Infinity View Glass Roof and best-in-class wheelbase of 2700 mm create a sense of openness and luxury, redefining what customers can expect from a CUV. The MG Windsor takes smart connectivity and in-car technology to new heights with its MG-Jio



JSW MG Motor India in association with RAAM MG achieved this feat  
EV demand in state expected to further rise with new Telangana EV policy

Innovative Connectivity Platform (ICP), offering advanced features such as Home-to-Car functionality and over 100 AI-powered voice commands. Drivers can control essential functions and access infotainment using simple voice commands in multiple Indian languages, enhancing ease of use. The 15.6-inch Grandview Touch Display not only provides intuitive navigation and entertainment options but also integrates

seamlessly with the vehicle's smart systems. With 80+ connected features, including real-time navigation, remote vehicle control, and safety alerts, the MG Windsor ensures a cutting-edge, intelligent driving experience. The Intelligent CUV is being offered in three variants: Excite, Exclusive, and Essence; and four colours: Starburst Black, Pearl White, Clay Beige, and Turquoise Green.

## Here's how many calories a person weighing 70 kg can burn with 30 minutes of jogging and cycling



When it comes to weight loss, both jogging and cycling are effective cardiovascular exercises that can help you burn calories, shed fat, and improve your overall fitness. However, they each have distinct benefits, depending on your personal fitness level, joint health, and specific goals. Here's how they compare, according to Dr Surender Pal Singh, HOD Physiotherapy Department, CK Birla Hospital, Delhi. Jogging for weight loss

Jogging is a high-impact exercise that typically leads to faster weight reduction than cycling, said Dr Singh. This is because jog-

ging burns more calories per minute due to the intensity and the engagement of the whole body. For example, a person weighing 70 kg can burn approximately 400 calories in 30 minutes of jogging, while the same person may burn around 300 calories cycling at a moderate pace for the same amount of time. However, Dr Singh said it can place significant strain on the joints, particularly the knees, hips, and ankles, which makes it unsuitable for individuals with conditions like osteoarthritis or ligament injuries. walking, jogging As a weight-bearing exercise, jogging can strengthen bones and improve bone

density, while also strengthening the heart, lungs, and cardiovascular system. Cycling for weight loss Cycling, on the other hand, is a low-impact exercise that is gentler on the joints, making it an excellent option for people with joint issues or those recovering from injury. While cycling typically burns fewer calories than jogging per minute, it can still be highly effective for weight loss, particularly when done for longer durations or at higher intensities, Dr Singh said. He added that it puts less stress on the joints, making it safer for people with joint pain or conditions like knee osteoarthritis, while also offering a

wider range of motion, which can be beneficial for increasing joint flexibility and strengthening the muscles around the knees. What's the verdict? Both jogging and cycling can help you lose weight, but the better option depends on your individual health and fitness level, said Dr Singh. For Faster Weight Loss: If you're healthy, with no joint issues, jogging may help you burn more calories and lose weight faster. For Joint-Friendly Weight Loss: If you have knee or joint problems, cycling is a safer, low-impact option that still burns calories and improves cardiovascular fitness.

## Beer, the favoured beverage for most could soon turn pricey!

Hyderabad: The Brewers Association of India (BAI), the association of India's largest beer-makers such as United Breweries, AB InBev and Carlsberg, have urged the Telangana government to immediately allow price increases to beer companies to duly compensate for inflation. In a letter to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, the BAI Director General Vinod Giri said the present basic prices allowed to beer supplier companies in Telangana were based on 2019 costs submission. "Since then, the cost of production has gone up by 35-40 per cent. However,

the government has not allowed a basic price revision to compensate for this increase in cost of production," he said. This has made operations in Telangana commercially unsustainable and has made any future investments unviable, Giri pointed out in the letter. Recognising urgent need to increase supplier prices for beer, the Telangana government had set up a Price Fixation Committee (PFC) in the month of July 2024 and directed all beer companies operating in the state to submit their proposal for revised declared prices.

# A thousand days of Ukrainian resilience

A 1,000 days ago, on February 24, 2022, world history changed dramatically. Russia launched its full-scale military aggression aimed at destroying Ukrainian statehood, culture and nation. The President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, united the nation and international community to fight the evil. Thus, Ukraine persevered and is still fighting for justice and peace. In February 2022, many in the West were convinced that Ukraine would not be able to withstand the Russian onslaught. But the armed forces of Ukraine defended Kyiv, expelled the occupiers from the north of Ukraine, and liberated the Kharkiv and Kherson regions.

National unity was a key factor in successful resistance to Russian neo-colonial ambitions. Russia's efforts at conquest were stopped thanks to the joint efforts of Ukrainians who stood united to defend their homeland. During these 1,000 days, Ukraine went through the horrors of war, but, at the same time, proved that an indomitable spirit, the unity of the people and international support could become the basis for bringing peace back. In April 2022, the world was shocked with the Russian military's massacres of Ukrainians in Bucha, Irpin, Borodyanka and Mariupol. These cities became symbols of the Ukrainian freedom struggle and evidence of the aggressor's war crimes. In a 1,000 days, the armed forces of Ukraine have become one of the strongest armies in the world. The heroism of Ukrainian defenders is admired all over the world.

Throughout this period, thousands of civilians, including about 600 children, have died due to the Russian aggression. As in UNHCR data, over eight million Ukrainians left the country, seeking refuge; over half of those who left have come back. In addition, seven million people became internally displaced persons. As of November 2024, about 3.6 million remain internally displaced. In these 1,000 days, over 2,500 Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilians have been successfully returned through exchanges. However, thousands remain in Russian captivity, in horrifying conditions and heavily tortured. The exact numbers of all captured Ukrainians are difficult to confirm. It is officially documented that Russia deported more than 20,000 Ukrainian children. The real figure is much higher and continues to grow every day. The International Criminal Court issued a historic arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin for his involvement in the unlawful deportation of Ukrainian children. With the help of intermediary countries, primarily Qatar, only 1,002 were returned home. Efforts continue to identify and get back the rest, but many cases remain challenging due to Russia's lack of cooperation.

Throughout these 1,000 days, civilian and critical infrastructure became the priority for Russian strikes. Russia deliberately targeted and damaged or destroyed 3,793 educational institutions, 1,714 medical institutions, and more than 2,100 objects of cultural infrastructure. These are cultural heritage sites, museums, libraries, theatres and historical monuments. According to the estimates of the World Bank, the total economic losses of Ukraine exceed \$400 billion. Restoration of the destroyed infrastructure requires at least \$500 billion. Demining of the territories is estimated around \$35 billion. Ukraine is facing the challenge of the century — to rebuild the country after the largest war in Europe since the Second World



War. We continue to rebuild the country, bring life back to destroyed territories and implement reforms, showing the world an example of resilience. All this would not be possible without our partners and allies that have provided billions in military, financial and humanitarian aid, which we received with deep gratitude.

No wins for the aggressor Ever since the beginning of its full-scale aggression, the so-called second military power in the world, a nuclear state, 25 times bigger than Ukraine — Russia — has lost 7,22,440 military personnel, both wounded and killed. This figure far exceeds the total number of military personnel in most of the world's armies. Russia continues to lose around 1,500 military personnel a day by using them as cannon fodder. To balance these losses, Russia got 1,00,000 North Korean troops to fight its war against Ukraine. In these 1,000 days, the Russian army has lost 9,365 tanks, 19,059 armoured fighting vehicles, 20,586 artillery systems, 1,252 multiple rocket launchers, 999 air defence systems, 369 aircraft, 329 helicopters, 19,073 operational-tactical unmanned aerial vehicle (UAVs), 28 ships/boats, one submarine, 29,428 auxiliary vehicles and fuel tanks, and 3,655 pieces of specialised equipment. Once a leading arms exporter, Russia's global defence contracts have been undermined as its military equipment's reliability has been questioned.

Russia has faced over 14,000 cases of sanctions from international entities, severely restricting its access to global financial systems and technology. These sanctions have resulted in long-term damage to industries reliant on imports, particularly high-technology sectors. In addition, over 1,000 global companies have exited Russia since the invasion began, reducing foreign direct investment. Over one million educated professionals and young workers have fled Russia, making it the largest exodus since 1991 (when the USSR was dissolved). This has severely impacted the IT and engineering sectors. While officials in the Kremlin are repeatedly asserting that Russia's economy is resilient, the reality of its long-term economic outlook appears increasingly fragile. The

poverty level is increasing, and social, educational and cultural programmes are being curtailed. Because of the crazy idea of its leader, Russia is degrading, and its citizens are being marginalised. In late October this year, Russia's Central Bank raised its key policy rate to an unprecedented 21%. In this manner, the Russian authorities struggle with the real problems and try to manage a wartime economy that is in danger of overheating due to a combination of factors that include rising inflation and the pressure of sanctions. The international image of Russia has been severely damaged. In the last 1,000 days, Russia has been suspended or excluded from key international bodies, such as the Council of Europe, and faces diminished influence in organisations such as the United Nations. Russia has become a global outcaste, with only a few rogue states such as North Korea continuing to support it openly. Its long-term influence in international diplomacy stands severely diminished. In search of just and lasting peace

It is probable that every Ukrainian personally knows at least one person who, right now, is defending Ukraine's independence on the front lines. The war did not defeat the Ukrainians, did not frighten them, did not break them, did not destroy them, and did not separate them. Today, Ukraine effectively deters Russia's armed aggression thanks to efforts on the military, diplomatic, and information fronts, as well as powerful international assistance. The heroic resistance of

Ukrainians is not only a struggle for the physical survival of the Ukrainian people and the freedom of the country. In this war, Ukraine defends its European choice, its identity and values as part of the European ones. Ukrainians shed their blood for a free and democratic Europe. Mr. Zelenskyy, has repeatedly emphasised the point that neutrality in this war is untenable. He has said, "There can be no neutrality between the aggressor and the victim. Neutrality in this conflict means you are with Russia." These words are a reminder that standing on the sidelines in the face of such clear violations of international law undermines the very principles that bind us as a global community. Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity are a guarantee of world stability. If Mahatma Gandhi were alive today, his unwavering commitment to justice and peace would undoubtedly have led him to call for Russia to quit Ukraine. Gandhiji's leadership during the Quit India Movement was rooted in the belief that no power has the right to oppress or dominate another nation. Gandhiji's philosophy of ahimsa and his moral clarity on colonialism as an affront to human dignity align closely with Ukraine's struggle for freedom from aggression. His stance would emphasise the principle that true peace can only be achieved when oppressors relinquish their hold and allow justice to prevail. In today's context, this would translate into calling for Russia to respect international law, withdraw its troops, and restore peace.

## Siddipet Commissioner launches Abhaya mobile app

Siddipet: Commissioner of Police Siddipet Dr B Anuradha launched the Abhaya mobile app in which the details of auto owners and drivers will be uploaded. Later, the autos will be given a QR code. By scanning the QR Code the citizens can get the details of everything regarding the vehicle and driver.

Speaking on the occasion, the Com-

missioner said that the department had launched the mobile application for the safety of the citizens who commute in autos. Along with the QR code, the owner's name and phone number will also be found on the sticker pasted inside every auto. Anuradha said that the police had completed the issuing of QR codes to 1,250 autos on the first day and they will cover all the autos soon.

# A snapshot of distress migration in Odisha

An estimated 1.75 million people moved from Odisha to other States in 2023, many of them driven by distress and desperation. Last month, the Odisha government set up a special task force to look into distress migration, which is defined by the World Bank as involuntary movement due to poverty or disasters. The task force aims to provide recommendations and targeted intervention measures, including infrastructure improvement and department-specific schemes.

Distress migration usually occurs in conditions where the individual or household is left with no viable means to maintain a life with dignity other than to migrate. This could be due to extreme economic deprivation, natural and environmental disasters, or even intolerable social and gender discrimination. In Odisha, the agricultural sector, which is central to the economy, faces multiple challenges, including landlessness, small landholdings, heavy reliance on rain-fed farming, and extreme weather events. These push people, particularly the vulnerable rural population, such as women, the elderly, children and those from backward groups, to migrate. The Odisha Migration Survey, 2023, a comprehensive survey funded by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and conducted by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Hyderabad and the International Institute of Migration and Development (IIMAD), Kerala, with a representative sample of 15,000 households, offers reliable district-

level estimates of inter-State migration from Odisha. According to the survey, more than 30% of the households are directly dependent on agriculture as their main source of income. It finds that 86% of inter-State migrants have moved to urban areas and 63% of them have relocated in search of better employment opportunities.

Further, nearly half of Odisha's inter-State migrants are from families living below the poverty line. About 33% of them are landless, and 40% own less than one acre of land. An overwhelming 80% belonged to backward castes (Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes combined) and 40% of the migrants reported having poor and kutcha houses. What is a particularly worrying finding is that return migrant households in Odisha performed low on development indicators. This suggests that migration has not led to lasting benefits for most returnees and raises questions about the efficacy of migration as a pathway to sustained economic upliftment. Aggravating the problem is the escalating strain caused by unpredictable weather patterns on agrarian livelihoods. Notes by the first author from an ongoing research, supported by the Food and Agricultural Organization and International Organization for Migration, show that the recurrent nature of heatwaves in Ganjam and cyclones in Kendrapada severely affect agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods. The farmers in Odisha, aided by the government,



are employing several resilience strategies, including the Spice, Mushroom, and Millet Missions to enhance their livelihoods. However, income losses caused by extreme weather events remain severe and push many agricultural families to migrate — some on a long-term basis, others seasonally — to other States. Disaster management in Odisha requires coordinated efforts across departments. Key agencies such as the National Disaster Response Force and the Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force are central to rescue operations. To bolster these efforts, the State is enhancing its disaster response network and implementing the In-

cident Response System, an effective mechanism for reducing ad hoc measures in response, to streamline efforts at the block level. As climate crises persist, Odisha's strategies for managing migration and building resilience will be crucial for its socioeconomic future. A significant challenge for the recently formed special task force will be the lack of robust data to account for the regional disparities in migration patterns. Insights from the Odisha Migration Study, 2023 could help address this gap. This data will help policymakers and the task force understand better the region-specific migration dynamics, identify vulnerable groups, and tailor interventions accordingly.

## Here are the precautions to be taken as cold wave likely to sweep Telangana



Hyderabad: The health department on Wednesday has issued an advisory on cold wave/frost following a significant drop in minimum temperatures in Telangana. Extreme cold could lead to hypothermia, injuries and even death if proper precautionary measures are not taken. If anybody spots a person with symptoms like shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech, drowsiness and infants with cold skin, bright red in color and very low in energy, they should get immediate medical attention, the advisory said. While waiting for medical attention, persons with hypothermia can be transferred to a warm room and their wet clothing, if any, be removed. The person's

body can be warmed through dry layers of blankets, cloths, towels or sheets and given warm drinks (not alcohol) to help increase body temperature. When the body temperature of the individual with hypothermia increases, they should be kept dry, including their head and neck with warm blanket. A person with hypothermia may be unconscious and may not seem to have a pulse or to be breathing. In that case, such persons should be handled gently and given emergency assistance immediately, the advisory said. As a precaution from the cold wave, the advisory has urged people to avoid prolonged exposure to cold and not to ignore shivering, which is the first sign that the body is losing

heat and it is time to immediately go indoors. Individuals must avoid consuming alcohol, which reduces body temperature and increases the risk of hypothermia. People should also avoid giving fluids of any

kind to persons who are fully alert.

The advisory has also urged people to avoid burning candles, woods etc in closed unventilated rooms and prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.

## Telangana UTF, MLC Narsi Reddy to protest for Samagra Shiksha staff pay

Hyderabad: Demanding the government pay the basic pay for employees working in Samagra Shiksha, the Telangana State United Teachers' Federation (UTF), along with teacher MLC A Narsi Reddy, is set to hold a series of protests across the State. According to Reddy, a series of protests will be held till February demanding resolution of issues pertaining to 12,000 employees.

The association said that as per the Supreme Court verdict of equal pay for equal work, employees working in the KGBVs and URS must be paid basic pay for the post they were working in. It also sought an annual increment of Rs.1,000 for KGBV employees. During a conference organised at TS UTF office here on Wednesday, Reddy announced a series of protests to achieve 37 demands of the employees.

To begin with, the teachers and employees decided to hold lunch hour protests on November 27 and 29 followed by sending letters to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy



## A significant challenge for the special task force will be the lack of robust data

from December 9 to 13. Representations to MLAs and MLAs will be submitted from December 22 to 25. The employees also scheduled dharnas at district collector offices on January 7, 2025 and maha dharna in Hyderabad on January 28. They also called for a Chalo Assembly programme during the budget session scheduled in February.

# How Sir Syed collected funds for his AMU dream

At the Aligarh Numaish (exhibition), an event started by the British that evolved into a major socio-cultural affair over the years, on February 6, 1894, Sir Syed Ahmad and his group of friends took the stage to recite ghazals and act in a play. Proceeds from their performance were earmarked for the development of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental (MAO) College, founded by the Muslim scholar, to further the cause of the community's education in the country. In Jahan-e-Syed, authors Mohammad Asim Siddiqui and Rahat Abrar quoted Sir Syed remarking, "If anyone is surprised to see me on stage, then he has no regard for his people... I am truly sorry for the people of this community who hold disgraceful things to be the cause of their honour and glory, but consider anything done in good faith for the benefit of their fellow men to be a cause for shame... You nobles, you wealthy men, you take pride in your riches and honour: Do you imagine that our children can profit from what you have, while your community is in such a poor state... I have done everything to raise money for the education our children must have... But my efforts have been to no avail... It is for this reason that I am standing on this stage, trying to do what I can for the education of our children."

In 1920, two decades after Sir Syed's death on March 27, 1898, MAO College would become Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). Over a century later, on November 8 this year, the Supreme Court underlined that the determination of the "minority character" of an institution is not a rigid concept and, in a narrow 4-3 majority verdict, overruled its 1967 ruling that had held that AMU was not a minority institution. The university traces its origin to the founding of the Madrasatul Uloom in Aligarh by Sir Syed on May 24, 1875. On January 7, 1877, the Madrasatul Uloom became MAO College. Then, after the AMU Act was passed in 1920, nearly four decades later, MAO College got its current name.

MAO College's journey to becoming AMU was realised due to Sir Syed adopting a multitude of ways to collect funds for his vision. MAO College was patterned on the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, which Sir Syed had visited in Britain. His objective was to build a college in line with the British education system — but without compromising on Islamic values. While Sir Syed had a "dream" and a "team of dedicated friends and well-wishers to help him in this mammoth exercise", he had "no money", Jahan-e-Syed states. The book's chapter on fundraising for MAO College states that "he ran from pillar to post to raise funds for building MAO College. He met nobles and aristocrats, Rajas and Nawabs, and ordinary men and women on the street to generate resources for the college". As per a coffee table book published by AMU in 2020, its centenary year, Sir Syed collected funds through all possible means and methods — donations, lotteries, and sale of pictures and books, among others. "In the Aligarh Exhibition, an annual feature, he set up a book stall and sold books. He even put on a beggar's jholi and begged for money," says the book. Rahat Abrar, a retired AMU professor and the former director of the Urdu

Academy, says Sir Syed devoted his whole life to ensuring education for the Muslim community.

"He found innovative ways to collect money. Instead of seeking funds from the government, he wanted to collect money from the people. In 1875, he announced that those who gave Rs 25 would have their names written on the boundary wall of the Madrasatul Uloom (which later became MAO College and then AMU). Similarly, the names of donors who gave Rs 300 were written on the wall of a classroom or hostel. The names of those who contributed Rs 500 were written on the wall of the Central Hall (later the Strachey Hall). Till date, 285 names are written on AMU's boundary walls," Prof Abrar tells. In 1891, he says, Sir Syed gifted Mir Mahboob Ali Khan, the sixth Nizam of Hyderabad, a painting. "The Nizam bought the painting for a handsome amount. That money too went for the construction of the college," Prof Abrar says. Sir Syed had a few more aces up his sleeves. "When he travelled across the country to collect funds for MAO College, he would refuse to eat feasts prepared by his patrons. He would say that instead of feeding him, the money should be donated to MAO College," says Prof Abrar. AMU's 2020 coffee table book mentions the lengths that Sir Syed went to in order to collect money for the college. "It be-



came his practice that on every occasion of family festivities and ceremonies, he donated the money which he would have spent on the feasts, to the college fund. It is interesting to note that he did not give a walima (reception) party on the occasion of the marriage of his son Justice Sayyid Mahmood; instead contributed Rs. 500 to the college fund," the book states. Sir Syed's son studied law in England on a scholarship. An author, Mahmood too dedicated his life to the cause of Muslim education. Mahmood, who died on May 8, 1903, would go on to become a judge in the court in the North-Western Provinces (now the Allahabad High Court). A

fund named "Sir Syed Fund" was started after Sir Syed's death in 1898, says Prof Abrar. In 1920, the British government demanded Rs 30 lakh to turn MAO College into a university. A committee headed by Sir Agha Khan, under the aegis of the Aligarh Movement, continued to collect funds from people from different walks of life. "While most of the funds were provided by the Muslim community, Hindus too came forward to donate for the cause... the names of several Hindu rulers are still written inside the AMU premises. The sum of Rs 30 lakh was paid to the government and AMU came into existence through the AMU Act, 1920," says Prof Abrar.

## As tourist preferences change, Goa sees a boom in small hotels, homestays, villas

Changing traveller preferences with a clear trend towards independent, experiential holidays has forced Goa's hotel industry to adapt and change track to cater to new and emerging trends. Statistics provided by the state tourism department have revealed that since the industry emerged from the pandemic and travel reopened after the lockdown, the trend of opting for homestays, independent villas and small bed-and-breakfast hotels has persisted and is reflected in a near-doubling the number of C (economy class) category and D category (bed and breakfast) hotels. According to the tourism department, between 2021 and 2024, the state saw the registration of 4,907 hotels officially registered with the Goa Tourism Department taking the total number of hotels registered in Goa to around 7500.

"Goa's hospitality sector saw remarkable growth, with 216 homestays and 4,907 hotels officially registered with the Goa Tourism Department. This expansion added a substantial 12,383 hotel rooms," an official of the department told HT. "The rise in registered homestays also highlights a growing interest in immersive, local experiences, offering tourists a chance to engage closely with Goan culture. This significant increase in hotel and room registrations underlines Goa's commitment to supporting its booming tourism industry, enhancing its capacity to host a wider range of visitors year-round,"

the official said. For comparison, Goa had only 2,631 registered hotels as of 2021 when business reopened after the pandemic.

The breakdown of the data reveals that of the 7,500 odd hotels registered in Goa only 300 belong to the 'high end' category, classified as A and B category hotels, while 7,200 belong to the C (economy class) and D (bed and breakfast) with 3,300 and 3,900 each respectively. The tourism department only recently began classifying independent villas and homestays separately and has seen 216 registrations over the past three years. It is a trend that is seen even among the biggest hotel groups operating in the state. Indian Hotels Company Ltd, which runs the iconic Taj group of hotels that opened its first luxury homestay residency AMA in 2019 today has 23 homestay hotels in the state, the most for any location.

"It is a very different clientele. Post-Covid it grew tremendously. Today we have 23 of them. Post-pandemic people wanted privacy, seclusion, and to be close to nature. It gives you a sense that you are in a private residence. You are in a home away from home," Ranjit Philipose, the senior VP in charge of Goa operations for the group that recently completed 50 years of operations in Goa, said. "There is a new market called the slow travel market. A lot of people want to slow the pace down, time for themselves with their families," he added. "Previously it

was all about opulence, and luxurious, etc. But today a lot of people are looking -- luxury is one segment but some people travel for experiences, people concerned about sustainability, and multi-generational travel. Pleasure was created during Covid that continues," he also said. "All hotels have adapted and changed with time -- they take the local flavours, local ethos. We have brought in these experiences so that it is not only about the hotel but it is about the destination also. People come here to explore the destination's offerings -- culture, food, arts and crafts," he said. President of the Travel and Tourism Association of Goa, an industry body, said that the trend that emerged during Covid, tapered off somewhat but continues to draw in visitors from all classes looking for independent vacations. "There was a trend that began during the pandemic, some tourists have returned to the bigger hotels but the demand for the new class remains," president Jack Sukhija, who owns a heritage hotel and who also recently launched a homestead-style hotel, said. The tourism department currently has around 7,500 accommodation units registered with about 67,500 rooms. Of these about 7,200 are in C and D categories with an average size of 10 and four rooms respectively and an inventory of 47,500 rooms. However, according to the Travel and Tourism Association of Goa.

# As Maharashtra campaign enters final leg, will Ladki Bahin hold the key?

At Nawapada, a tribal settlement in Navapur taluka of Maharashtra's Nandurbar district, a group of women gather to talk about the state government's flagship Ladki Bahin scheme. But ask them who facilitated the money, and they look around confused. Just then, a woman pipes up from a house in one of the alleys — "I know... Eknath Shinde, the one with the beard and red tika." As Maharashtra heads into a close election, with a jumble of parties and alliances in the fray, both the ruling and Opposition alliances have been aggressively trying to outdo each other with a string of schemes targeting women. While the Mahayuti (BJP, Shinde Sena and NCP) has promised to increase the monthly assistance to women under the Ladki Bahin Yojana from Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,100 and induct 25,000 women police personnel, the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (Shiv Sena UBT, NCP-Sharad Pawar and Congress) has promised women Rs 3,000 a month under the Mahalakshmi scheme and free transportation in government buses. But if the ruling alliance fancies its chances, it's in large part due to Ladki Bahin, a scheme with a monthly budget of Rs 3,500 crore that it has managed to push through right before the elections. As per Chief Minister Shinde's announcement on October 9, at least 2.26 crore women have benefited from the scheme. The scheme provides Rs 1,500 a month to women residents of Maharashtra who are between the ages of 21 to 65 years and whose annual family income is less than Rs 2.5 lakh.

The Indian Express travelled to Nandurbar and Sindhudurg, districts separated by nearly 800 km, to see the impact of the scheme on its intended beneficiaries. Nandurbar, a tribal district, is among Maharashtra's poorest, while the relatively prosperous Sindhudurg, along the Konkan coast, is among four districts in the state with more women voters than men. While Nandurbar has traditionally been a Congress bastion, the BJP has been making inroads, winning two of the four Assembly seats in the last election. Sindhudurg is considered a Narayan Rane turf, but this time, is likely to witness a contest between the two Shiv Sena factions. The Ladki Bahin scheme has taken off in both the districts, with an overwhelming number of the applicants — 97% in Nandurbar and 96% in Sindhudurg — getting the money in their accounts. 'Small amount, big difference' As with all such cash transfer schemes targeting women, Ladki Bahin has put money in the hands of women, helping them exercise their financial agency when and where it matters most.

Nilima Walvi, 36, a daily wage labourer from Palipada tribal settlement in Nandurbar's Navapur, says that in August, she spent the money she received from the scheme on her eight-year-old daughter Devashree's treatment at a private hospital. The Class 3 student studies at a nearby ashramshaala (a residential school for tribal students). "For almost three days, the school staff kept giving her paracetamol but the fever didn't come down and she was extremely weak. We got scared so we rushed her to a private hospital. Rs 1,500 a month may not be a big amount. But it really does make a difference in situations like these," says Nilima.

In Sindhudurg's Sangave village, Paskin Dsouza, 48, who works as a domestic help, had to pay Rs 100 to fill the Ladki Bahin form at a private centre and has to spend Rs 20 on the bus ticket to Arkula every time she goes to her bank to withdraw the money, but is glad she has the money. "My husband is a daily-wage labourer and doesn't get any work on most days. My elder son Motes used to work in a hotel in Goa, but he died, and now we are struggling to survive. My younger son is in Class 12 and my daughter is married. How can I not vote for the government that helped me when I needed it the most," she says. Maharashtra election As with all such cash transfer schemes targeting women, Ladki Bahin has put money in the hands of women, helping them exercise their financial agency when and where it matters most. (Express photo by Amit Chakravarty) A few km away, in Sindhudurg's Pushpawadi village, Suvarnalata Pawar, 62, is a cancer survivor. In 2021, when she had a relapse, she was referred to Mumbai's Tata Memorial Hospital but it during the pandemic and the hospital only took in patients who were critical. Her husband is a bus driver and her sons — one in Mumbai and the other in Kolhapur — have salaried jobs. "We had to go to a private hospital in Kolhapur and my sons had to take loans for my treatment. When I got this money, I helped them with one instalment of the loan. I am so grateful for this," says Suvarnalata, looking skywards with folded hands. Elsewhere in the district, in Walawal village in Kudal taluka, 60-year-old Sneha Walawalkar, whose husband died early, says she is not dependent on the money since her children are well-settled and support her. "But this money comes to my account and I can use it the way I want. It's my money," she says, beaming.

'What if it is stopped after the polls?'

But if the huddle at the Nawapada settlement in Nandurbar is any indication, the popularity of the scheme is tinged with scepticism about whether the money will continue after the polls. "If the same people come back to power, we will continue to get this money," says Sakhubai Gavit, in her late 40s, whose family members work as farm labourers. "What is the guarantee?" asks Suma Gavit, in her 50s, another in the group. Both agree they are fortunate to get the money while the scheme lasts because "nobody really knows what will happen after the elections". "While these (Mahayuti) people are saying they will double the money after being re-elected, others (Congress) are promising an even larger amount. But what is the point of this money if food and medicines continue to be so costly?" says Sakhubai. It doesn't help that for a scheme that's identified with CM Eknath Shinde, his Sena faction has only one candidate (in Akkalkuwa) in the four Assembly seats that make up Nandurbar district; the rest are with the Sena's Mahayuti partners. When asked about the scheme, a woman who is part of a group sitting outside a ration shop in Dhekwad village of Nandurbar says, "I got the money, but don't know which party gave it. We have always voted for the punja (Congress symbol)." Another woman in the group manages to say "Shinde sarkar gave the money", but isn't aware if her constituency has a candidate



from the party.

The ration shop owner, who didn't want to be named, says, "Almost all women who are eligible have got the money in our district. But the question is, how many of them know who sent this money? Even though they may know that the Shinde government sent it, Shinde does not have any candidate here (in Navapur). Then the question is, even if they want to thank the Mahayuti for this gift, do they know who the alliance candidate is?"

Geeta Padvi, an anganwadi sevika who helped 167 women from Nandurbar's Dhekwad village to fill forms for Ladki Bahin, says, "Women know where the money has come from and it has helped a lot of them. Many could even be willing to vote for this government hoping that the money will continue, but since there is no direct connection between the candidates and the CM, they are likely to get confused." However, Bharat Gavit, NCP (Ajit Pawar), the candidate contesting from Navapur constituency in Nandurbar, is hopeful that he can make the most of the goodwill generated by the scheme. His team has made videos of women talking about benefits of the scheme which are being circulated on social media as a part of the campaign. "I did not realise what a great impact the scheme had made until some of the beneficiaries came up to me during my campaign and spoke about it," said Gavit, who is contesting against two-time sitting MLA from the Congress, Shirish Naik. Unlike in Nandurbar, in Sindhudurg, there is much more clarity about the source of the scheme.

Bhagyashree Raut and Sheetal Parab are co-workers at a cashew sorting factory in Mangaon, each earning Rs 170 a day. While they, like the women in Nandurbar, are sceptical of the future of the scheme after the elections, they are glad to have got the money in their hands. "At least this CM kept his word and gave us money," says Bhagyashree, 50, who says the money came in handy for the treatment of her hus-

band Bhaskar, who was diagnosed with a lump on his tongue. Sheetal, 35, mother of two school-going children whose husband hasn't recovered since falling ill during the pandemic, says, "I have to earn for the entire family and this money is very useful. Others are promising another scheme with double the amount, but my vote will go to the one who gave the money instead of the one who has only spoken of it so far." Sitting BJP MLA Nitesh Rane from Kankavli constituency of Sindhudurg district calls it a groundbreaking scheme. "This is a women-oriented district with the highest women voters. This election, history will be written by women voters," he said. Disagreeing with the scheme's impact, Sandesh Parkar, Rane's opponent from Shiv Sena (UBT), says people want long-pending development of areas and not money. "Voters here are looking forward to days when they do not have to migrate for jobs, their children get higher education nearby and nobody has to rush to Goa or Ratnagiri for critical medical care, which is currently inadequate. The MVA government is assuring all this and much more, including Rs 3,000 per month to women under the Mahalakshmi scheme."

'Dreams won't come true with Rs 1,500' But what's undeniable is that Ladki Bahin, like with every such financial empowerment scheme targeting women, has raised their expectations. In Sindhudurg's Pednekarwadi village, part of Kudal taluka, Akshata Parab, a 38-year-old single mother is grateful for the money that has come her way, but wonders if that's enough to guarantee a better life for her teenage daughter. Ladkin bahin As per Chief Minister Shinde's announcement on October 9, at least 2.26 crore women have benefited from the scheme. (Express photo by Amit Chakravarty) Akshata, who recently separated from her husband who "drank too much", works as a farm labourer for six months of the rice-farming season and at a small spice-manufacturing unit for the remaining six months for Rs 170 a day.

# Are personal coaches better or could Indian shuttlers benefit from training in a group?

It's been a slow, fraying year for Indian badminton – its first without an Olympic medal in a dozen years. Unsurprisingly, it has coincided with scant results worth noting and a breathless wait by fans for assorted coaches to wave magic wands, that will throw up results, even while the athletes haven't been in peak shape or greatest of headspaces. And while forgetting that there's been a steady slide in the number of matches won, let alone titles secured. For the form that he went into the Olympics with, Lakshya Sen over-achieved. A semifinal finish where neither Chinese nor Indonesians made the Last 4, and a leadup where he himself hadn't been amongst titles, will be considered creditable. For the physical preparation he had put in, and what his eclectic, clever game is capable of, losing to Lee Zii Jia was a disappointment. Especially when top coaches agree he could have even taken down Viktor Axelsen, had he kept his nerve. The two losses from leading positions in the semis and bronze play-off, simultaneously highlight the importance of the coach in pinpoint strategy, and their helplessness in getting their players to deliver at the crunch. A coach is only as good as the results. This welds into the larger, heated debate of whether personal coaches are good for the shuttlers. And by being good, we solely mean whether they can get the athletes the results on the court, in sheer Ws. Wins. For a long time, the chatter about in-bound foreign coaches, who athletes prefer for personalised attention, has been a source of mid-level annoyance for the national coach, Pullela Gopichand. It's simply because the results have not followed in singles. And doubles went down the same route in Paris.

PV Sindhu was good for gold in Tokyo but pushed herself into one right corner, dominated by a coaching conundrum. Park Tae Sang wasn't the smartest of career choices, given the nature of her game, which went into reverse with the defensive overtones. And without a second voice telling her to retain the attacking verve, and nerve. Agus Dwi Santoso was much the same – a brilliant coach for rally specialists, but dimming the spark of the tall athlete's ferocious offensive attack. Prakash Padukone couldn't quite prop up the backsliding game, though Anup Sridhar and Lee Hyun-il will now attempt the improbable. In hindsight, the whole world will chorus in with this insight, but Sindhu opting for a support team with a personal coach, needed the dissenting voice, even if abrasive, to get her back on track five years ago. Both Park and Agus were not particularly strict coaches, they would coax and convince and it kept her in a reasonably happy space. But they weren't necessarily great for her game, and results. Kidambi Srikanth blundered from one wrong call on personal coach to the next, and then the next, looking for that elusive magic-wand that could set things right. He reckoned the World Championships silver in 2021 was the formula, and continued to chase the mirage of a wonder-coach. A precociously, creative talent, all he needed was some detached honesty in telling him that physically he wasn't at the level where he could consistently trouble big names. And beautiful, bold game styles like his, needed a very strong base, to pull it off in big events, where he had a natural disadvantage in his

perpetual irritation for slow courts. Srikanth's game was more special than the rest, and everyone from Gopichand to Parupalli Kashyap would agree. But it did not warrant special seclusion, and would have bloomed even in group sessions.

HS Prannoy put in those hard yards to resuscitate a career, albeit late in the day. But what he did not demand, as right, was personalised attention of the chief coach, by simply trusting him to plan and chip in exactly when needed. Even B Sai Praneeth briefly fell into the quagmire of wanting monopolised attention and never recovered from that. These are intelligent, highly talented and skilled shuttlers with no malice in them. Passing envy? Sure. But nothing too unhealthy. Lasting resentment? Not at all. They won India a Thomas Cup, on sheer teamwork. They bond reasonably well. But self-defeating career calls on the coaching choices? Those are plenty. Perhaps the one male shuttler who genuinely had the right to feel ignored was Kashyap. Because Gopichand was far too focussed on taking Saina Nehwal and then Sindhu to the very top. He once even left him midway through a match at the World Championships, to tend to Saina's game. It cost him a World's medal, but Kashyap went on to marry the source of his grief, and the two vowed to merrily joke about it, ever after. Kashyap had the maturity to understand that Saina's and Sindhu's careers were headed for dizzy heights. The one notable success was Saina Nehwal, seeking out monastic focus in Bengaluru, as she searched for an elusive World Championships medal. But Nehwal was always self-



driven, and could squeeze the best knowledge out of any coach. There's no telling if both she and Sindhu could have achieved far more had they sparred together and not chased exclusivity of attention. At any rate, they extracted plenty out of their rivalry – it added to India's titles. But both careers eventually careened off the track, when even greater feats were possible. Lakshya has demanded a similar bespoke, unique status with his coaching calls, though letting go of Anup Sridhar with whom he won his last title and bringing back the Korean months before Paris are debatable. And he was chastised by Padukone. While it is utmost important for athletes to be happy and relaxed, they often need to step out of comfort zones where they are the centre of their universe, and listen to harsh words, and feel not-so-special, so that the game gets better. It is here that group training acquires relevance. It keeps egos in check, self-assessments are non-delusional, the sparring is infinitely better, and the feedback is diverse. Even a trivial 3v3

session, fooling around trying trick shots can pep up the drudgery and reduce inwardly-obsessed stress. Multiple coaches can offer varied insights, and it's easier to move from one title success to the next, or one first-round exit to the next sobering failure, in the company of others traversing the same path. The finances too work out better – one reason why Chinese and Indonesians prefer that system, and eventually even Viktor Axelsen and Anders Antonsen rejoined their national centres. Shared resources are better utilised, expertise is readily available and wheels don't need reinventing. Star tantrums will be tolerated as long as the success comes but the wins have gone missing recently. And though the biggest names of Indian badminton will continue to resist group training, and fixate on personal coaches, they might just in heart of hearts know, that when success started trickling from 2008, it tossed up 10 different names, who each succeeded more than they do now. They thrived at a time when India boasted multiple title contenders who trained together.

## More than one dataset can breach the 1.5°C threshold this year

The Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) forecast last week that 2024 is almost certain to be the first calendar year when the world's average temperature is warmer than the pre-industrial average by more than 1.5°C in its ERA5 dataset. The importance of this event was explained in this column last week. What is concerning about this year is that ERA5 is not the only dataset this year where global temperature is likely to be at least 1.5°C warmer than the pre-industrial average. An HT analysis shows that there is a good likelihood of this happening in at least two other datasets. Here is why.

Before one explains how multiple datasets are likely to breach the 1.5°C threshold this year, it is important to understand why there are multiple datasets for global temperature and why the level of global warming appears different in each of them. The reason why multiple datasets exist is that our measurements of temperature are not spread out uniformly across the globe. The multiple ways of making this data uniform produce the differences in the global average of different datasets. This is especially true of the temperature in the pre-industrial period (usually taken as the 1850-1900 period), where there are bigger geographical holes in the data. That's why dif-

ferent datasets disagree more on the pre-industrial average than the current temperature or rate of warming.

The divergence between datasets also means that the breach of the 1.5°C threshold can be a staggered event, with different datasets reporting the event in different years. For example, of the five prominent global temperature datasets analysed here, one breached the threshold in 2023 itself; another three came close to the breach in 2023 and would appear to do so if the deviation in temperature was rounded off to one digit after decimal; and one was still around 0.2°C away from the threshold last year.

In the data we have for 2024 so far (for nine months in three of the five datasets and for ten months in two), the average warming is above the 1.5°C threshold in all but the dataset produced by NOAA. This means that most of them will breach the threshold for the year as a whole even if the remaining part of the year deviates less than 1.5°C above the pre-industrial average.

Since we know the average deviation required in the remaining part of the year for breaching the 1.5°C threshold, we can also calculate how much sequential temperature change is required. For example, the data produced by Berkeley Earth will show a

breach unless the average temperature in October-December cools down compared to July-September by at least 0.42°C. On the other hand, the data produced by NOAA will not show a breach unless the last three months warm up by 0.42°C compared to July-September.

Calculating the required sequential temperature change is useful because it is not very easy to quickly change the global average temperature in a big way. If the world needs to cool down by a large quantum in a particular dataset for the breach to not happen, the dataset will likely record a breach.

For example, the GISTEMP data produced by NASA requires that the world cooldown by at least 0.28°C in November-December compared to September-October. This level of sequential cooling has happened in 31 such sequential changes out of 1,735 available in the data (1.8%). This means that the likelihood of GISTEMP not recording a breach is low. On the other hand, ERA5 data has never recorded the required sequential cooling of 0.54°C in its dataset that begins in 1940. This is one reason why C3S is almost certain of a 1.5°C breach in its dataset this year. As the accompanying chart shows, on the basis of past statistics alone, the probability of the breach not happening is very low in three out of five datasets.