

RTA officials find white registration plate vehicles being misused

Hyderabad: With incidents of white registration plate vehicles allegedly being misused for commercial purpose, the RTO authorities have warned motorists particularly stressing that yellow number plate vehicles are designated for commercial activities such as vehicles for rent or hire, while white board vehicles are strictly for personal use. When white board vehicles are used for commercial purposes, it will lead to significant financial losses to the government and legitimate commercial vehicle owners. Traditionally, yellow number plate vehicles are designated for commercial activities such as vehicles for rent or hire, while white board vehicles are meant for personal use. However, the RTO has noticed a growing trend when white board vehicles are being used for commercial purposes, leading to significant financial losses to the government and legitimate commercial vehicle owners.

Transport Department officials said that in some instances motorists use white board vehicles for activities that legally require a yellow number plate, such as pro-

viding rides for hire or operating transportation services. "This illegal practice causes loss of revenue to the government as taxes and fees related to commercial vehicles are high as compared to personal vehicles. Owners of yellow board vehicles who pay these high fees face unfair competition from those illegally using white board vehicles," said a transport department official. This issue has gained more visibility in recent times, especially with the use of unofficial Apps that facilitate these activities. Some vehicle owners are promoting their services through social media platforms, further encouraging the misuse of white board vehicles for commercial purposes. Taking note of this situation, the transport department is preparing to take strict action against such vehicles.

The department is actively working to identify and penalise persons misusing white board vehicles for commercial activities. It is learnt that such acts could attract hefty penalties and driving licences may also be suspended depending on the gravity of the matter. Moreover, the transport



department authorities aim to protect the interests of yellow board vehicle owners who pay high fees to abide by the rules and operate commercially. By taking action against white board vehicle owners

who engage in illegal commercial activities, the department plans to level the playing field and ensure that all commercial vehicle operators follow appropriate guidelines.

Telangana govt eyes alternate strategies to boost tax revenue



Hyderabad: Facing a revenue shortfall in the first half of the fiscal year, the State government is exploring various strategies to bolster its finances. The officials are considering alternative revenue enhancement proposals, without immediately raising taxes apparently due to the upcoming local body elections. This is after the State managed to achieve only 39.41 per cent of its projected budget revenue, amounting to Rs 1.08 lakh crore out of the Rs 2.74 lakh crore goal set for the 2024-25 financial year.

The tax revenue reached Rs.69,000 crore against the budgeted Rs 1.64 lakh crore, falling short by approximately Rs.13,000 crore as of September 30 and posing a huge challenge for the State government to run the show. Under these circumstances, the focus is on increasing liquor sales, where the government sees potential for a substantial boost. Proposals are being considered to hike prices by Rs.20 for beer and by Rs.20 to Rs.70 per quarter bottle of Indian-made foreign liquor (IMFL), to generate an additional revenue

of Rs.1,000 crore monthly. If approved, this measure could make up for the tax deficit while sparing property and registration fees from immediate increases. The government is also looking at monetising assets, specifically by identifying prime land plots for development and auction. All the urban development authorities especially Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority, have been instructed to send proposals in this regard. Selling unsold flats constructed under schemes like Rajiv Gruhakalpa in erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, is also on the table. These measures are aimed at raising capital without new tax burdens on the general public. Efforts to recover pending dues from both the Centre and various organisations have intensified, as Telangana seeks to reclaim funds dating back to the bifurcation of Andhra

Pradesh. The government is pursuing payments owed by both public and private entities, and an inter-departmental committee, led by Special Chief Secretary for Finance K Ramakrishna Rao, has been constituted to address disputes involving joint ventures with private companies in housing projects. Additionally, the government is examining options for a one-time settlement scheme to encourage citizens and businesses to clear outstanding taxes and fines, a move expected to accelerate revenue collection in the short term. However, the officials admit that these are only temporary solutions and the State government must finalise its broad fiscal policy, besides implementing austerity measures, attract fresh investments, and also initiate schemes that would improve financial condition of people to encourage them to spend more.

Hyderabad-based Crimson becomes first school operating platform to receive WELL HSR

Hyderabad: City-based Crimson has become the first Indian school operating platform to receive the prestigious Well Health-Safety Rating (WELL HSR) from the International Well Building Institute (IWBI). Five Crimson school buildings and

facilities in Hyderabad and Bengaluru, have received the certification for meeting 16 out of 29 criteria including filtered and breathable air, purified and drinkable water, cleaning and sanitization procedures, innovation and emergency prevention and preparedness, among others.

What are the major challenges faced by Indian cities? | Explained

The story so far: October 31 is observed every year as World Cities Day. The world's urban population has reached an estimated 4.7 billion, or 57.5% of the world's total population, with projections to double by 2050. The theme for this year's World Cities Day is 'Youth Climate Changemakers: Catalysing Local Action for Urban Sustainability'.

What are challenges faced by cities?

The UN underscores that cities face unprecedented challenges, especially climate change. While strides have been made towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), urban centres remain plagued by poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. In the Global South, these challenges are intensified by rapid urbanisation, inadequate infrastructure, and limited resources. Cities here often suffer from housing shortages, poor access to clean water and sanitation, and increased vulnerability to climate-related events.

What about Indian urbanisation?

India's urbanisation trajectory differs from the cities in the Global North. In Western countries, urbanisation followed industrialisation, which created jobs that absorbed rural labour. Their urbanisation was sustained also because of massive economic transfers from colonies. Economist Utsa Patnaik has highlighted that India alone contributed over \$45 trillion to England's economy during colonial rule. In contrast, India's urbanisation is largely driven by economic distress, resulting in "poverty-driven urbanisation," with both rural-to-urban and urban-to-urban migration. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the strain on urban planning became apparent, as reverse migration trends highlighted gaps in infrastructure.

What are urban challenges in India?

Without a 2021 Census, India lacks precise data on its urban population. World Bank estimates suggest around 40% of India's population live in urban areas, in around 9,000 statutory and census towns. The main challenges Indian cities face include inadequate spatial planning, climate change, massive migration, growing inequality and social segregation, and governance limitations. Urban planning agencies have struggled due to two main issues. First, spatial and temporal plans are often outdated and fail to accommodate population growth. Since the 1980s, deindustrialisation has led to job losses in cities like Ahmedabad, Delhi, Surat, and Mumbai. Many workers displaced by this trend moved to peri-urban areas, where they live in overcrowded conditions. Currently, 40% of India's urban population resides in slums. Second, plans often focus on capital growth rather than people's needs, leading to a lack of local ownership and engagement in the planning process. Similarly, climate change severely impacts Indian cities. Cities face severe pollution and are increasingly subject to urban flooding and "heat island effects." Among the 10 most polluted cities in India, eight are in the NCR region around Delhi. Additionally, urbanisation was once believed to be neu-

tral regarding social and religious dynamics, but Indian cities are increasingly segregated along these lines. Inequality is widening, with exclusive developments catering to the wealthy while millions lack basic housing. For instance, DLF's "The Dahlias" project in Gurugram offers apartments starting at ₹100 crore, a stark contrast to the two crore urban Indians without shelter. Most city jobs (around 90%) are in the informal sector, often with poor working conditions and no job security. Despite the 74th Constitutional Amendment, most Indian cities remain controlled by undemocratic bodies. Though cities have elected representatives, they rarely control urban planning, which is often outsourced to parastatals and private entities. For example, less than three of the 18 functions outlined in the 12th Schedule have been universally transferred to urban governments, and cities receive a mere 0.5% of



the GDP in intergovernmental transfers. As we observe World Cities Day, these challenges highlight the need for comprehensive national interventions.

How the pet industry encourages animal abuse

Sanjana Narendra recalls the unbearable stench that engulfed her when she entered the dark, filthy shed in Doddakallasandra, Konanakunte, where puppies were being illegally bred. "There were no proper windows or ventilation," says the manager of the Shwana Foundation, a city-based NGO working for the welfare of dogs. Narendra, who was part of a team that rescued 11 Shih Tzu puppies on October 16, 2024, says that the dogs they rescued were all shivering and sick when discovered. "After they were examined by the vets, we realised that due to severe cataracts, they had lost about ten to twenty per cent of their vision," she says, adding that the dogs also had tick fever and were highly anaemic.

The person accused of illegally breeding these puppies was a man who ran a water-can delivery business in the area. "He was notorious for abusing and overbreeding the dogs. They were beaten, neglected and forced to live inside tiny cages where they couldn't move around or sit properly," says Narendra, a 24-year medical student at the Shridevi Institute of Medical Sciences and Research Hospital in Tumakuru. The animals were not just restrained but badly beaten and improperly fed, she says. According to her, the team responded to a tipoff from a resident, approaching the accused on the pretext of buying a pup. They made videos of what they had witnessed before calling 112 for help. Based on the complaint, the Hoysala patrolling police reached the spot, rescued the animals and sent them to medical help at a veterinary hospital in Jayanagar. The police also booked a non-cognizable case against the breeder and took an undertaking from him that he would no longer breed the pets, she adds.

Pet breeding in India is a highly unregulated industry, though a fairly lucrative one, going by the sheer number of pet shops that have proliferated in the country, selling breed dogs, Persian cats, birds, turtles and fish, among many other animals. It is also one that sees a lot of abuse and neglect of the animals being bred and sold, as Keerthan Vignesh R.P., chief manager of Charlie's Animal Rescue Centre, a Bengaluru-based animal shelter, will attest to.

Vignesh, who has often rescued animals used for breeding, recounts some of the horrors he has encountered: animals in gunny bags and baskets left in dump yards and gutters, a dog chained so tightly to a pole that the chain pierced its neck, animals burned with hot oil and water or with their tails cut off. He still recalls the breeder who had owned and bred a nine-year-old chow chow. "The dog delivered two puppies before it died, and this fellow was so proud, saying that even though the dog was nine years old, he did not let it go until it gave two puppies." He refers to the pet breeding industry as a "mafia" of sorts, one that leaves the breeding animals very sick. "They will do anything and everything to make sure that they make some money out of these animals," he says, recounting some of the health conditions these dogs often suffer from, including chronic kidney failure, skin issues, calcium deficiency, sight problems, bone deformity, fungal infections, even mammary tumours.

According to him, the female dogs end up being bred twice or thrice a year, too soon for a mother dog to recover from her previous pregnancy. "They feel lifeless, they don't react, they don't ever feel happy," he says, while Dr. H.D. Lohith of Bangalore Pet Hospital and Maruti Pet Care Cen-

tre recounts the health complications that arise from having a weakened immune system, another side-effect of being overbred. Another major issue, he points out, is inbreeding. "As a purebred, most of these dogs already have genetic issues, and the inbreeding increases the chances of the disease expressing itself in the next generation," he says. The sordid conditions in which they are birthed and raised can, in turn, lead to behavioural issues in many breed dogs.

The sordid conditions in which they are birthed and raised can, in turn, lead to behavioural issues in many breed dogs. | Photo Credit: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTA systemic issue Under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (PCA), 1960, Section 11, if the animals are kept in inhumane conditions, they can be produced by the magistrate and sent to the shelter. However, enforcement is a big issue. Surendra Kumarswamy, an agriculturist and social worker who often helps with rescuing dogs, offers his opinion on the legality of dog breeding. "This is not a regulated space. There's no government official actively going and checking if the norms are being followed," he says. The sordid conditions in which they are birthed and raised can, in turn, lead to behavioural issues in many breed dogs. Kavita Yadav, a researcher and filmmaker, is an ardent animal lover. She brings up the case of a man in Delhi who was breeding pit bulls, one of which attacked and killed his daughter. "Everyone is getting enraged at the dog but nobody's putting an effort to figure out why it happened. These dogs are kept in very bad conditions, in tight cages, and they're tortured continually for breeding. When you put them in a space like this, the animal will turn much more aggressive," she believes.

Opposition slams BJP for oppressing the farmers by inflicting double fine for stubble burning

Chandigarh (JAG MOHAN THAKEN), November 8: The congress and Aam Aadmi Party have slammed the BJP led central government for imposing double fine on farmers for stubble burning. The General Secretary of the All-India Congress Committee, former Union Minister, and MP from Sirsa, Kumari Selja, said that instead of working in the interest of the farmers, the BJP government is focused on oppressing and exploiting them. Farmers are being fined and cases are being registered against them in various places. On one hand, farmers are facing hardships in the markets, and on the other, the central government has now decided to double the fine for stubble burning. The Congress condemns this decision by the Centre. The government should encourage farmers instead of harassing them so that they can find alternative ways to increase their income without burning crop residue.

In a statement released to the media, Kumari Selja said that farmers are still struggling to fight for their rights, and 750 farmers have lost their lives in this struggle. Instead of listening to their concerns, the government is engaged in repressive poli-

cies to oppress and exploit them. She said that stubble burning is not a recent issue; it has been happening for years. There is no doubt that stubble burning increases air pollution. The government should create a system so that farmers do not have to burn stubble. By utilizing stubble, the government can produce electricity. If the government wishes, it can set up stubble purchasing centres at the district level and dispose of the stubble at its own level. Selja added that the government cannot shirk its responsibility by imposing fines on those who burn stubble or by registering cases against them. Following strict remarks from the Supreme Court on the issue of air pollution caused by stubble burning, the central government has now taken out its frustration on farmers by deciding to double the fine for stubble burning. On Thursday, the Ministry of Environment issued a notification to double the penalty amount. Now, a fine of ₹5,000 will be imposed on landowners with less than two acres, ₹10,000 for two to five acres, and ₹30,000 for those with more than five acres. The governments of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Delhi will be required to

implement these rules. Kumari Selja said that the government should refrain from registering cases against farmers. On the other hand, by suspending agricultural department officials and employees who are unable to prevent stubble burning, the government seeks to avoid the Supreme Court's strictness. She said that the government needs to formulate a solid strategy for stubble management, rather than solely blaming farmers. The government should also reflect on its own responsibilities. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has also strongly criticised the Central Government's decision to double the fine for stubble burning. AAP senior leader and spokesperson Neel Garg stated that farmers in Punjab are already facing financial hardship, and now, on top of that, the Central Government has imposed a doubled fine on them. Neel Garg said that the Punjab Government had sought Rs. 1200 crore from the Centre to tackle this issue and reduce incidents of stubble burning by providing financial incentives to farmers to discourage the practice. He questioned why the Centre had refused to provide this assistance if they were genu-

inely concerned about stubble burning? Garg pointed out that, due to the efforts of Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and the AAP government, the number of stubble burning incidents in Punjab had significantly reduced over the past three years. If the Centre had provided the requested financial support, these incidents would have dropped even further. However, instead of offering help, the Centre has imposed a fine. Garg further stated that Punjab's farmers are seeking resources for stubble management and even want alternatives to paddy cultivation. If there was a guarantee of Minimum Support Price (MSP) for alternative crops, they would stop growing paddy altogether.

However, the Centre is neither purchasing crops at the MSP rate nor providing any alternative options. He criticized the move to double the fine, calling it a method to harass and intimidate the farmers of Punjab. He appealed to the Central Government to stop troubling farmers and instead offer support, as these are the same farmers who fill the country's grain reserves, feeding people across the nation.

The empire turns renegade

What if the Democrats had someone other than Kamala Harris or Joe Biden as the candidate? What if the Biden administration had chosen fiscal prudence-induced economic pain during the pandemic instead of what many economists (not all though) argue is a stimulus fuelled inflation which cost them the elections? What if the Biden-Harris administration had done better in managing the fall-out of the ongoing conflict in West Asia? These are questions which perhaps will keep election and data wonks engaged for a long time. This column does not have a comparative advantage in framing or answering these questions. What it can and does want to ask is the following. Forget a win or loss. How does one explain the fact that Donald Trump has increased his popular support, as seen in national vote share, in each of the three elections he has contested? Clearly, he has a message which has growing; even if incrementally, traction among the voters in the US. What exactly is that message?

Is it just the opposite of political chivalry which has earned him bipartisan loathing within the old establishment but helped him portray himself as an anti-establishment crusader? Is it a set of incoherent, perhaps even counter-productive, but seemingly potent economic rhetoric which has made him an attractive political option for the American underclass? Or is it something much more profound yet simple?

The answer, in this author's wisdom, is to be found in Trump's promise of putting "America First". Trump's USP vis-à-vis the American voter, more than anything else, is that he will make their country renege on the responsibility, and therefore the costs, of being the leader of global capitalism; what Marxists also like to call the empire. Let us look at a brief summary of

the story so far. US leadership of global capitalism is, historically speaking, a much more recent phenomenon than the advent of modern capitalism. It only became a claimant for the position after the First World War and assumed it after the Second World War, by which time, the US's economic and military might were far ahead of the erstwhile European powers, especially Britain. The rise of American capitalism (or empire) followed a different route compared to the vintage imperial powers. The latter's capitalist evolution, was critically dependent, at least for a significant period, on their colonies in, what is today the global south. US's economic rise, on the other hand, is primarily a story of exploiting a large domestic market after getting rid of colonial dominance and then using export markets, both for capital and commodities, in Europe. The US is the first geography outside mainland Europe to achieve full development of productive forces of capitalism. While the proliferation of capitalism and its productive forces gave the US its initial advantage, the proverbial Rubicon of capitalism crossed many rivers in the later period.

First, it was post-war Japan which, ironically under the US's guidance, tasted success and eventually became a threat to the US's dominance. Then there were the South-East Asian tigers which imbibed capitalist dynamism. Both these success stories and their threat perception to the US were if one were to crudely describe it, mitigated by the US's dominance in the financial and money markets, which forced these countries to embrace deflation after a financial crisis triggered in either currency or asset markets. And then, came China, which is a very different story. A comparison of global GDP shares from World Bank data is useful to illustrate this point. The

US's share in global GDP (in current dollars) was about 40% in 1960. It fell to 25% by 1980 and had settled at this level by the mid-1990s. It is almost the same today as well. Japan's share in global GDP, between 1960 and 1995 increased almost continuously from 3.5% to almost 18% before it started falling monotonically to reach just about 4% today. Japan's economic decline almost coincides with China's rise. China's global GDP share peaked in 2018 at almost the same level where Japan found its peak in the 1990s. The difference between the Japanese and the Chinese situation is that the latter has had a much more interventionist regime in its financial markets which has made a financial market-driven taming of the Chinese dragon a far more difficult task at least until now. To be sure, there are enough signs that the Chinese state's manipulation of its financial and asset markets has created systemic problems in the economy. However, to predict a Japan-like economic downfall of China would be premature if not outrightly delusional. While the geo-economic game has undergone a paradigm shift between Japan's economic rise to its downfall and China replacing it, the US economy has undergone a critical economic churn to the predicament of its economic underclass. In its transition from what can be described as the global factory to the global boardroom, the US has seen a sustained shift in income distribution against the working classes over the last five decades. Its political mitigation – the underclass still has decisive political power – was first managed by vilification of the so-called communist contamination of American animal spirits under the neoliberal revolution. What followed was a period of mediocre growth driven on asset market-based and financial sector-gen-

erated cocktail steroids until it all came down crumbling in the global financial crisis of 2008. The American voter, when seen in hindsight, displayed a proverbial dead cat bounce version of prioritising progressive and multicultural bonhomie in electing Barak Obama for two terms before embracing a clearly reactionary and sectarian Donald Trump in 2016 and voting for him in greater numbers in 2020 and 2024. While Trump's social messaging has been diametrically opposite to Obama's all-in-unity and prosperity rhetoric, his economic messaging has had a clear bipartisan appeal. Nothing else explains the resurrection of things such as industrial policy in the US to bring back manufacturing jobs. Where Trump has scored a point over Biden-Harris and the old political establishment at large is his assertion that tariffs or Chinese factories are not the only albatrosses around the US's neck. Trump's additional critique, which is completely unpalatable to the old US establishment or deep state, is that the US abdicate and defunds its self-ordained responsibility of being the global policeman in ensuring the existing geopolitical order. If it means weakening NATO against Russia, reneging on climate crisis consensus or even raising a toast with some of the most despicable autocrats in the world, so be it. His justification for preaching this abdication is essentially economic. The empire, in his view, has become an unrewarding, at times punishing, proposition. Trump, to be sure, is not the only first-world politician selling this idea. There are many in Europe, from Germany to Hungary, who are finding increasing political traction in advocating an abdicationist geopolitical stance – democracy and freedom (of Ukraine) be damned – in the name of minimising the economic pain of such endeavours.

Find out what these two men did to kick the habit and lead healthy lives

Ad filmmaker Niranjan Kaushik, 50, takes a break from playing tennis and corrects you from calling him an ex-smoker. "I am a non-smoker. There's no residual relationship. The toxicity is out of my life forever," says the man who once couldn't do without 40 puffs a day till 2016. He's now a tennis buff, having started playing at 44 after he gave up smoking. Regular sessions have helped him decrease body fat and lower bad cholesterol, something he had to battle with as a smoker. "Growing up in Juhu, Mumbai, in the 1980s, I never thought smoking was a risk factor. Nobody did. It was the done thing, a sort of a recreational activity. I began by picking up dad's unfinished cigarette and by the time I was in class XII, I was smoking three to four cigarettes a day. Once I took up advertising, it became my creative tool," says Niranjan.

TURNING POINT AND REBOOTING THE MIND His turning point happened during the demonetisation announcement in 2016, when he realised he had Rs 20,000 of unusable notes and bought eight cartons of Marlboros from the nearest vendor for Rs 16,000. "Since I led a fairly active lifestyle, I didn't have any noticeable health impacts like other smokers, except for elevated levels of cholesterol. But I thought I was really mentally sick to blow up my money during a crisis on cigarettes and justifying the act in my mind as an advance purchase for the months ahead. That twisted thinking did it," says Niranjan.

So his rehabilitation followed the psychological route called neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), which basically resets and retrains your mind to delink the image of cigarettes from everyday activity. "I always associated smoking with me writing a storyboard or a punchline. Much of my ideas developed during smoking breaks and I wrongly attributed my creativity to it. Nicotine is a stimulant that excites the brain by releasing adrenaline. When you're bored, sleepy, or tired, nicotine can perk you up. It can even relax you temporarily because it encourages the release of endorphins and dopamine, which can improve mood and create feelings of pleasure. Truth is this is an illusion," says Niranjan, who changed the imagery associated with his work. "The existing positive associations with smoking can be replaced easily with other images. I switched over to tea from coffee and took up some other activity during work breaks, so I could dissociate my thinking from smoking. In fact, NLP can help you visualise the perils of smoking in such detail, that giving up smoking may seem like a relief," he says. Niranjan did three months of this protocol and has not been remotely tempted by smoke since. He stayed away from nicotine replacement pills and patches because he didn't want to be dependent on them. He now eats clean and has corrected his lifestyle. "Of course, I didn't attempt everything together. While I was quitting smoking, I continued having my red meat. This gradual withdrawal prevented a relapse," he says. **HOW TO PREVENT RELAPSE** Relapse is something that 53-year-old Madhav Kolhatkar had been dealing with before he finally gave up smoking

on February 4, 2017. "I am nicotine-free." This is the SMS that he has been sending daily since that day to Mukta Puntambekar, director at Pune's Muktangan De-Addiction Centre, who helped him give up smoking. That was quite a zigzag journey of promises kept and broken, of burning himself in bed, blood pressure and finally a liver abscess. Now, the former smoker is a counsellor himself, helping young people kick the habit. What began as a Class IX student's "post-dinner thrill" quickly changed into addiction as Madhav saw many of his peers do that in South Mumbai. "By the age of 21, I was smoking at least 10 cigarettes a day. I even stole money from my dad's wallet to buy a pack of cigarettes and then got attracted to alcohol. I became an addict of both, puffing up 15 cigarettes with 360 ml of rum and beer. Sessions with a psychiatrist failed and when my parents visited my older sister in the US, I stayed back, smoking and drinking at home. Once the mattress on my bed almost caught fire," he says. He lost weight, his blood pressure soared, he had jaundice and typhoid. But it took a liver abscess to press the pause button and sign up for a rehabilitation programme. "For a while I was fine but my craving for tobacco remained unaddressed. I gave up midway and replaced cigarettes with gutkha or paan masala. Then I focussed on giving up alcohol first. That made it easier for me to give up cigarettes as I usually smoked and drank simultaneously," says Madhav as he battled withdrawal symptoms like restlessness and sleeplessness. Mukta devised a personalised module of deaddiction. "We followed a graded action plan, bringing down his cigarettes from 10 to 2 in the ini-



tial days. Then I asked Madhav to call me the moment he had a craving. I would immediately remind him that his lung problems could only worsen and that he could have lung failure or cancer. We planned his meals and filled his waking hours with different activities. We used the HALT and HOW methods. HALT refers to Hunger, Anger, Loneliness and Tiredness which are triggers for smoking. We distracted him during these phases. HOW refers to Honesty, Open-mindedness and Willingness, which helped Madhav build trust. I would conduct surprise urine tests, which can identify nicotine even if the person had smoked ten days ago. So Madhav started

feeling accountable and got serious about quitting," she says. Initially, Madhav was put on nicotine replacement chewables called Nicogum, which mimic the effects of nicotine and tricks the brain. It can help reduce cravings and irritable feelings that occur when someone stops smoking. "I took to journalling, writing down how each day passed without nicotine. As I read every page, I realised my life was getting fuller and I was becoming more meaningful to others than feeling sick all the time," says Madhav. He has now completed his graduation and earned a diploma in Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy. He thinks his practical experience will make him a better counsellor.

No minimally invasive surgeries at Telangana Government hospitals

Hyderabad: Minimally invasive surgeries, one of the key super-specialties that have in the past few years rapidly gained ground, remain inaccessible to needy patients at government hospitals in Telangana State.

Vital life saving surgeries for emergency patients suffering heart episodes need immediate unblocking of blood vessels, treatment for brain strokes by removal of blocks to stop internal bleeding, removal of tumours, biopsy and ablation, which uses heat to destroy cancerous cells and utilizing minimally invasive techniques to exactly deliver chemotherapy to the tumour cells, are not available in any of the government hospitals in the State.

None of the top government teaching hospitals including those affiliated to Osmania General Hospital (OGH), Gandhi Hospital, Kakatiya Medical College in Warangal and even for that matter Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS) offer such surgical techniques that have now become universally accepted for their safety and efficiency.

While minimally invasive surgeries, which enable patients to recover faster post-surgery and are vital surgical techniques to treat children, are routinely performed in private hospitals in Hyderabad, a similar initiative is lacking in government hospitals, despite the availability of highly skilled and experienced surgeons.

The government teaching hospitals do not have exclusive super-specialty departments dedicated to minimally invasive surgeries. "There are no separate minimally invasive surgical departments or department of Interventional Radiology at government hospitals in State. Doctors who perform such surgeries often learn from their seniors or peers through workshops and CME programs," a senior surgeon at Gandhi Hospital said.

Niloufer Hospital, the top tertiary hospital for mother and child care in Hyderabad, does not have a dedicated Interventional Radiologist and a dedicated department is yet to be established. Such surgeries are very important for children at Niloufer Hospital, where critical cases need immediate surgery and infants do not re-



cover from traditional surgeries due to excessive blood loss. "Sick infants and children needing surgical intervention can't recover from traditional ways of surgery, which are performed in adults. There is a lot of blood loss and recovery is always iffy among infants who undergoing traditional surgeries. So such instances, minimally invasive surgeries are way to go forward," senior pediatrician from Niloufer Hospital said. • None of the government hospitals have minimally invasive surgeries • Department of Intervention Radiologists not established in government hospitals • Lives of patients with brain stroke, heart episodes.

How the fall of the Berlin Wall shaped, divided, and ultimately united a generation

On the evening of November 9, 1989, East Berlin was an unlikely scene of revolution. As news spread of a relaxation in travel restrictions, thousands gathered at the Berlin Wall, a forbidding structure that had separated East and West Germany for nearly three decades. A seemingly mundane press conference, and a botched announcement, led to an almost surreal moment — border guards, confused and overwhelmed, opened the gates. Within minutes, a flood of East and West Berliners crossed paths in laughter, tears, and celebration, and hammers chipped away at the concrete barrier that had divided the city for 28 years. This night, now 35 years past, is remembered as one of history's great triumphs of unity over division. When the Berlin Wall was constructed in August 1961, it stood as a visible wound marking the world's ideological split. After World War II, Germany, particularly Berlin, had been divided between the Allies: the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and the Soviet Union. By 1949, two separate German states emerged — the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG, West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR, East Germany), each reflecting the political leanings of its controllers. As West Germany developed into a democracy with a market economy, East Germany remained under a stringent Soviet model, marked by restrictions on freedom and an iron-fisted government.

"Many people in the GDR were unwilling to accept the country's political and economic system. A massive exodus already began in the late 1940s, with the result that an estimated 2.7 to 4 million people had left the GDR by August 1961 — up to a sixth of its population. The GDR had already started closing its border to West Germany in 1952. Finally, the GDR hermetically sealed the border to the West by building a wall through and around Berlin on 13 August 1961," as per the German platform deutschland.de, a service of the Federal Foreign Office. "On the morning of August 13, 1961, the inhabitants of East Germany woke to find themselves cut off from West Germany by more than 100 miles of barbed wire, eventually to become the stone Berlin Wall erected by the Communist Soviet Union government occupying East Germany. Fittingly, this day became known as Barbed Wire Sunday," writes Bethany Wagner, in her paper *Revisiting Life Behind the Berlin Wall*, published by Azusa Pacific University in 2013.

The Wall was meant to stop East Germans from fleeing to the more prosperous West. Four metres (13 feet) tall, 156 kilometres long, and with a 'death strip' — a mined corridor of land armed with guard towers, barbed wire, and lethal traps — it was one of the Cold War's most potent symbols, a barrier that physically and emotionally divided friends and families. "At least 140 people died at the Berlin Wall between 1961 and 1989 in connection with the GDR's border regime — most were killed by GDR border guards while attempting to escape," as per deutschland.de. Living behind the Berlin Wall, 17 million citizens were subject to a pervasive surveillance system and constant state control, where even the

smallest acts of resistance could lead to dire consequences. The state security service, known as the Stasi, monitored citizens, "used wiretaps, bugged homes, and interviewed friends and family members to suppress any movements of rebellion," documents Wagner. An example of the harsh repression faced by East Germans is the story of Erika Riemann, a teenage girl who suffered terribly at the hands of the state. Riemann was arrested by the Stasi after drawing a bow on the moustache of a portrait of Joseph Stalin — a prank that the government did not find amusing. She was tried in a military court and sentenced to 10 years of hard labour in Siberia. After her arrest, she was taken to the dungeon of an East German castle, where she was subjected to severe interrogation. "Her captors made her sit up straight in a chair for hours on end. If she moved at all, she was slapped. She received nothing to eat and nothing to drink," writes veteran news reporter and editor Jim Willis in his book *Daily Life Behind the Iron Curtain*. Exhausted, she confessed to the charges against her, despite not fully understanding many of them.

Willis recounts stories of people digging tunnels and flying hot air balloons over the Wall. "Escape attempts were carried out by young idealistic college students and graduates... Those involved in creative endeavors such as artists, musicians, and writers were at the forefront of protesting Communism," he writes. In the GDR, access to consumer goods was limited, and the government tightly controlled border movement. Coffee, a national obsession, was especially scarce. From post-war rationing to the 1977 crisis and widespread protests, East Germans demanded real coffee beans but often had to make do with ersatz substitutes. Black markets flourished, and smuggling between East and West became rampant, with East Germans constantly comparing their shortages to the West's easy access to coffee on the global market. In addition to the material deprivations, East Germans suffered from a psychological strain known as 'Wall sickness', deep emotional distress caused by the division of their country and the constant surveillance by the state. Amid strict travel restrictions, the people of East Germany longed to travel the world. Rosy Singh, Associate Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University's Centre for German Studies, says, "The author Friedrich Christian Delius tells the story of an East German's escape plan before the Wall's fall. The protagonist builds a sailing boat and navigates across the Baltic Sea to Denmark, with the ultimate goal of reaching Italy. This journey reflects the intense longing for freedom and the desire to experience the world which was inaccessible to East Germans due to travel restrictions."

The cultural landscape was equally stifling, creative work was censored and everything had to align with the party's vision. This control over personal and professional expression was a core part of the regime's effort to suppress free thought and dissent.

Breaking through the wallAs the



1980s wore on, East Germany's tightly controlled society began to buckle. Economic troubles, combined with the wave of reform spreading through Eastern Europe, catalysed massive protests across the country. By the autumn of 1989, the East German government was on thin ice, its citizens demanding rights that were long withheld. Just days before the wall came down, half a million people had gathered in East Berlin for mass protests, demanding greater freedoms and the right to travel. East German leaders, facing unprecedented unrest, had reluctantly agreed to loosen the border restrictions. However, a bureaucratic error triggered one of the most significant political events of the 20th century — the fall of the Berlin Wall. On the evening of November 9, 1989, after weeks of public pressure and mass demonstrations, East German authorities announced new travel policies. When a government spokesperson, Günter Schabowski, hastily said that the changes were "effective immediately," it triggered an exodus to the border. Bewildered guards, facing the relentless crowd, opened the checkpoints. In the ensuing hours, Berliners flooded across the barrier that had, until moments before, seemed insurmountable. The scenes that followed were filled with emotion and disbelief as families reunited, people climbed over the Wall, and sledgehammers chipped away at the concrete barrier. For those who lived it, the Wall's fall marked a moment of transformation. Kiddy Citny, who famously painted his heart-and-love-themed artwork on the Wall in 1984, saw his act as one of protest. "I wanted to show that East and West Germany can be united, that they belong together," he told deutschland.de. Similarly, Claudia Ulbrich, a choir singer performing during the December 1989 Berlin Celebration Concerts, recalls that time vividly: "It was joy, joy, joy. We celebrated the kind of freedom we could never have imagined," she told the German platform.

A symbol that reshaped the worldThe world watched as the Berlin Wall fell,

recognising the moment as one of hope not just for Germans but for everyone striving against repression. In the years following, countries that had been under Soviet influence found inspiration in the Wall's fall, seeing that change could indeed come. The impact echoed across other nations too — from activists at Tiananmen Square to freedom movements in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and beyond — galvanising a new push for human rights and freedom. Till today, the sale of pieces of the Berlin Wall remains a big business, with souvenirs ranging from small fragments to large segments, attracting buyers worldwide due to their symbolic connection to freedom. berlin wall A piece of the Berlin Wall on the west side of the Ronald Reagan Library (Wikimedia Commons/Ronald Reagan Presidential Library)The long road to reunification

Former German Chancellor Willy Brandt coined one of the most memorable phrases after the fall of the Berlin Wall: "Jedes Teil gehört jetzt zusammen" (That which belongs together now). However, the fall of the Berlin Wall marked the beginning, not the end, of Germany's reunification journey.

While the collapse of the Wall was euphoric, blending two societies with vastly different economies, political systems and daily experiences was no easy feat. West Germany brought the strength of its established economy, while East Germany contributed a citizenry eager for freedom but wary of the changes ahead. While the Berlin Wall's fall marked a historic shift, the process of reunification brought its own set of challenges, especially for East Germans. "Reunification came as a complete surprise for most economists and politicians," says Singh. She notes that perspectives vary: "Liberals call it a peaceful revolution, but leftists argue that the West imposed its system on East Germany." The generally accepted view, though, is that reunification, despite its challenges, was largely peaceful. In the aftermath, East Germany faced a decade of intense upheaval. "After the initial euphoria came the hard realities," Singh said. "

Rs 7 crore pending in dues to Mumbai Police for security provided; I-T dept biggest defaulter

The Mumbai Police, which provides security to some of the key institutions in the city on demand, has been facing an unusual challenge — pending dues of over Rs 7 crore from various government agencies. Data provided by the Mumbai Police in response to a Right to Information query by The Indian Express, shows that at least 14 agencies owe them Rs 7,10,67,252 against security services provided over a period of seven years. As per the list, the Income Tax department is the biggest defaulter, followed by the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The information was accessed by The Indian Express through the Right to Information from the Local Arms III and Local Arms IV of the Mumbai Police. The Income Tax Department has outstanding dues of Rs 4.85 crore for the security availed for various purposes, including raids over the past six years, while the MMRDA is yet to clear a bill of Rs 1.11 crore for bandobast provided in 2017, and the RBI owes Rs 45.71 lakh for services that the central bank opted for between January 2018 and March 2020. The Indian Express reached out to the official spokesperson of CDBT through calls, messages and mails but it did not heed any response. When contacted, the spokesperson of MMRDA refused to comment, while RBI's PRO did not respond. Explaining the process of availing of security services, a senior police officer said that each agency has to write to the Commissioner of Mumbai Police, requesting for security. As per the protocol, the request is forwarded to the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Operation) and on behalf of the Commissioner of Mumbai Police, the DCP conducts an inquiry and, depending on the findings, directs the Local Arms department to arrange the necessary security.

"The DCP operation, in its instruction, gives us the date, time, location and number of personnel to be facilitated to the respective agency and we just follow the orders," an officer said. According to the Mumbai police, the charges for a 12-hour security service of one personnel varies from Rs 5,486 to Rs 13,569, depending on the designation of the personnel from a police constable to an assistant commissioner of police. The rate keeps changing every year, an officer added. Sources within the department stated that the Mumbai police directs payment to be made when security services are utilised. However, these government agencies have not complied. Consequently, despite numerous reminders, RTI data shows that these institutions are yet to settle their outstanding dues. Joint Commissioner of Police S Jaykumar (Administration) said, "We typically require advance payment when providing security for individuals. For institutions, we respond to their requests and then generate a bill afterward. If they fail to make payment, we follow up with reminders." Like the Income Tax, MMRDA and RBI, the General Stamp office in Fort also has an outstanding due of Rs 44.20 lakh, which they have to pay for the bandobast services between August 2019 and July 2024. A senior official from the General Stamp Office, requesting anonymity, said, "The pay-

ment is pending due to some procedural issue because of a query that has been raised by the government's treasury department. The same has been forwarded to the Mumbai Police and as soon as they reply, the bill will be cleared."

The Mumbai Police have also issued bills against General Manager of the Deonar Abattoir, Maharashtra State Council of Examination in Pune, National Sorting Hub near Domestic Airport and National Mineral Development Corporation Limited of 8.25 lakh, Rs 3.05 lakh, Rs 2.69 lakh and Rs 2.02 lakh, respectively, for availing security services for various purposes. When contacted, General Manager of Deonar Abattoir K Pathan said, "I am not aware that there is any amount due with the Mumbai Police, I have been in this office since 2021 and we have not received any reminder from anyone regarding this outstanding payment. Usually they provide security to us to ensure that there is no law and order problem." While the superinten-



dent of National Sorting Hub at the Domestic airport Santosh Kulkarni claimed that they have cleared each and every bill for the security availed of by their department. He said, "We often opt for security from the police force when UPSC examination's

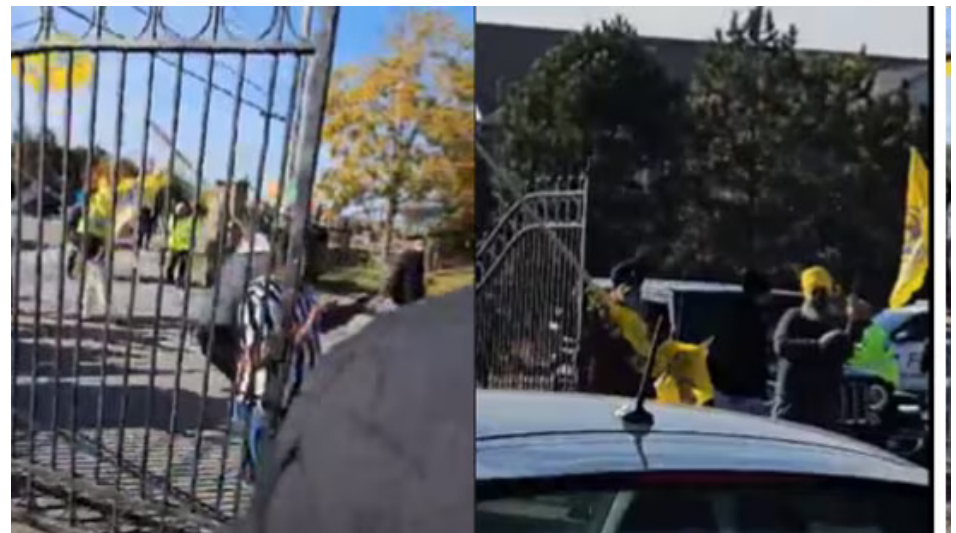
question paper or any other sensitive material is being transported. The Mumbai police recently sent us a reminder of some outstanding bills and in our reply, we have mentioned the date and time of each payment made by our department."

Hindus beaten at Canada temple by Khalistanis, leaders say 'red line crossed'

The recent attack on the Hindu Sabha temple in Canada's Brampton by Khalistani extremists witnessed widespread condemnation by Canadian politicians, including opposition leader Pierre Poilievre, Toronto MP Kevin Vuong and MP Chandra Arya. "Our country's leaders have failed to protect Hindus," Toronto MP said. The Indian government also condemned the attack on Hindus at a temple adding that the Canadian authorities had been requested well in advance to provide strong security measures for these events, which constitute routine consular work. Trudeau's political rival, Poilievre, advocated for the 'right to practice faith in peace' and assured that he would end the environment of chaos in Canada. Sharing a post on X, Poilievre wrote, "Completely unacceptable to see violence targeting worshippers at the Hindu Sabha Mandir in Brampton today." READ | What are Canada's allegations against Amit Shah? "All Canadians should be free to practice their faith in peace. Conservatives condemn this violence unequivocally. I will unite our people and end the chaos," he added. Canada becoming a safe harbour for radicals: Toronto MP

Strongly objecting to such attacks, Kevin Vuong, Toronto MP asserted that "Canada has become a safe harbour for radicals" and asserted that the country's leaders have failed to protect Hindus just like they failed to safeguard Christians and Jewish Canadians. Sharing a post on X, Vuong wrote, "Alarming to see an attack on Hindu Canadians. From Khalistani extremists to terrorist cosplayers, Canada has become a safe harbour for radicals. Our leaders are failing to safeguard Hindus as they have Christians and Jewish Canadians from violence. We all deserve to worship in peace."

Red line has been crossed: MP Arya



Trudeau's political rival, Poilievre, advocated for the 'right to practice faith in peace' and assured that he would end the environment of chaos in Canada.

on Hindu temple attack Canadian Member of Parliament Chandra Arya condemned the violence in a Hindu temple and said that a "red line has been crossed" by Khalistani extremists, highlighting the rise of brazen violent extremism in Canada.

READ | Justin Trudeau visits temple, wears sacred Hindu thread amid escalating India-Canada row Arya shared a video of the attack on X and wrote, "A red line has been crossed by Canadian Khalistani extremists today. The attack by Khalistanis on the Hindu-Canadian devotees inside the premises of the Hindu Sabha temple in Brampton shows how deep and brazen Khalistani violent extremism has become in Canada." Khalistani radicals attack Hindu temple in Canada: Video viral Following the attacks, the Hindu Canadian Foundation, a non-profit organisation working for the

Hindu community in Canada shared a video of the attack on the temple. Video shows women and children being beaten by Khalistani extremists. Sharing a video on X, the Hindu Canadian Foundation wrote, "Hindu Sabha Temple is under attack by #KhalistaniTerrorists #khalistan." "Kids, Women and Men are being attacked. This is all happening under the support of Khalistaani politician sympathizers," the post added. Meanwhile, Canadian PM Justin Trudeau also condemned the attack adding that everyone should have the freedom to practice their faith in peace. Secure your car with trusted Royal Sundaram Auto Insurance. Click Here Read breaking news, latest updates from US, UK, Pakistan and other countries across the world on topics related to US Election, politics, crime, along with national affairs.

Historian William Dalrymple at Idea Exchange: 'Failure of Indian academics to reach out to general audiences has allowed the growth of WhatsApp history'

Historian William Dalrymple on the transformative influence of ancient India, the myth of the Silk Route and why Indians write history books that are unpeopled. This session was moderated by Devyani Onial, National Features Editor. The Golden Road is my own naming of a route that I think was far more important than the much-vaunted overland Silk Road. I don't think many people realise that the Silk Road is not a term that was used in ancient or medieval sources. The first reference to a Silk Road, though disputed, certainly came into use in 1877 with the publication of a set of German geographical books by a man called Baron von Richthofen, who coined in German the phrase Die Seidenstrasse, which means the Silk Road. The idea that there was a sort of superhighway connecting sea to sea across the thin waist of Asia is a myth. It's a myth which obscures a real superhighway, which did exist, and which is becoming clearer and clearer in scholarship particularly over the last 20 years, following a series of excavations at Berenike, on the Red Sea coast of Egypt, and here in India at the Muziris excavations at Pattanam in Kerala. So, the Golden Road is my answer to the Silk Road. It's as much a made-up term as the Silk Road is, but it's a counter-blast, which, for the classical period, is strongly rooted in evidence now of both archaeology and economic history. It also emphasises what we often forget, which is the amazingly enabling place that geography and meteorology have given India in terms of ancient trade.... The Chinese have been very good at weaponising and mobilising this idea of the Silk Road, which is the basis for the Belt and Road Initiative.

There are two things which they've done. One is to project the story of their history in a way that has become very popular and accessible, and it is a naturally romantic story. But they've also been very good at using that idea, projected as an entirely peaceful global trade network in contrast to the militarised European networks of the 18th and 19th century, and building this whole extraordinary Belt and Road Initiative. There have been various talks of doing what has been called a Cotton Road, or a Spice Road, or more recently at the G20, IMEC (India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor), which then got shelved during the Gaza conflict. Why has India been slow to copy it? I don't know, you'd have to ask the government. Devyani Onial: While India hasn't been able to tell their story to the world, do you think Indians tell it to each other a bit too enthusiastically, especially on WhatsApp? Whether it's claiming that cosmetic surgery was available in ancient times or that the flying objects in the epics are evidence that there were planes and drones in ancient India? My personal bugbear is that the study of history in academia entered a long phase from about the '50s through to the beginning of the present century, where academics only talked to themselves, and often did so in deliberately obscure language of the Subaltern Studies Collective and so on...

As a result, you've got the growth of 'WhatsApp history' and 'WhatsApp University.' It was the failure of Indian academics to reach out to general audiences.

It's changing now but there's been a 40-year vacuum for that, which has allowed 'WhatsApp history', plastic surgery, Mahabharata atomic bombs, sky vehicles like helicopters in the Ramayana, and all the rest of it to proliferate... That comes from a frustration that everyone in this country and in the diaspora is aware that there's a great civilisation here, but slightly foggy on the details because no one's writing on them. This book is an attempt to provide a well-researched answer to that question, what was it that India gave the world? What was it that came out of India and influenced the world around it?

Rakesh Sinha: You mentioned scholarly silence. Are you suggesting the Golden Road story was deliberately masked up?

No, I'm not suggesting that for a minute. It was studied in different academic silos so it was never pulled together into a single story. There's a lot of detailed scholarly work being done, and there are, in Delhi, great scholars who've pulled lots of it. But there was a long period when I think that sort of thing was not happening.

Shalini Langer: How did you come up with the whole idea for your podcast Empire and why do you think that it's become so popular? Second, your podcast almost regularly brings up the fact that colonial history is not taught in English and French textbooks. So, what is the awareness of colonial history among the general public?

As a historian, you're very lucky if 100,000, maybe 200,000 people will read your books in five years. Empire is by no means the biggest in the world. We are number two or three in Britain. And yet, in two years, we're reaching audiences now of 880,000 downloads a week. About colonial history, yes, that's absolutely true. The British are taught a very insular curriculum but that's changing now.

Uma Vishnu: Given the subject of the book, I'm sure you have faced accusations of furthering the Hindutva agenda. Was that a concern when you were writing the book?

There is this weird prejudice in this country that anyone who writes about Mughal history is a Marxist, and anyone who writes about ancient India is a member of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh). I'm neither. It is possible to be interested in Mughals without being a Marxist, and it is possible to be interested in ancient Indian history without being a member of the RSS, and to try and study both relatively objectively and factually. This is not a book of Indian history. This is a book of the diffusion of Indian ideas out of India. Obviously, the single most successful Indian idea in the early period was Buddhism. It got as far as Siberia and Mongolia, and most other countries in between. One-third of the book is about Bud-



dhism. There is an extraordinary story to be told about the spread of Sanskrit and Hindu culture to Southeast Asia. We shouldn't be ashamed or surprised or feel the need to press the mute button simply because it's something which appeals to the far Right.

Rinku Ghosh: You have highlighted the cross-fertilisation of ideas, courtesy the Buddhist monastic universities and the exchanges they encouraged among Chinese and other Southeast Asian travellers. Unfortunately, while we talk about the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagara as a seat of a global confluence of cultures, Buddhist history has been glossed over in popular narrative. Yet China has weaponised that as a tool of cultural diplomacy. How can we prevent this appropriation?

The problem is that the Right considers Buddhist and Hindu history as the same. Yet Buddhism is a very, very important part of the story. This month London had two major shows on the Silk Road. One was in the British Library about Dunhuang, called 'A Silk Road Oasis'. And the other was at the British Museum called 'Silk Roads'. Both excellent shows but both almost completely omit India from the narrative. I have always thought that this is the fault of Western scholars, but maybe it's because this story is not being pushed from here... Yet when you go to Bodhi Gaya today, there's not only a lovely statue of Xuanzang, the Chinese monk, there's a whole Chinese-India peace thing happening. This is something that these two countries can talk about sensibly, because there was a great deal of a very amicable to-

and-fro at this period.

Suanshu Khurana: In the process of writing the book, what were the challenges? Do you think that there has been a lack of human stories, which usually jump at us in your other works? For a historian researching the 18th century, there is an almost embarrassing richness of sources. Compared to that, this is a very empty cupboard in terms of biographical detail and you're dealing with archaeology, epigraphy, a lot of very rich art history, which has been one of the main pleasures for me studying this. Nonetheless, amidst this desert, there are odd characters that are well-recorded and have biographical accounts of them... In the end, I think I managed to cover together enough biographical material to make this a readable account.

Harish Damodaran: Were maritime engagements and seafaring looked down upon? Generally crossing the seas was not considered good in Hinduism. Is that one of the reasons Buddhism eventually got exported out?

There's a great deal of scholarly debate about it. The fact that the Buddhists didn't discourage sea travel, that allowed Buddhist traders to make an early start, but quite early on, you find Hindu traders joining them. So by the time you've got the Mekong, running down the middle of Cambodia, it seems to have been treated not as foreign territory, as part of, if you want to call, a greater India. It's there in various Puranas and in the laws of Manu, this prohibition about crossing the seas, but large numbers of people seem to have gotten around it one way or another.

India could not create mass prosperity. It's not too late

The last 50 years offer an exciting puzzle to economic historians: Why did an autocracy like China deliver strong wage growth but weak public market shareholder returns (about minus 13 per cent in the last 20 years), while a democracy like India delivered strong public market shareholder returns (about 1,300 per cent in the last 20 years) but weak wage growth? India's challenges arise from our stock of jobs since 1947 and the flow of jobs since 1991. Changing our future requires more manufacturing jobs and high-productivity firms. India has made remarkable progress since 1947; we have created the world's largest democracy on the infertile soil of a hierarchical society, raised life expectancy from 31 to 68 years, and become a middle-income country. However, our social justice ambitions — social mobility is 40 per cent lower in middle-income countries than in high-income countries — confront the long odds of history. World Bank's Chief Economist Indermit Gill suggests that the 108 middle-income countries currently aiming to reach high-income status must recognise the planet's recent record is dismal; the 34 middle-income economies that transitioned to high-income status since 1990 had only 250 million people (the population of UP).

India's challenge of employed poverty (not unemployment) arises from our labour force stock: Only 11 per cent are in manufacturing, 14 per cent in construction, 45 per cent in agriculture, and 30 per cent in services. Tragically, most farmers dwell in the self-exploitation of (informal) self-employment. The only sustainable and scalable way to help farmers is to have fewer of them; we don't want to live in China but greatly respect their achievement of moving millions of people off farms into factories.

Let's reverse our gaze: Why hasn't India moved millions from farms to factories since 1991? It's surely not a shortage of three factors of production — land (every Indian household could get half an acre and fit in Rajasthan and Haryana), labour (30 per cent employed poverty) or capital (50 per cent of our FDI since 1947 has come in the last five years). It's not culture; the Hindu growth rate went from 2 per cent to 7 per cent with the same population. It's not law and order; we can do better, but peace is the norm for most citizens, employers and investors. It's not financialisation; our banks and equity markets are healthier than ever. It's not macro-economic stability; it matters, but monetary and fiscal policy may have been mislabeled as solutions to productivity. India will not get to the 45 per cent peaks of the labour force in manufacturing of developed countries, but we should target 25 per cent by 2035 (about a one percentage point increase per year). Economics suggests two more suspects: Infrastructure and skills. But both have shifted from being a dagger in the heart to a thorn in the flesh in recent years. Infrastructure, because of massive investments. Skills, for three reasons. First, the usually depressing ASER report now suggests we have more kids in school, with more years of schooling and better learn-



ing outcomes than ever. Second, NEP 2020 is a wonderful 15-year higher education roadmap that lifts the apartheid against employability, and embraces holistic learning. And finally, as demonstrated by the eight-week training required for cell phone assembly workers, the first 25 million people needed in factories require repair, not preparation. These workers are already available, and ongoing human capital reforms will remove the quality constraints for the next hiring surge.

Regulatory cholesterol — excessive employer compliance, filings, changes and criminalisation — is the most potent suspect for our missing factories. This cholesterol doesn't hurt big companies but sabotages productivity for small firms (flying under the radar) or informal ones (those with a sense of humour about the rule of law). Attracting factories requires a policy shift from the bird's eye to the worm's eye view of the daily life of employers. Change has begun with proposals like Jan Vishwas 2.0, Enterprise Digilocker, and the National Open Compliance Grid (architected as Digital Public Infrastructure). It should be followed up by adopting labour codes, creating competition for social security monopolies like EPF and ESI, and reducing the irrational statutory gap between gross (chitthi waali) and net (haath waali) salaries for low-wage employees.

India's domestic consumption is an asset; our fastest-growing jobs today are in services like sales, customer service and logistics. China is now criticised for neglecting domestic consumption at the altars of investment and exports. However, manufacturing matters and Make in India should be complemented by smart policy for Make for India. Automobile companies have built scale, supply chains and exports because of the level playing field for domestic and foreign companies to sell in India. If we had

allowed duty-free imports, auto manufacturers in Thailand, China, and Vietnam would have serviced our car demand. Tata persisted in setting up a steel plant in Odisha for 10 years, but Posco gave up and shifted to lobbying to ship steel from Korea under an FTA. This case for the strategic use of tariffs is not export pessimism or subsidising incompetence; India's trade-to-GDP ratio in 1970, 1980 and 1990 was sinfully low at 7 per cent, 14 per cent and 15 per cent respectively. But that number is 50 per cent today. Small countries like Singapore, Thailand, and Hungary have 336 per cent, 133 per cent, and 186 per cent, but they have no choice. However, countries with large domestic markets must use smart policy packages, including tariffs, non-tariff barriers and incentives, while remaining aware that input tariff levels must keep exports competitive. Using policy

nudges that staple market access to domestic production will create learning-by-doing, technology transfer and manager alumni effect, which raise economic complexity, value addition, and wages. Early results in electronic assembly confirm that labour-intensive manufacturing is not a missing gene in India but a latent one. China forced its citizens to choose between their wallets and freedoms.

Our manufacturing employment can rise to 18-20 per cent of workers in the next decade. India missed her tryst with destiny despite building the world's largest democracy because she didn't create mass prosperity. But she has made a new appointment which she will keep through high-productivity firms and factories. The writers are co-founders of Teamlease Services and Ashoka University respectively

Hyundai Motor offers first look of upcoming Ioniq 9 electric SUV

Seoul: Hyundai Motor on Wednesday unveiled a teaser image of its upcoming all-electric Ioniq 9 sports utility vehicle, highlighting its massive-yet-sleek exterior design. The teaser for the three-row electric SUV presents the overall silhouette and the model's elongated wheelbase. Hyundai said the Ioniq 9 draws inspiration from the sleek exteriors and cozy interiors of boats, reports Yonhap news agency.

The Ioniq 9 symbolises the largest vehicle class in Hyundai Motor's Ioniq lineup and the company's inaugural venture into the realm of large electric SUV models. Hyundai plans to fully unveil the design and features of the Ioniq 9 at a glo-

bal showcase event next month. Meanwhile, Hyundai Motor reached a major milestone of 100 million units in global cumulative production, an achievement accomplished in 57 years since the company's foundation. The company said it delivered its 100 millionth and first vehicle, an Ioniq 5, directly to a customer. The vehicle rolled off the final inspection conveyor belt at the plant's shipping centre during a handover ceremony.

"Reaching global cumulative production of 100 million vehicles is a meaningful milestone that was possible thanks to our customers around the world who have chosen and supported Hyundai Motor since the very beginning."