

C-section crisis in Telangana set to get worse

Hyderabad: The decision by the Congress-led State government to curtail major initiatives aimed at encouraging maternal and child health is threatening to cast a long shadow over C-sections in Telangana State. A year into its term, the Congress-led State government appears to be devoid of any concrete ideas on how to address the crisis of cesarean deliveries in Telangana State. Given the total lack of public health advocacy regarding cesarean sections, senior health officials who were earlier involved in similar initiatives, express concern that the extremely high rates of Cesarean sections in Telangana State could persist, and may even worsen in the coming years.

A concerted multi-pronged effort, including consistent massive awareness programs to regulate C-sections, which were implemented under the previous BRS regime, is yet to be taken-up in Telangana State.

The gradual erosion of unique mother

and child centric initiatives, such as KCR Kits, nutritional supplementation for pregnant women with anaemia, the establishment of more milk banks in addition to the existing one at Niloufer Hospital and conducting awareness programs by involving different cross-section of the society, are expected to further exacerbate the situation of cesarean sections in Telangana State, senior doctors familiar with the issue said.

To encourage normal deliveries, the earlier BRS government had held multiple meetings with private health care establishments to encourage them to avoid unnecessary C-sections and take-up more normal deliveries. Similar efforts are totally absent in the present Congress-led State government, even after a year in power.

In the last decade, there was a concerted effort to utilize services of midwives to ensure safe and enjoyable normal deliveries for pregnant women in Government hospitals. "Some of these initiatives are still



there. However, what is lacking is total lack of advocacy and specific focus to reduce the

C-sections in Telangana State," public health officials summed it up.

Sigmund Freud and some of his popular theories



Hyderabad: Anyone, who has even an iota of curiosity about psychology, must have heard about or spent a fair chance of time learning about Sigmund Freud and his popular and controversial theories on the mind and the way it works, which was also known as Freudian psychoanalysis, the school of thought created by this famous scientist. Freud was born in Frieberg, Moravia (today's Czech Republic) in 1856, but his family moved to Vienna where he went to school, graduated, got married, and became a doctor. After developing psychoanalysis, Freud became one of the most influential and controversial thinkers of the 20th century. Some of his theories

Sigmund Freud's theories suggest that unconscious memories, thoughts, and urges influence human behaviour. Freud argued

that human behaviour is largely determined by unconscious motivations that stem from childhood experiences, specifically encounters with love, loss, sexuality, and death, and complex emotional attitudes toward parents and siblings. One of Freud's greatest contributions was talk therapy, the notion that simply talking about problems can help alleviate them. The unconscious mind played a vital role in all of Freud's theories, and he considered dreams to be one of the key ways to look into what lies outside humans' conscious awareness. When working with a client, he would focus on a particular dream symbol, and then use it to see what other thoughts and images came to the client's mind. He believed that by examining dreams, he could see how the unconscious mind and conscious awareness work. That's why, he

named the dreams 'the royal road to the unconscious.' In his work 'The Interpretation of Dreams' Freud analysed dreams based on unconscious desires and experiences. One of his popular theories deals with defence mechanisms, where he said that when someone seems unwilling to face a painful truth, they might be accused of being in 'denial mode.' Similarly, if they try to look for a logical explanation for unacceptable behaviour, they are said to be 'rationalising.' For instance, rationalisation for smoking includes: 'One cigarette won't hurt

me' or 'If I quit, I'll just gain weight.' He felt that denial and rationalisation represent tactics that the mind uses to protect itself from anxiety. However, his craziest ideas, which garnered much criticism during his lifetime and after death, were the 'Oedipus Complex' and the 'Electra Complex' where he suggested that we're all repressing our true desires to have sex with our parents. While many psychologists feel that his ideas were hopelessly vague and just words, which can't be tested scientifically, for some, the man was an apparent genius.

Is Alkaline water worth the hype? Find out here

Hyderabad: Alkaline water is water that has a higher pH level than regular tap water, typically ranging from 8 to 9.5 (with 7 being neutral). The pH scale measures how acidic or alkaline a substance is, with values below 7 being acidic and values above 7 being alkaline.

Alkaline water usually gets its higher pH from dissolved minerals like calcium, magnesium, and potassium, which are naturally present in some water sources. It can also be produced through electrolysis, a process that uses an electrical charge to separate water into acidic and alkaline components, often resulting in water with a higher mineral content. History of Alkaline water

For centuries, people have been interested in drinking water that has a higher pH. Throughout history, many have turned to natural sources like springs, believing they

offered health benefits. In fact, ancient Greeks and Romans often drank from mineral springs, which typically had a higher pH than ordinary tap water.

However, the modern interest in alkaline water really picked up in the 20th century when scientists began to take a closer look at the pH levels in drinking water. The wellness community became particularly enthusiastic about alkaline water, with many suggesting that water with a higher pH could help balance acidity in the body and support overall health. In the 1960s, a Japanese researcher, Dr. Hayashi, started examining the health benefits of alkaline water. He discovered that water with a higher pH, when filtered through a unique electrolysis process, might offer various health improvements. This discovery fueled more curiosity about alkaline water, especially in Asia

India's 'steel frame' does need a check

India's governance challenges demand urgent reforms to modernise its bureaucracy. The country's economic story, which is marked by significant strides in growth and innovation, is juxtaposed with enduring issues of income inequality, underinvestment in critical sectors, and bureaucratic inefficiency. Central to this narrative is the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), which has for long held sway over the nation's governance. However, persistent challenges within the IAS and the wider bureaucracy have highlighted the urgent need for administrative reforms to unlock India's true economic potential. The legacy and challenges of the IAS

The IAS, often called India's "steel frame", traces its origins to the colonial Indian Civil Service (ICS). Post-Independence, it became the backbone of India's administrative machinery, with officers occupying pivotal roles in governance. Yet, this legacy has not been without its cracks. Political interference, lack of specialisation, and outdated personnel practices have gradually eroded its effectiveness. One of the pressing issues is the politicisation of the IAS. Frequent transfers, suspensions, and promotions influenced by political loyalty rather than merit, have undermined morale and professionalism. Officers often struggle to develop domain expertise due to frequent rotations across departments, preventing them from becoming effective policy specialists in an increasingly complex governance landscape.

Corruption and inefficiency plague the bureaucracy further. According to the World Bank's measure of government effectiveness, India ranks only moderately, reflecting the poor quality of policy implementation and administrative independence. Without reform, these systemic inefficiencies threaten to stymie India's economic growth and governance objectives. Executive-led governance in India, characterised by centralised decision-making, has yielded mixed results. While it has facilitated rapid economic reforms and infrastructure development, it has also led to bottlenecks in policy implementation and a lack of accountability. The centralised power structure often sidelines bureaucrats' insights and expertise, reducing their ability to act as effective policy executors.

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the government has attempted to address some of these shortcomings by curbing politicised transfers and introducing measures to enhance bureaucratic accountability. However, critics argue that centralising power in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) risks undermining the autonomy of senior bureaucrats, leading to further disempowerment of the IAS. The need for administrative reforms in India is not new. Since Independence, over 50 commissions and committees have been tasked with reimagining the country's administrative apparatus. The First Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) in 1966 and subsequent commissions, have consistently

emphasised the need for specialisation, accountability, and merit-based promotions within the bureaucracy. The Second ARC, set up in 2005, laid out a blueprint for administrative reforms. It included recommendations for lowering the permissible age of entry into the civil services, introducing performance-based promotions and lateral entry, and establishing safeguards against arbitrary transfers. However, many of these recommendations remain unimplemented, stalled by bureaucratic inertia and political resistance.

Government's push for reform Recognising the limitations of the IAS-centric administrative model, the Modi government has sought to diversify governance by introducing lateral entry into senior bureaucratic positions. This move is aimed at bringing domain experts from the private sector and other government services into key policymaking roles, infusing fresh perspectives and specialised knowledge. Since 2018, the central government has pursued lateral recruitment to bring individuals with specialised knowledge and domain expertise into specific assignments. By 2023, this initiative saw the appointment of 57 officers, many of whom were drawn from the private sector, reflecting a deliberate effort to infuse fresh talent and perspectives into governance. The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) recently advertised 45 posts for lateral entry, including positions for Joint Secretaries and Directors across various ministries. This shift has disrupted the IAS's traditional dominance, with only 33% of Joint Secretaries at the Centre now belonging to the IAS, compared to near-total dominance a decade ago. However, the lateral entry initiative has faced resistance. Critics, including retired civil servants, argue that it could undermine incumbent morale and distort promotion incentives. Opposition parties have also voiced concern about the lack of reservation provisions for marginalised groups in these appointments. The Modi government's recent U-turn on lateral entry appointments, reportedly due to political pressure from political allies, underscores the contentious nature of this reform.

The U.S.'s proposed Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), under U.S. President-elect Donald Trump, offers an intriguing model for reforming India's administrative apparatus. DOGE aims to streamline government operations, reduce inefficiency, and eliminate redundant agencies, all while leveraging the expertise of leaders such as Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy. DOGE's focus on cutting wasteful expenditures and introducing accountability mechanisms resonates with the challenges faced by the Indian bureaucracy. A similar advisory body in India could help identify inefficiencies within the civil service, promote data-driven decision-making, and develop metrics to assess bureaucratic performance. A time-bound commission, such as the DOGE's expiration date tied to the U.S. semi-quintennial, could also ensure that reform initiatives remain focused and actionable. Challenges to reform Reforming India's bureaucracy is no

small task. Despite its flaws, the IAS remains deeply entrenched in the country's governance structure. Proposals for lateral entry, performance-based promotions, and specialised training often face resistance from within the service, where seniority-based progression and generalist approaches are deeply institutionalised. Political interference further complicates reform efforts. Proposals such as the Civil Services Standards, Performance, and Accountability Bill (2010), which sought to protect bureaucrats from arbitrary transfers, have languished in legislative limbo. Even judicial interventions, such as the Supreme Court of India's directive to establish civil services boards in 2013, have had limited impact due

to lack of enforcement. A multifaceted approach to administrative reform is vital to address the challenges of India's bureaucracy. Recruitment must prioritise merit and domain expertise, with promotions tied to measurable performance rather than seniority. Protecting bureaucrats from politically motivated transfers and fostering specialisation in policymaking roles would enhance accountability and efficiency. Further, the government should invest in a robust data infrastructure to track bureaucratic performance, enabling informed decisions on placements, promotions, and policy implementation. Reform is essential for India's economic aspirations and ensuring governance effectively serves its people.

India's reliance on China for critical minerals | Explained

The story so far: The Ministry of Mines in 2023 identified 30 critical minerals deemed essential for the nation's economic development and national security. While the report highlighted India's complete import dependency for 10 critical minerals, it did not fully address a more pressing concern — the extent and nature of dependency on China.

Is China a dominant player?

China's unparalleled dominance in critical minerals stems from its vast resource base and strategic investments across the value chain. As the world's largest mining nation, China has discovered 173 types of minerals, including 13 energy minerals, 59 metallic minerals, and 95 non-metallic minerals. Reserves of nearly 40% of these minerals, particularly copper, lead, zinc, nickel, cobalt, lithium, gallium, germanium, and crystalline graphite, increased significantly last year, supported by an exploration investment of \$19.4 billion. This led to the discovery of 132 new mineral deposits, including 34 large ones. China's dominance extends beyond reserves to include processing and refining, with control over 87% of rare earth processing, 58% of lithium refining, and 68% of silicon processing. Furthermore, China has strategically invested in overseas mining projects and built unparalleled midstream refining capabilities, raising supply chain vulnerabilities for countries including India, the U.S., and EU nations.

What about China's export controls?

When it comes to China's approach to weaponising critical mineral exports, it is strategic and calculated. Beijing primarily targets minerals deemed critical by Western nations and their allies, especially those essential for semiconductors, batteries, and high-tech manufacturing. However, China carefully balances these decisions against two constraining factors: it avoids controlling minerals which heavily depend on Western raw material imports, and it refrains from actions that could disrupt its domestic industrial en-

terprises or export-dependent sectors. This strategic calculus was evident in China's 2010 rare earth embargo against Japan, its recent restrictions on antimony, gallium, and germanium exports, and its December 2023 ban on rare earth extraction and processing technologies.

Is India dependent on China?

An in-depth examination of import data of 30 critical minerals spanning 2019 to 2024 reveals India's acute vulnerability to Chinese supplies, particularly for six critical minerals where dependency exceeds 40%: bismuth (85.6%), lithium (82%), silicon (76%), titanium (50.6%), tellurium (48.8%), and graphite (42.4%). Bismuth, primarily used in pharmaceuticals and chemicals, has few alternative sources, with China maintaining an estimated 80% of global refinery production. Lithium, crucial for EV batteries and energy storage, faces processing bottlenecks, despite alternative raw material sources, as China controls 58% of global refining. Silicon, vital for semiconductors and solar panels, requires sophisticated processing technology that few countries possess. Titanium, essential for aerospace and defence applications, has diversified sources but involves high switching costs. Tellurium, important for solar power and thermoelectric devices, is dominated by China's 60% global production share and finally graphite, indispensable for EV batteries and steel production, faces supply constraints as China controls 67.2% of global output, including battery-grade material.

Why does India rely on imports?

Despite being endowed with significant mineral resources, India's heavy reliance on imports stem from several structural challenges in its mining and processing ecosystem. Many critical minerals are deep-seated, requiring high-risk investments in exploration and mining technologies — a factor that has deterred private sector participation in the absence of adequate incentives and policy support.

A seminar titled "How to Crack Civil Services in the First Attempt: UPSC Master Class" was organized by VINGS Media and G5 Media Group, in association with 21st Century IAS Academy, at G. Pulla Reddy Degree College, Hyderabad, on Monday.

Dr. Bhavani Shankar, Chief Mentor of 21st Century IAS Academy, addressed the students and emphasized the importance of leading a reputable life in society. He highlighted that preparing for the UPSC Civil Services Examination is a pathway to achieving this goal, as civil services provide a unique opportunity to serve the nation.

During his address, Dr. Shankar presented a detailed PowerPoint presentation that covered the types of questions typically asked in the UPSC examination. He urged students not to fear the exam, clarifying that many questions are based on concepts taught in primary classes and dispelling misconceptions about the exam's difficulty. He also noted that graduates from any stream with a minimum of 35% marks are eligible to attempt the examination. The session included an interactive Q&A segment, where students enthusiastically participated and gained valuable insights.

Dr. K. Murali Krishna, Principal of the college, welcomed the participants and shared a brief note on the significance of civil services, encouraging students to make the



most of the seminar. The event concluded with a vote of thanks proposed by Ms.

Deepika. The seminar was attended by Dr. Venkaiah and other faculty members and Mr

Giri Prakash and Mr Ganesh Director and editor of Vings media and G5 media group .

Restoring constitutional order in Manipur



A thorough assessment of the Supreme Court's interventions in Manipur over the last 18 months and the incremental steps it can take to rebuild trust in the rule of law is at least merited.

An editorial titled 'Welcome spotlight: On the Supreme Court directive to Manipur government' published in The Hindu on December 14, 2024, rightly mentions that the executive's reticence and lack of accountability, both at the federal and State levels, for the unrelenting ethnic violence in Manipur has again forced the higher judiciary to intervene. However, we must be circumspect in projecting the Supreme Court as a benevolent institutional actor that has dutifully responded with alacrity matched by requisite conviction, and concern to consistently hold the executive to account. A thorough assessment of the Supreme Court's interventions in Manipur over the last 18 months and the incremental steps it can take to rebuild trust

in the rule of law is at least merited. In general, we can witness a gradual slide towards institutional dereliction, complacency, and apathy that is unbecoming of a Constitutional Court meant for all Indians. This is evident from the fact that, except for the last hearing on December 9, where it sought details of destroyed and encroached properties, the court did not hold any effective hearings or pass corresponding orders in 2024.

Throughout this year, the main batch of petitions on Manipur was heard only six times. In other words, the court functioned as if its writ jurisdiction had ceased to extend to Manipur, even as 2024 saw some of the bloodiest phases of violence and gruesome killing of innocent victims belonging to

both warring ethnic communities. Adding to this are the continuation of various events that emerged on or after May 3, 2023, and are unprecedented in the life of our republic. The list of illustrations is lengthy and extensive — the demographic and geographical separation of the State and its enforcement through a militarised buffer zone, the State's complete surrender over the monopoly of violence and law and order to armed militant groups, and the administration of an illegal, hateful ethno-cultural oath to legislators by the Arambai Tenggol.

On some occasions, the Supreme Court did respond, especially when it took suo moto cognisance after a video depicting tribal women being sexually assaulted and paraded naked by a mob went viral on social media. But its responses were episodic across several months in 2023, only to remain largely absent in 2024. This is evident as magisterial courts in Assam, to whom the Supreme Court had given charge of pre-trial procedures, await its directions to take cognisance of the chargesheets filed and begin the trial. For instance, the trial is yet to begin in the case of the sexual assault and naked parade of two tribal women, even though the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had filed chargesheets against six accused persons, including a juvenile, in October 2023. In an order dated August 7, 2023, the Supreme Court had directed: the formation of a committee of three retired judges, led by Justice Gita Mittal, to look into all matters of relief and rehabilitation; the constitution of 42 Special Investigation Teams (SITs) in six groups based on the crimes, comprising CBI officers drawn from cadres/States and headed by a retired Director-General of Police. By all accounts, the functioning of the former has been reduced to a mechanical, bureaucratic ritual of filing occasional reports. Several tribal student organisations have since also filed separate pleas before the Supreme Court for relocating displaced students to other universities and professional institutes.

Simultaneously, a report in The Hindu (December 18, 2024) stated that chargesheets for only 6% (192 cases) out of 3,023 registered cases have been filed by the SIT till November 20, 2024. It remains unclear how much of the structure envisioned for the SITs by the Supreme Court is still intact, as publicly available information suggests that multiple IPS officers on deputation to the SITs from Haryana, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, and Delhi have either sought repatriation or have already been repatriated back to their home cadres. Crucial measures

These directions, initially viewed with a high degree of optimism, have overwhelmingly failed to instill any sense of justice among the people of Manipur or arrest their feelings of institutional neglect and the complete erosion of the rule of law. Now that the Supreme Court appears to have turned its attention back to Manipur, it must undertake the following measures to provide the State with a much-needed healing touch. First, given the volatile situation in Manipur, inimical to a fair criminal justice system, the trials of cases investigated by the SITs should be transferred forthwith outside Manipur, and the appropriate trial courts should be allowed to take cognisance of chargesheets already filed. Second, the SITs should be directed to fill the existing informational vacuum and provide timely updates to petitioners and the families of deceased victims about the progress of the investigations and trials. Thirdly, considering the enormity of multi-faceted issues arising from the conflict in Manipur that persist and are likely to continue due to the sharp governance deficit, a bipartisan High Powered Commission comprising eminent persons, including members from both conflicting communities, should be constituted. This commission, in turn, be directed to report its findings directly to a Special Bench of the Supreme Court, which should be given the task of exclusively hearing cases related to the ethnic violence in Manipur.

9th Nizam Raunaq Yar Khan Launches Anita Advani's Memoir "The Endearingly Wicked Ways of Rajesh Khanna" on His Birth Anniversary

Hyderabad: In a poignant celebration of love and legacy, Anita Advani launched her memoir titled "The Endearingly Wicked Ways of Rajesh Khanna," dedicated to Bollywood's legendary superstar Rajesh Khanna, during a heartwarming ceremony at the Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad. The event coincided with Khanna's birth anniversary, making it a fitting tribute to the iconic actor who ruled the silver screen. The book was launched by the hands of esteemed Highness Raunaq Yar Khan, the 9th Nizam of the Asaf Jahi Dynasty, who graced the event as the chief guest too. His presence underscored the cultural significance of the event, which celebrated both Khanna's cinematic brilliance and the emotional & committed journey shared between the late supersrar and Anita Advani. Accompanying the book launch was an enchanting Urdu Musical Mushaira, amplifying the cultural richness of the occasion and inviting guests to revel in the poignant poetry inspired by love, loss, and nostalgia.

Anita Advani, who shared the last eleven years of Rajesh Khanna's life in a live-in relationship akin & as sacred as a marriage, spoke candidly about her motivations for writing the memoir. "This is my first book, and I lived every moment with Rajesh in his final days," she shared. "I began writing this book four years ago, and today we kick off a series of launches from Hyderabad—next, we have plans for Mumbai and Delhi. Hope i have Nawab Raunaq with me there too" The memoir aims to offer an intimate glimpse into the life of an actor who was more than just a star; he was a phenomenon who touched countless lives. Highness Raunaq Yar Khan expressed his admiration for Khanna, stating, "The only



actor I truly connected with through cinema is Mr. Rajesh Khanna. I am glad to be a part of this book launch celebrating his legacy." "The Endearingly Wicked Ways of Rajesh Khanna" is not just a memoir; it is a

heartfelt chronicle that celebrates a legendary actor's life and the deep bond he shared with a woman who stood by him until the very end. The event marked the beginning of a beautiful journey through the pages of nos-

talgia, emotion, and the enduring presence of Rajesh Khanna in the hearts of Bollywood fans and admirers alike. The book sums up his life in the most intimate recollection of his life till the very end.

Hyderabad's Biggest New Year Celebration Unveiled: Always Events & SV Productions Launch Event Poster Featuring Star-Studded Lineup!

Hyderabad: In anticipation of the most awaited New Year's Eve event in the city, Always Events and SV Productions proudly announced their grand celebration at Novotel on December 31st. The poster for this spectacular occasion was unveiled in a lively ceremony held at Novotel, with well-known anchor Ravi and actress Soumya Janu gracing the stage alongside event organizers Mr. Sumanth and Mr. Vinod. This year's New Year's Eve gathering promises to be the largest and most glamorous celebration that Hyderabad has to offer, a perfect way to spread joy among your loved ones. Attendees can look forward to an evening filled with electrifying performances, vibrant attractions, and unforgettable memories.

***Event Highlights*:**

- ***Nye 2025 with Sreeleela Heroine*:** A special guest appearance by the sensational Dancing Queen, Sree Leela! - ***NIRAVAL LIVE BAND*:** Experience a mesmerizing live performance showcasing diverse musical genres. - ***Dance Performances*:** Enjoy dynamic dance acts that blend classical and contemporary styles. - ***Bollywood DJ*:** Get ready to dance to the latest hits with a high-energy Bollywood DJ set. - ***Charismatic Emcee*:** A dynamic host



will keep the energy high and audiences engaged throughout the night. - ***Magic Show*:** Be captivated by awe-inspiring illusions and tricks that will leave everyone amazed. - ***Kids Zone*:** A dedicated space filled with fun activities to keep the little ones entertained. - ***Fashion Show*:** Witness a dazzling showcase of the latest trends and styles. -

***Unlimited Food & Premium Beverages*:** Delight in a lavish selection of gourmet food and top-tier drinks. - ***New Year Countdown*:** Join in a thrilling countdown to welcome the New Year with an exciting fireworks display. - ***Special SFX*:**

Enjoy cutting-edge special effects that will create a visually stunning atmosphere. -

***Tattoo & Photo Booth*:** Capture memories with fun and interactive experiences. - ***Celebrity Visit*:** Anticipate a high-profile celebrity appearance to elevate the event's prestige. Join us as we celebrate the arrival of 2025 in style and splendour at Novotel. Get ready for a night filled with laughter, dance, and magic!

Farmers' Unions Claim A Successful Punjab Bandh



Chandigarh (JAG MOHAN THAKEN), December 30: The farmer leaders have claimed that the Punjab Bandh, on Monday, called by the two organisations of Punjab, the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha and Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) has remained a successful event. It is pertinent to mention that farmers' unions in Punjab had announced a statewide shutdown named as 'Punjab Bandh' on Monday from 7 am to 4 pm, amid their ongoing protest at Khanauri border, where the farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal is on fast unto death since November 26. As claimed by the farmer unions farmers blocked roads at many places across Punjab on Monday as part of their bandh call, affecting the commuter traffic in several areas. The Bharatiya Kisan Union Ekta (Dakoanda) led by Manjit Singh Dhaner has also raised farmers' voice for their rightful demands by blocking roads at dozens of places in Punjab Monday. Giving information to the press about this, the state president of the organization Manjit Singh Dhaner, senior vice president Gurdeep Singh Rampura and general secretary Harnek Singh Mehma said that the hunger strike of farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal is being deliberately neglected by the Centre and the Punjab government. During today's protest, the organization demanded that considering the health of Jagjit Singh Dallewal, the central government should start talks immediately, stop the repression of farmers trying to go to Delhi and accept other demands of farmers including MSP. During the protests, the leaders strongly criticized the draft National Agricultural

Marketing Policy sent by the central government to the states and demanded its cancellation. The United Kisan Morcha has announced plans to hold a Visal Kisan Conference at Tohana city of Haryana on 04 January 2025 to achieve the remaining demands against the National Agricultural Marketing Policy. Bharatiya Kisan Union Ekta Dakoanda will participate in this Kisan Conference with full strength.

Angrej Singh Bhadour a farmer leader of Punjab, in a press release informed that a massive Kisan protest is being held by the United Kisan Morcha Punjab on 09 January 2025 at Moga against the National Agricultural Marketing Policy, to enact a law for farmers' debt relief, guarantee of purchase of all crops at MSP and to implement the remaining demands of the Delhi movement. Senior Congress leader and Leader of the Opposition, Partap Singh Bajwa, has strongly criticized the Bhagwant Mann-led AAP government for its mishandling of the ongoing farmers' movement, accusing it of betraying Punjab's agrarian community and colluding with the BJP to undermine the state's proud legacy. "The farmers of Punjab have once again demonstrated their unity and resolve by making today's bandh (shutdown) a historic success," Bajwa said. "This movement underscores the legitimacy of their demands and the failure of both the AAP-led Punjab government and the BJP-led central government to address their concerns. Farmers are, and will always be, the backbone of our nation." Bajwa expressed grave concern over the ongoing hunger strike of farmer leader

Jagjit Singh Dallewal, which has now entered its 35th day. He underscored the farmers' key demand for an assured Minimum Support Price (MSP) for all crops, calling it essential to protect their livelihoods. Bajwa accused the AAP government of ignoring this critical issue and instead working with the BJP to undermine the farmers' peaceful agitation. "Reports of a significant police force being deployed at Patiala Police Lines are deeply troubling," Bajwa said. "Why has such a force been assembled? Is this preparation to intimidate or harm peaceful protesters? Let me be clear—if the Punjab Police uses any force and farmers are injured or harmed in any way, the responsibility will lie squarely on Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann. This will be an unforgivable act of betrayal against the very people who elected him." Bajwa also questioned Mann's inaction at the national

level. "Why hasn't Bhagwant Mann sought time from the Prime Minister or the Home Minister to resolve this urgent matter? Why is he leaving it to bureaucrats and police officials instead of taking the lead? Farmers' demands, especially for MSP, are not just state issues—they require national-level intervention," he added. In his closing remarks, Bajwa issued a stern warning: "Punjab's farmers and their demands for MSP cannot be ignored or suppressed. The people of Punjab will not tolerate betrayal, whether from the BJP or the AAP government. Both parties must understand that Punjab's voice and its farmers' rights cannot be silenced." He urged the government to immediately meet the farmers' demands, refrain from using force against peaceful protesters, and protect Punjab's honour and its agrarian community at all costs.

Congress doing politics over death of Manmohan Singh, says Kishan Reddy

Hyderabad: Union Coal Minister and State BJP President G Kishan Reddy criticised Congress party for politicising the funeral of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Addressing a press conference here on Monday, Kishan Reddy said the Congress party, which failed to give genuine respect to Singh during his tenure, was now using his name for political gains. "Congress is using Manmohan Singh's funeral for political gains," he said. Coming down heavily on

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, the senior BJP leader accused Rahul Gandhi of doing politics over the death of Singh.

"Rahul Gandhi's act of publicly tearing up an ordinance remains an unprecedented instance of disrespect towards a sitting Prime Minister (Singh). Sonia Gandhi is responsible for all corruptions that took place during the UPA government and Singh," he reminded.

Amit Rohidas Interview | I made a comeback in 2017 because of the HIL

Amit Rohidas has been one of the core players of the Indian men's team for the last five to six years. As the best person for the rushers job during penalty corners in the Indian team, the 31-year-old defender has proved his value time and again. The year 2017 was an important landmark for Amit for he made a strong comeback to the Indian team and has never looked back since. All thanks to HIL where he represented Kalinga Lancers. Lancers went on to win the tournament in 2017. The two-time bronze medallist in Olympics is now getting ready for Hockey India League (HIL) as part of Tamil Nadu Dragons to be held in Ranchi and Rourkela from December 28. "I am a big fan of the HIL because it supported me to come back to the Indian team. After that, I continued. I will try to maintain my fitness and skills which will help me in the future," he told The Hindu in Chennai before starting his training session. Excerpts:

You have completed 200 internationals in the recent friendly against Germany in New Delhi. When you look back, how do you feel?

I was surprised because no one knew and I didn't know either. I knew that the last 200 match was going to be 199. But when I reached the ground, Vikram (pal) (Competition Manager of Hockey India) bhai told me that I was going to score 200. Everyone was shocked including the coaching staff and our teammates. When they told me that I was going to complete 200, I was very happy. Because it is a big thing to play 200 matches for the country. At this level, I am happy that I have completed 200 for the country.

How do you see your career? How have you evolved in the 11 years since you made your Senior International debut in 2013?

Yes. I made my senior debut in 2013. After that, in 2014, my last World League Grand Final was in January. After that, I had a three-year break. I made a comeback in 2017, thanks to the Hockey India League. Otherwise, I don't know where I would be today. I am a big fan of the Hockey India League because it supported me to come back to the Indian team. After that, I continued. I will try to maintain my fitness and skills which will help me in the future.

You were out of the team for three years. Were you injured or out of form?

I didn't have an injury. It's ups and downs any sportsperson faces. You learn a lot from that. I don't know why I was out. But I continued my hard work. I made a comeback in 2017 because of the HIL.

What improvements did you make in 2017?

I continued to focus on my basics. I maintained my fitness. You can make a comeback if you have the age. Otherwise, it's difficult. I played in HIL and the department tournaments. If you don't maintain your fitness, you can't do anything.

How was the three years being out of the Indian team?

The three years were a difficult time. It's difficult to make a comeback. My family supported me a lot. They didn't let me down. They told me to believe in myself and work hard.

Any changes you made in your game

to make a strong comeback?

I was trying to give my 100% in my basics. I was getting results from that. We (Kalinga Lancers) won the HIL.

What do you think about the Tamil Nadu Dragons team in the HIL?

I feel proud. I am happy that the Dragons team has given me an opportunity. We are a good side. We will work on the plan the coaches have given us.

Jip Janssen was part of the gold medal-winning team in the Netherlands team in the 2024 Paris Olympics. He is a very good defender. There are other good foreign players. How do you feel about that?

Jip Janssen is my good friend. Definitely, ours will be a good combination. We will do well in the HIL. It will be fun to play with them. Odisha won the Senior National men's championships in Chennai recently. In the team, many players hail from Sundergarh where you were born. We (Odisha) have been working hard for many years. We won the bronze medal in 2016 in the 5-a-side Senior Men's Nationals. We were hoping to win the gold medal and very glad that we got it this time. We put in a lot of effort. The boys played well. You won a bronze medal under head coach Graham Reid in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics & again a bronze with Craig Fulton at Paris. Every coach has a different style of playing. Fulton was both an attacking and defensive coach. If we focus on attacking, we are not paying attention to the defence. If we are not paying attention to the defence, we might concede a goal. Fulton saw both parts equally. Reid was different. But he also had both attacking and defensive structures. Both coaches were similar in many ways.

How do you see India's defensive structure and how did you deal with the suspension in the match against Great Britain in the quarterfinals?

When I got my red card after 17 minutes, there were 43 minutes left. We worked a lot on that. Especially, when someone gets a card, it is 2 minutes, 5 minutes or 10 minutes. What should be our plan after that? We kept doing that plan. We were getting success. But we saw more. After I got my red card, we could not attack but kept our house safe. Our planning was 100% successful. Do you think that this is the best Indian team in the last decade or so. Winning two back to back medals in Olympics is not easy.

After we won the bronze medal in Paris, we went back to our homes. Everyone had different functions to attend. It was a busy schedule. I could not stay at home for a day. I left in the morning and came back in the evening. After 20 days, there was the Asian Champions Trophy (ACT). We had to manage. But once India called us, we had to come. We could not leave. At ACT, we had six senior players and the remaining were juniors. We were guiding the new players to play with a free mind. There is no pressure on us.

Will HIL be a selection of sorts for the FIH Pro League?

I think the selectors will select the team from HIL.

Are there any areas of improvement in the Indian team?



"I am happy that the Dragons team has given me an opportunity. We are a good side. We will work on the plan the coaches have given us"

There has been a lot of improvement. From the facilities to equipments, there has been improvement in everything. Gradually, the team's performance has improved. Hockey India, the Government of Odisha, and Sports Authority of India have worked hard. Now, you can see the improvement. There will be more improvement. We will play HIL and the players will get better. That's the main target of HIL.

In the Paris Olympics, the conversion rate of penalty corners has been quite low. Is it because the rushers and overall defence have got better?

For example, if I am the first usher, the opponent has to do all the analysis. They have to watch our videos. For that, we are working hard. The opponent also is working hard. Sometimes, their plan is successful and sometimes not successful. This happens in a game. Sometimes, our drag flicker scores a good goal and sometimes not. If he doesn't score a goal in penalty corner, then we have to convert it into a field goal. We have to keep this balance. Your coordination with Harmanpreet Singh has been very good. We are in the same core group. We have the same relationship with everyone. We don't lack anything. We talk freely. If you have any problem or if you need anything, we talk to each other. On the ground, the more you are involved with the players, the better your performance is. That's why you can see the medals.

You had your hockey lessons at Panposh Sports Hostel in Rourkela where the HIL will be held. How does it feel?

I joined the hostel in 2004. It will be great because I have played many matches there. All the fans are great.

How come the fans regularly throng to the Stadiums for all International hockey matches in Odisha?

The atmosphere is different there. Hockey is very famous in Sundargarh district. Hockey players come to Odisha to learn, to enjoy and to support.

Host India lost the series to Germany in a shootout. The lessons learnt... Our target was to give more opportunities to younger players and showcase our potential. You must have seen which players were playing, who were resting. If we don't give them (the youngsters) an opportunity, when will they improve? We have to show them a good performance and lead them. We lost the first match, but in the second match, we won but lost in the shootout with a good margin. We have to improve from there. We have to learn from there. We've learnt a lot from there.

What are your personal goals?

I don't look far ahead. Need to take it one match at a time. At the moment, it is HIL.

Who is your inspiration among the defenders?

My inspiration is Dilip Tirkey. I consider him my idol. Among foreigners, it is Germany's Moritz Furst. I played with him in HIL as an opponent and as a teammate. His behaviour, his game sense. I have learnt a lot from him.

Your HIL experience?

For three years, I played with Ranchi Rays and Kalinga Lancers. Among youngsters, all of them who are selected are good. All the teams have youngsters. The system is made so that the youngsters get chances to show their performance. So that they can lead the Indian team in the future. The system and rules are good. It's time to get together as a team and perform well in the HIL. As a senior player, I will share as much as I can. I will treat everyone equally.

Envisioning India as a global skill supplier

Global mega trends, such as demographic transitions, globalisation, technological advancements, and climate change, are significantly altering the demand for, and the supply of, international migrant workers. Among the various facets of such changes, the skills of these workers are assuming centrality in public policy discourse. Reviews of immigration policies of the traditional and major migrant destinations (the U.S., the U.K., Canada, and Gulf Cooperation Council countries) and of the new destinations (Germany, South Korea, Japan, etc.) reveal the increased prioritising of skill-selective and skill-intense immigration. Most of the destination countries recognise that their ability to respond to certain developments, such as an ageing society, digitalisation, declining fertility rates, and the need for economic diversification strategies to tackle the challenging global economic environment, can be met only by welcoming international migrant workers with the relevant skills. Can India rise to the occasion and bridge the global skills gaps? Responding effectively to the skill needs of different destination countries is a complex task. Robust and evidence-based policy interventions are essential to facilitate skill-centred international labour migration outflows from India. Fragmented policy structure

However, India still lacks a comprehensive policy architecture for international labour mobility. The policy interventions are fragmented and are often not based on evidence. The only data source for annual migrant labour outflows from India is the data on emigration clearances, which covers only those with an educational attainment below matriculation and low skilled workers migrating to 18 select countries. Such data inadequacy stands as a major obstacle in formulating constructive policies.

India's efforts have mostly revolved around bilateral agreements on international labour mobility with different countries covering aspects such as social security, skills, protection, and welfare. These are primarily one-off exercises, not situated within a composite policy framework. Further, there are hardly any evaluations available on the outcomes of these pacts and the learnings from them. India must design and operationalise a comprehensive national policy on international labour migration, with skill-centred migration anchored as one of the fundamental pillars. Such a policy should clearly set the road map for the different processes involved in transitioning India as the global skill capital. The way forward. The critical step in this direction is to identify and anticipate the ever-changing skills in demand in select destination countries and the emergent skill gaps across their key sectors and occupations. Organisations such as the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training are actively involved in skill forecasting for European countries using rigorous methodologies. Data and insights obtained from regional and national skill-forecasting exercises, especially for the U.S., the U.K. and Canada, that mostly cover the medium term (2-5 years), can help India respond to skill



needs. This should be supplemented by big data analytics of real-time online job vacancies in destination countries for which India seeks to become the lead supplier of skills. Once this is done, India's capacity to provide the requisite skills must be assessed. This will entail systematic mapping of the country's skill development efforts related to skill mobility and follow-up actions: introducing identified skills and competencies as a part of the curriculum in specific institutions; reorienting skill programmes of India's International Skill Centres to meet the global skill gaps; creating customised short-term skill training geared towards destination countries; and so on. The priority must be to raise the quality of skill development to international standards. This calls for the convergence of the skill qualification systems of India and the destination countries. India also needs a review of the National Skills Qualification Framework to assess its effectiveness in aligning our qualifications with those of the major destination countries.

Considering that contemporary immigration policies encourage temporisation, return migration is gaining prominence in international skilled migration flows. This is another area where India falls short: the optimum utilisation of return migrants' skills is one of the most neglected aspects of the country's migration policies. The best way to effectively reintegrate return migrants is to ensure that the skills and competencies they acquire in the destination countries are accredited by specialised skill certification institutions in those countries so that migrants can transition back effectively to the Indian labour market when they return. Another pressing need is a skill-centred international labour migration information system, encompassing quantitative and qualitative indicators. Such a platform

should regularly collate, generate, analyse, and report information and data on key indicators of skills and migration to enable evidence-based interventions. This will be piv-

otal in fostering skill partnerships between India and the principal destination countries, boosting skill-centred mobility, and improving migration and developmental outcomes.

EC tells Congress: 'No arbitrary deletion or addition of voters in Maharashtra polls'



Congress alleged "arbitrary deletion of voters" and addition of over 10,000 voters in each constituency from the final voter lists. The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Tuesday said there were no "arbitrary additions or deletions of voters" in the recently concluded Maharashtra assembly elections, PTI reported. The EC statement is in response to Congress, which alleged "arbitrary deletion of voters" and addition of over 10,000 voters in each constituency from the final voter lists. "Inexplicable increase in voting percentages from 5 pm to the final voter percentage declared by the EC at 11:30 pm on the day of polling," the grand old party further claimed. The EC explained how the increase in voter turnout from 5 pm to 11:45

PM was "normal", being part of the process of aggregation of voter turnout and how there can be bona fide but inconsequential differences in votes polled and votes counted. 'Impossible to change actual voter turnout data': EC The election body said it is impossible to change actual voter turnout as statutory Form 17C giving details of voter turnout is available with authorised agents of candidates at the time of close of voting at the polling station itself. It said the rule-based process was followed with transparency in Maharashtra electoral roll preparation and there were no irregular pattern in voter deletions in the state. The EC told the Congress that due process was followed, including the participation of Congress representatives in the preparation of electoral rolls.

The View From India newsletter: India's outreach: Around and beyond

Over the last few weeks, we saw heightened Indian engagement in our neighbourhood and beyond, offering important pointers on both continuity and shifts in foreign policy. Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's recent India trip, the leftist leader's first state visit abroad since his staggering rise to power, drew much attention in both capitals. Commentary and analysis of the visit in Sri Lankan media pointed to continuity in bilateral cooperation, especially in areas exploring development, trade and security, cooperation. The Hindu's editorial on President Dissanayake's visit titled 'More of the same', too, highlighted this continuity in relations. It noted that India and Sri Lanka have an opportunity to resolve their differences. "As the coalition that Mr. Dissanayake heads secured a massive mandate across the country in the November 14 parliamentary election, he is in a comfortable position to show a new direction to ties with India," it said.

We also looked at how the visit also offered a much-needed reality check on India's position on Sri Lanka's Tamil question, studying the joint statement issued during the visit, as well as the remarks made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Dissanayake. None referenced the 13th Amendment, the Sri Lankan legislation that bears the imprint of India's historic interest

in, and intervention aimed at, securing the rights of the island's Tamil minority. "Those counting on India would do well to understand that the Tamil question is no more an issue that serves a domestic political compulsion or provides diplomatic leverage to New Delhi. It is time they recognised India's waning interest and influence on the Tamil question. Besides, they must ask if India has any moral standing to ask another country to treat minorities better," the piece argued. Do watch Our Diplomatic Affairs Editor Suhasini Haidar's latest episode of Worldview, where she zooms out and examines if New Delhi is making a subtle, strategic outreach to its south Asian neighbourhood this season? The King of Bhutan, the Presidents of Sri Lanka and Maldives, and the Foreign Minister of Nepal received warm welcomes in New Delhi. What do these high-level visits mean by way of engagement and substance?

All of India's neighbours are opting to balance India and China in different ways. President Dissanayake, for instance, discussed Chinese development partnership, investments and a possible resumption of maritime research with a visiting member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), just a day after returning from India. He is scheduled to travel to Beijing next month. Meanwhile, India and China saw improvement in their own ties as



they "positively affirmed" the outcome of their disengagement agreement at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), as National Security Advisor Ajit Doval met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing for the first boundary talks between the Special Representatives (SR) since 2019. During the talks, Mr. Doval and Mr. Wang said that it was important to "draw from the lessons" of the four-year long military standoff at the LAC, in order to maintain peace and tranquility at the boundary. They also discussed other ties

that were derailed due to the frictions at the boundary, providing "positive directions" for cross-border exchanges, including the resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar pilgrimage from India to Tibet, data sharing on trans-border rivers, and border trade. — Suhasini Haidar reports on the development. The Hindu editorial observed that the meeting was a "milestone" in restoration of ties, while urging India to ensure more transparency in its conversations with Beijing over the future steps in normalising ties.

Igniting entrepreneurship for India's growth

Entrepreneurship is more than a business endeavour—it catalyses innovation, employment, and socio-economic progress. Startups have already created 15 lakh direct and decent jobs, and sectors like manufacturing, healthcare, education, green energy, agriculture, and digital services hold immense potential for further expansion. As a powerful job multiplier, entrepreneurship is critical for meeting India's need for one crore new jobs annually, addressing the brain drain, and leveraging India's demographic dividend for sustainable growth. Entrepreneurship in India must extend beyond Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore to second—and third-tier cities. With a population of 140 crores, there is immense local demand in these cities and their vicinity for entrepreneurs to create businesses with 10, 100, or 1,000 crores of turnover and thus create 50, 500, or even 5,000 decent direct jobs per venture.

Additionally, India's six crore micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) hold vast potential—if just 10% of them added 1-2 jobs annually, they could meet India's need for one crore new jobs each year. Despite its potential, India's entrepreneurs face hurdles such as limited access to finance and markets, knowledge gaps, compliance challenges, and limited expert networks to guide them through hurdles. Technology offers transformative solutions: Fintech platforms provide credit access

without traditional collateral. Learning platforms bridge knowledge gaps with entrepreneurship, financial management, digital marketing courses, etc. Compliance tools automate accounting and tax filings. Public platforms like UPI revolutionise digital payments, empowering micro and rural entrepreneurs to scale their ventures.

Numerous AI-driven platforms enhance operational efficiency and support sustainable solutions, aligning with India's green goals. While automation raises concerns about job displacement, strategic upskilling ensures that entrepreneurs and their workforce remain competitive in an AI-integrated future. To further unlock India's entrepreneurial potential, a National Jobs Platform that integrates solutions for nano, micro, and mainstream entrepreneurs, upskills talent and connects job seekers with employers in an open and accessible system could go a long way in accelerating India's job and economic growth.

This platform would include: National Entrepreneurship Platform with programmes for aspiring and practising entrepreneurs to foster startup and small business growth. National Skills Platform for employability, vocational training for job seekers, and skilling for nano- and micro-entrepreneurs to grow their businesses. National Placement Platform to provide career advisory, place-



ment services, and connections to local employment opportunities. Powered by a mobile-first, video-centric, AI-enabled foundation, this integrated platform would provide a one-stop shop for programmes from the government, the private sector, and foundations addressing entrepreneurs' and workers' immediate and pressing needs through best-in-class offerings. It would democratise

access to entrepreneurial resources, markets, finance, talent, jobs, and upskilling opportunities,

transforming job creation and economic progress—much like Aadhaar and UPI revolutionised identity management and finance. Realising Viksit Bharat by 2047 relies on nurturing entrepreneurship that creates businesses and transforms lives.