

## Lonely tigers in Kawal Reserve: roads, projects keep mates 120 km apart

Adilabad: It is mating season for tigers. But are tigers able to find mates in the forests of erstwhile Adilabad district, which has one of the country's largest reserves, the Kawal Tiger Reserve? Latest instances indicate the answer is a firm 'no'. Forest department sources said a female tiger was searching for a male companion in the forests of Kerameri mandal in Asifabad division for over two months. On the other hand, a male tiger titled K8 was searching for a tigress in the forests of Penchikalpet mandal in Kagaznagar division for quite a long time. They were about 120 kilometres away from each other.

This female and male tiger may not meet each other too, as several road and irrigation projects in between their locations are obstacles. A male tiger, popular as Johnny from Maharashtra recently undertook a marathon journey of over 350 km in a quest to meet a female tiger. He, however, had to return home without realizing his dream.

"Many tigers are facing a similar situation in the forests of the composite Adilabad

district. The population of the tigers will flourish in the forests of the region if male tigers can meet female ones and vice-versa. But they are struggling to reach each other due to national highway, railway and irrigation projects," a wildlife conservationist said. The 41st reserve of the country, Kawal was created with an area of 2,015.44 square km in 2012. The core of the reserve spans 893 sq km, while the buffer zone spans 1,120 sq km. It can accommodate between 20 and 30 tigers thanks to efforts of Forest officials who created sufficient prey base and made the forests safe by reducing dependency of villagers and preventing encroachments. "The core will be able to see the growth of the population of tigers only if a female tiger settles here. Else, male tigers would migrate to the core and go back to their territories if they can not find a female companion in the core. Unlike male tigers, tigresses do not travel long distances. They are not entering the core due to obstacles in between such as road and irrigation projects," the conservationist pointed out. According to Forest officials, around five tigresses gave birth to between 10 and 18



cubs in the forests of Kagaznagar division despite disturbances by way of encroachments from 2015 to 2021. A tigress titled Phalguna, which drifted into the forest of this

region in 2015, had delivered eight cubs in two litters over a period of time. However, no tiger has been successful in nurturing a family here in recent times.

## Telangana calls for enforcing Clause VII of Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal



Hyderabad: The Telangana government has urged the Krishna River Management Board (KRMB) to enforce Clause VII of the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-I (KWDT-I) to ensure proper allocation of water resources. This clause mandates that only 20 percent of water drawn for drinking purposes is considered consumptive use.

Consumptive use of water refers to the portion of water that is consumed during its use and not returned to its source. This includes water that evaporates, is incorpo-

rated into products or crops, or is consumed by people or animals, making it unavailable for further use in the same form. For effective water management, taking consumptive use into consideration is crucial as it helps determine the actual demand and availability of water resources.

The State highlighted that this principle is being followed in other Tribunal awards, and KRMB's delay in implementing this clause has resulted in Telangana losing around 31.952 TMC of water annually and

over 320 TMCs of its water share during the last 10 years. The State has for the last 10 years been insisting on equitable distribution of Krishna water between the two Telugu States. It would be possible only by addressing such issues. In the 17th Board meeting, the KRMB chairman noted the lack of consensus on this issue, suggesting a referral to KWDT-II.

The State officials however emphasize that according to Section 85(8)(a) of the AP Reorganization Act, 2014, KRMB must regulate Krishna water distribution among Andhra Pradesh and Telangana based on Tribunal Awards. Clause VII of KWDT-I clearly states that only 20% of water drawn for drinking purposes should be considered as consumptive use, and thus, reaching a consensus on this matter is unnecessary. The Telangana government highlighted that this principle is

being followed in other Tribunal awards and KRMB's delay in implementing this clause has resulted in Telangana losing considerably. The state is now pressing for the immediate implementation of this provision to rectify the prolonged loss and ensure fair distribution of water resources aligning with inter-state agreements and KWDT-I's final order. The legal and regulatory framework are supportive of the conclusion that only 20% of water drawn for drinking purposes is considered consumptive use, with the remaining 80% expected to return to the water system in various forms. Other tribunals managing water disputes in India, such as the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT), the Godavari Water Disputes Tribunal (GWDT), and the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal (NWDT), also address consumptive use clauses in their orders.

## Rs 10 lakh compensation extended to kin of Asifabad tiger attack victim

Kumram Bheem Asifabad: Forest officials on Saturday handed over a compensation of Rs.10 lakh to relatives of Morle Lakshmi (21), who was killed by a tiger while picking cotton in a farm at Easgaon village in Kagaznagar mandal on Friday. District

Forest Officer Neeraj Kumar Tebriwal handed over a cheque of Rs 5 lakh to her husband Vasudev, while another cheque of the same value was given to her mother Vadai Vimala, at the office of Kagaznagar FDO. He stated that a watcher job would be provided to one of the family members

# Making sense of the Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire

When Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu decided to launch a military invasion of Lebanon on October 1 — Israel's fourth invasion of the neighbouring country — he said his main objective was to let the over 60,000 northern Israelis, who were displaced by Hezbollah rockets, return to their homes. Almost two months later, he accepted a ceasefire with Hezbollah, agreeing to withdraw all Israeli troops to the south of the Lebanese border. The future of the displaced residents remains uncertain. Hezbollah still possesses thousands of drones and rockets and the capability to fire them. Then why did Mr. Netanyahu accept the ceasefire? Let's first look at the ceasefire deal, which was mediated by the U.S. and France. According to the agreement, Hezbollah would withdraw its troops and weapons to the north of the Litani River, and Israel would withdraw its troops from southern Lebanon. The Lebanese Army would be deployed in the south, between the Litani and the Israeli border, to monitor and enforce the ceasefire. The withdrawals would take 60 days. Israel says if Hezbollah violates the terms of the agreement or tries to rearm itself, it reserves the right to resume fighting. The displaced residents of both southern Lebanon and northern Israel should be allowed to gradually return to their homes, as per the agreement.

Three reasons Mr. Netanyahu gave three reasons, explaining the rationale behind the ceasefire. He believes a ceasefire with Hezbollah would allow Israel to focus more on Iran, Israel's main regional rival; two, Israel can focus on resupplying its own forces who are increasingly facing the fatigue of the two-front war (in Lebanon and Gaza) and three, Israel can isolate Hamas in the ongoing war in Gaza. Israel's leaders, including its newly appointed Defence Minister Israel Katz, say Hezbollah is not the same organisation it used to be. Two months of intense bombing and ground attacks have destroyed much of its capabilities, they argue. But the reality is much more complicated.

To be sure, Israel has dealt heavy blows to Hezbollah. First, the pager and walkie-talkie explosions across Lebanon hit Hezbollah's rank and file. Then Israel carried out massive bombings decapitating Hezbollah's senior leadership. Several top commanders, including the charismatic Hassan Nasrallah, who had led Hezbollah for three decades, were killed. The south Beirut Shia neighbourhood of Dahiye, a Hezbollah stronghold, was subjected to massive bombings. So were the villages in south Lebanon, closer to the Israeli border. Israel also forced Hezbollah to decouple Lebanon from Gaza. The Shia militant group started firing rockets into Israel in October 2023, days after Israel launched its retaliatory war on Gaza following Hamas's October 7 attack, declaring "solidarity with the Palestinians". Hassan Nasrallah, the former Hezbollah chief killed by Israel, had said in the past that Hezbollah would declare a ceasefire only if Israel declared a ceasefire in Gaza. But today, Hezbollah declared a ceasefire in return for Israel's ceasefire and withdrawal from Lebanon. Israel's war on Gaza continues, and the ceasefire is a climb-

down for Hezbollah. Israel's failure

Yet, Israel failed to meet its declared objectives in Lebanon. Mr. Netanyahu had earlier said Israel would continue fighting against Hezbollah until its objectives were met. But on December 24, a few days before the ceasefire was announced, Hezbollah had fired more than 250 rockets into Israel. Israeli troops did not make much territorial gains in southern Lebanon even after two months of fighting. Worse, they failed miserably in destroying or deterring Hezbollah's rocket capabilities. The high-security locations hit by Hezbollah rockets and drones included a private residence of Prime Minister Netanyahu and a military base in Binyamina. Israel was also taking heavy casualties in Lebanon. In October alone, Israel lost some 35 soldiers in southern Lebanon. So unlike in Gaza, where the remainder of Hamas is operating like a loose insurgency from the ruins of the strip, Israel was facing intense heat in Lebanon. The Biden administration, which fully backed Israel's war on Gaza, had also heaped up pressure on Israel over Lebanon. When the Israel-Hezbollah war of 2006 came to an end, the UN Security Council Resolution 1701 demanded a full withdrawal of the Israeli troops



from Lebanon and Hezbollah from the south. It had also demanded the deployment of the Lebanese army in the south and called for the disarmament of Hezbollah. The latest ceasefire agreement is rooted in Resolution 1701. Israel withdrew in 2006, but Hezbollah only grew stronger, by stockpiling more weapons, deepening its presence in the south and building itself as a powerful political and

social actor in Lebanon's fractious polity. Today, Hezbollah has been weakened, but is far from being defeated. Expecting the Lebanese army, which is an inferior fighting force to Hezbollah, to enforce the ceasefire would be myopic, given the past experiences. Mr. Netanyahu might try to sell the ceasefire as a victory for Israel. But facts on the ground offer a different picture.

## Leadership equity for women

The return of Donald Trump to the White House has reignited global concerns about persistent challenges to women's rights and leadership around the world. However, while it has undeniably added greater urgency to the ongoing debate about the lack of gender diversity in leadership, counteracting these concerns has been the rising visibility of women leaders globally and growing conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Central to this discourse is the concept of leadership equity—a paradigm shift that goes beyond token representation to ensure women are empowered to access and sustain leadership roles across all sectors. Despite ample empirical evidence of their transformative impact, women remain underrepresented in leadership roles worldwide, including in India. For a country of over 1.4 billion in a hurry to transform itself socially and economically, leadership equity for women is essential. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat—a post-Covid-19 roadmap for economic self-reliance—relies on inclusive leadership. Women leaders are often able to amplify the impact of the programs they lead much better, helping build sustainable development frameworks that ensure balanced and just progress. Leadership equity is particularly relevant for India's ambitious nation-building efforts. Women leaders are the scaffolding for sustainable development, essential for building resilient economic and social systems. Women must not only have a seat at the table but also occupy the high table, making decisions through positions that drive innovation and growth. Achieving this requires dismantling structural barriers and creating an environment where women in leadership roles can thrive. As the country embarks on ambitious initiatives such as Atmanirbhar

Bharat, women must be empowered to lead at every level. This is not merely an issue of fairness or gender equity, but a strategic imperative for national transformation. Research underscores the benefits of gender-diverse leadership. An article, "Women leaders make work better. Here's the science behind how to promote them", published by the American Psychological Association, says women leaders enhance productivity, collaboration, and fairness in organizations. Yet, only 10% of Fortune 500 companies are led by women. To address this disparity, businesses and other organisations must identify leadership potential early, foster allyship through training, and establish mentorship and sponsorship programmes. In India, the representation of women in leadership roles remains limited even today although the evidence is quite clear: Companies with a stronger gender-diverse leadership performs better financially and spurs the creation of workplace culture of performance, better collaboration, and innovation. This skew in the gender metric extends beyond the corporate sector into the social sector, which otherwise exemplifies the deep impact of women in leadership roles. Women in leadership have a long-term beneficial impact on education, health care, and livelihood programmes, while the gender-sensitive approach of organisations led by women demonstrate better accessibility and community relevance for communities they serve. Yet, there are still only a few women in leadership roles although they account for the vast majority of the social sector's workforce. Such stark asymmetry is ironic, for it points to systemic deterrents to the influence of women leaders on strategy at a macro level, thereby negating the impact of women who often lead and execute grassroots programmes. Our research to



understand the complexity surrounding women's leadership in the social sector—wherein we examined the gaps and challenges, captured best practices, explored the scope of positive interventions, and identified possible support structures to build leadership capacities—reveals that nearly 73% of emerging women leaders in the social sector believe that continued mentorship and networking support would boost their leadership ambitions. There is an urgent need to rework the mantra for success, level the playing field even while women in the social sector continue to face unique challenges such as limited funds, restricted networks, and cultural biases at questioning their authority. These challenges can be overcome by spotting leadership potential early, providing mentorship, and building skills to prepare women with enough time to take on higher responsibilities. Targeted leadership development programs for mid-career women in the social sector can enhance workforce productivity and foster innovation, both acting as multipliers of change to address deep-seated biases. India stands at the crossroads. By embracing leadership equity, the nation has an opportunity to redefine the mantra for success, not just on economic growth but also as a society where everyone, irrespective of gender, has the ability to lead and succeed.



A seminar on “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 Visvesvaraya college of Engineering and Technology, Ibrahimpatnam, Hyderabad.

“Merit has no gender nor boundaries,” said Mr. Krishna Pradeep, Chairman of 21st Century IAS Academy. He cited the example of Mrs. Smitha Sabarwal, a Telangana IAS officer, who became the only female officer

to serve for 10 years at the Chief Minister's Office (CMO). He praised her exceptional contributions to society, emphasizing how she used her own intellect to serve the public. He highlighted her reputation as a “People's Officer” and a “Firebrand,” noting that her success was driven by the three P's: Passion, Patience, and Persistence. He also pointed out that she never worked under political influence but instead remained focused on serving the public with integrity and dedication.

Dr. Bhavani Shankar, Chief Mentor of 21st Century IAS Academy, addressed the students, emphasizing that UPSC exams include questions from primary school topics as well. He urged students to dispel the misconception that the exam is mostly composed of difficult questions and stressed the importance of NCERT books for effective preparation.

The Chairman of the college Laxmi Narayana addressed the students, emphasizing the importance of seizing opportuni-

ties as they arise. He announced the launch of the Civil Aspirants Club, a collaborative initiative by 21st Century IAS Academy and Visvesvaraya College, and encouraged students to actively participate in the club to enhance their learning and career prospects.

Secretary Sridhar Reddy, Director Janardhan Reddy, Principal Dr Ramesh, TPO Dr Jay Prakash, Director of Vings media and G5 Media group Giri Prakash, The Geetha Advertising MD Ramakrishna and others were present.

## SSC Public Exams: Telangana SSC students to be awarded marks instead of grades



Hyderabad: Students taking the SSC Public Exams will henceforth be awarded marks instead of grade point average (GPA) or grades. While the existing system, allocating 80 marks for the external and 20 marks for the internal exams, is unchanged for this academic year only, the State government decided to shift to marks from grades system, which has been a practice for a decade.

So far, depending on the marks secured students are allotted grades namely A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2, D1, D2 and E with A1 and E being the highest and lowest

grades. According to sources, this shift to marks system is aimed at introducing online admissions in the junior colleges in the State. So far, the grading system has been a big hurdle for the government as it has made it difficult to fairly compare and rank students in the online admission process. Now the marks system will pave the way for introducing online admissions in all junior colleges from next year. Further, present Class IX students will not be having internal assessments in their Class X from the next academic year 2025-26. The government also announced scrapping of the internal assessment ex-

ams, which are part of the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE). This means, 100 per cent of the marks will be allocated to external exams conducted by the Directorate of Government Examinations. Modifying its earlier order that notified allotment of 100 per cent marks to external exams, the government in an order said “The procedure of awarding of 100 per

cent marks to external assessment is modified it will be implemented from the academic year 2025-26 and awarding 80 per cent marks to external assessment and 20 per cent to internal assessment will continue for academic year 2024-25 only. Awarding marks system in SSC Public Examination dispensing the existing grading system will be from the academic year 2024-25”.

## Warangal Architect makes history: Shashank Bhoopathi chosen as Telangana's first ISRO Space Tutor

Hyderabad: Shashank Bhoopathi, an architect from Warangal, has been selected as Telangana's first Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Space Tutor. Recently, ISRO selected a few Space Tutors across the country to promote space education. Bhoopathi was the candidate chosen from Telangana. Bhoopathi graduated in Architecture from JNAFAU University, founded Ancient Technologies Design Research Lab to explore how ancient knowledge can solve modern challenges. His work involves studying ancient architectural sites, developing theories based on their design principles, and building prototypes. These prototypes are designed to be integrated into future space missions, aiming to make space exploration more efficient. Bhoopathi's projects include

modular spacecrafts, lightweight and collapsible astronaut housing, and innovative satellite designs. Space Research Architecture is a rare field, with very few experts globally and only two companies in India. Bhoopathi's company is the only one in South India, making his work even more significant. His innovative designs have earned him invitations to universities across India, where he conducts workshops and shares his vision for blending ancient and modern science. As an ISRO Space Tutor, Bhoopathi says he plans to inspire students through workshops and seminars. He is also working on a new project to integrate magnetic field technology into space structures, inspired by ancient science.

# India's democratic system becomes a model for the world: Om Birla

Chandigarh (The Hawk), November 30: Addressing as the chief guest at the 10th convocation of Manav Rachna University in Faridabad on Saturday, Lok Sabha Speaker, Om Birla stated that India's democratic system has become a model for the world. Speaker Birla said that today India has unparalleled identity in the world. Due to India's good governance other countries are emulating its democratic model. It is the strength of our democracy that India is setting new benchmarks in several fields including, education, medicine, IT, automobiles etc. He said that every Indian is making their contribution in making India a developed country showcasing the prime example of unity in diversity.

The Lok Sabha Speaker encouraged the students to embark on their new career journeys with pride in India's rich cultural heritage and urged them to pledge their contributions toward building a developed India. Speaker Birla participated as the chief guest at the 10th convocation of Manav Rachna University in Faridabad Saturday. Over 1,500 degrees, including undergraduate, post-graduate, and Ph.D., were conferred during the event, and talented students excelling in various fields were honoured. Haryana's Revenue and Disaster Management and Urban Local Bodies Minister, Vipul Goel was the special guest at the ceremony. Birla also called upon the youth to harness their energy and resources positively to contribute to national interests. He reminded the audience of India's 75 years of constitutional journey, celebrating the values of equality, liberty, and fraternity. He motivated degree holders to move forward with enthusiasm, upholding the teachings and values instilled by their parents and teachers. Speaker Birla also commended Manav Rachna University for its 27 years of contribution to the education field. Welcoming the Lok Sabha Speaker, Haryana's Revenue and Disaster



Management and Urban Local Bodies Minister, Vipul Goel said that Haryana is playing an active role in preparing 'global change masters' by creating a better educational environment and infrastructure in the state, nurturing young talent, and inculcating values in the graduates. Congratulating the graduating students, Goel said that Indians hold prestigious positions in top global companies, making India the centre of global attention. He urged the students to uphold the values imparted

by their parents and teachers and to always stay connected to Indian culture, wherever they go.

Expressing gratitude to Speaker Birla, the University spokesperson tweeted, "With hearts brimming with pride, we express our gratitude to the Hon'ble Speaker of Lok Sabha, Shri Om Birla, for addressing the Manav Rachna graduates and fraternity as the Chief Guest of Convocation 2024. A visionary leader and an inspiring voice, Shri

Om Birla's profound words have illuminated this landmark occasion, celebrating resilience, knowledge, and excellence."

On the occasion, the University conferred honorary doctorates to several distinguished individuals, including MP, Anurag Sharma, Haryana Water Resources Chairperson Smt. Keshni Anand Arora, Alok Sharma, Pankaj Bansal, Padma Shri Rani Rampal, Sanjay Sethi, Dr. Tanuja Singh, Anand Mehta, and Pradeep Mohanty.

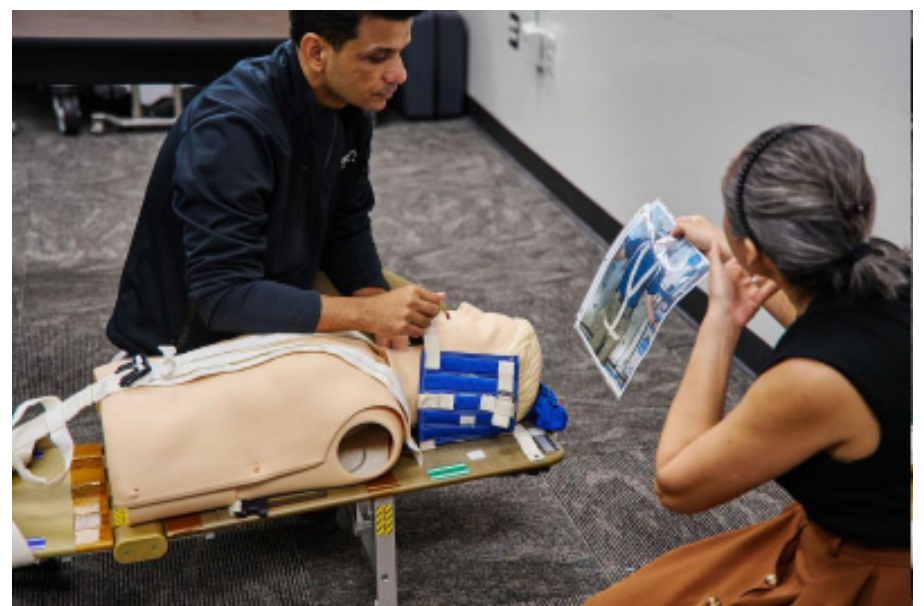
## Indian astronauts selected for joint ISRO-NASA mission to International Space Station complete initial training

Backup-Group Captain Prasanth Balakrishnan Nair seen during ISS Emergency Scenario Training. The Gaganyatris assigned for Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4) have completed initial orientations for mission-related ground facility tours, initial overview of mission launch phases, SpaceX suit fit checks, and selected space food options. Backup-Group Captain Prasanth Balakrishnan Nair seen during ISS Emergency Scenario Training. The Gaganyatris assigned for Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4) have completed initial orientations for mission-related ground facility tours, initial overview of mission launch phases, SpaceX suit fit checks, and selected space food options. | Photo Credit: Special arrangement

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Friday (November 29, 2024) said that Indian astronauts Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla and Group Captain Prasanth Balakrishnan Nair who have been selected for the upcoming Axiom-4 mission to the International Space

Station (ISS) have completed the initial phase of training. "Towards the goal of accomplishing a joint ISRO-NASA effort to the International Space Station, the two Gaganyatris (Prime-Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla and Backup-Group Captain Prasanth Balakrishnan Nair) assigned for Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4) commenced their training in the U.S.A from first week of August, 2024. The initial phase of training has been completed successfully by the Gaganyatris," ISRO said.

The space agency added that during this phase of training, the Gaganyatris have completed initial orientations for mission-related ground facility tours, initial overview of mission launch phases, SpaceX suit fit checks, and selected space food options. Prime-Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla in the middle of a Medical Emergency Training. The Gaganyatris assigned for Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4) have completed initial orientations for mission-related ground facility tours, initial overview of mission launch phases.





# For decades, MHADA has come to mean crumbling buildings; what's the solution?

When the 48 buildings in Abhyudaya Nagar began to show serious signs of ageing, conversations about redevelopment began in the year 2000. Between 2006 and 2014, the colony saw three failed attempts due to challenges with developers, one of whom was arrested in the 2G spectrum case. Spread across 33 acres, Abhyudaya Nagar was built by the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA) in the 1960s to house industrial workers. After an epic struggle to get their homes redeveloped, the 15,000 residents of this colony can finally hope – Abhyudaya Nagar is set to make history. If things go as planned, it would become one of the first housing projects in Mumbai to be redeveloped under the state's revamped, and hugely ambitious, Cluster Development Policy. "Just ahead of the assembly elections, Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis assured us that MHADA would redevelop our colony," said Mishra, who stands to get a 635-sq-ft house and a parking space.

The story of Abhyudaya Nagar's redevelopment mirrors that of thousands of crumbling MHADA buildings across Mumbai. The housing board was established to create affordable housing in the 1970s; today, it owns 114 properties in the city, some of them colonies spanning several city blocks. MHADA is also responsible for the repair and reconstruction of 19,642 old and dilapidated, cessed buildings, most of them built in the colonial era. In addition, MHADA owns 2.25 lakh homes in Mumbai, built under various housing schemes, since 1948. For decades, 'MHADA' has been synonymous with decaying buildings, a graveyard of stalled redevelopment proposals. The properties under MHADA's care were condemned to a growing list of 'old and dilapidated' structures, many unfit for habitation, and yet attempts to get them redeveloped mostly come to naught. Eknath Rajapure, working president, MHADA Sangharsh Kruti Samiti, says that residents of MHADA buildings face challenges such as corruption within the housing board; MHADA's callous disinterest towards what can only be described as a humanitarian crisis building in its properties; developers who dupe residents or back out of projects; tenants-builder-landowner disputes; and litigation that effectively stonewalls projects. So, how does a housing board go from a state of policy paralysis and inertia to being appointed as the Special Planning Authority for some of Mumbai's most groundbreaking redevelopment schemes? Take, for instance, the redevelopment of BDD Chawls, one of Mumbai's most significant urban renewal plans.

Launched in 2016 and being executed under the state's revamped Cluster Development Policy, this is MHADA's first most monumental redevelopment project to date, and only the second one to be executed under the cluster policy in Mumbai. Built a century ago to house mill workers and other migrants who came to Bombay to work, these chawls are spread across 92 acres, in Worli, Naigaon and N M Joshi Marg. Living in 160-ft tenements are 16,000 families across all three locations, each of whom will receive a 2 BHK apartment of 500 sq ft, on an ownership basis when the project is com-

plete. The first batch of these new home owners will be given the keys to their dream houses in early 2025.

MHADA's most colossal redevelopment challenge is the plan to transform Kamathipura, Asia's largest sex district, into a modern 'urban village township'. Also planned under the revamped Cluster Redevelopment Policy, the project was approved by the state government in January 2023. It covers a staggering 734 buildings, 14 religious structures and two schools, among other structures situated on 27.59 acres. Both landowners and tenants will receive 500-sq ft apartments. Rousing MHADA from its lethargy and giving the redevelopment process the momentum it so badly needed were amendments to the Development Control and Promotion Regulations (DPCR) 2034. These policy changes are builder-friendly and greatly incentivised the redevelopment process for developers, benefitting tenants, home owners and landlords, in the bargain. Among these was an amendment to Rule 33(9) of the Cluster Redevelopment Policy, a game-changer possibly inspired by the success of Mumbai's first-ever cluster redevelopment project – the Bhandi Bazaar urban renewal plan. Launched in 2009 – the first phase was completed in 2020 – this is a private initiative being spearheaded by the Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust (SBUT) under the aegis of the state government. It is transforming one of the most densely populated neighbourhoods in Mumbai.

Under the plan, 250 decaying buildings will be razed and replaced by modern towers with state-of-the-art, sustainable facilities, food courts, recreational areas, gardens, community spaces, and other such amenities that have further enhanced the quality of life of 3,200 families. The Bhandi Bazaar plan shows just how much can be achieved when the agency driving such a complex project is motivated to see it through to completion. Collaboration and trust are also vital, something MHADA has not inspired in lakhs of other residents still awaiting their turn. Also amended recently was Section 79(a) of the MHADA Act, 1976, bringing a sliver of hope to families in thousands of dilapidated buildings under MHADA's care. Amended in December 2022, it gives the housing board sweeping powers to rescue buildings whose redevelopment has been stalled. Under Section 79(a), MHADA can serve a notice to a dilapidated building's landlord, directing him to initiate redevelopment within six months. If the landlord fails to act, MHADA can issue a notice to the tenants under Section 79(b). If they too fail to initiate redevelopment with a builder of their choice, MHADA can serve the society with Section 91(a) and redevelop the building itself. The housing board has issued over 1,200 such notices in the last 12 months.

Residents of these buildings make a convincing argument when they say that to most effectively use Section 79(a) and other amendments, MHADA would have to actually start caring about implementing its mandate. They point out that while the recent policy changes are very encouraging, on-ground implementation will follow only if MHADA acts swiftly and proactively. Experts point out that the amendment was made only because residents of cessed buildings,



whose redevelopment projects had been pending since 2017, approached the Bombay High Court. They had urged the court to direct the state to take over the projects as the developer had defaulted in completing them.

The scepticism towards MHADA also arises from the hopelessness of hundreds of thousands of families in transit accommodation assigned by MHADA till their homes are rebuilt or redeveloped. Many of these families have been housed in 'transit camps', usually a great distance from where they originally lived, as their structurally weak buildings had collapsed or their redevelopment projects had been stalled. Meant to be temporary accommodation, these 'transit' dwellings end up becoming near-permanent homes as there is no attempt to find a long-term solution to the families' housing crisis.

This is not the only challenge posed by a housing board that does not always prioritise residents over builders. At Siddharth Nagar, popularly known as Patra Chawl, 672 families are yet to move into their redeveloped homes, 16 years after MHADA launched the project on this prime 47-acre plot in Goregaon. The project was derailed when the developer was arrested in the PMC Bank scam case but it resumed under another builder – which constructed only the saleable component of the project! While home buyers of the 1,700 flats in the saleable component are already moving in, the 672 original families still have no access to the project's rehabilitation component. This component was built only after residents moved the Bombay High Court, which in

2023 ordered MHADA to construct and house them on the same plot. This component is awaiting the Occupancy Certificate, so there's no telling when the 672 families will get their new homes. The future is also uncertain for 1.5 lakh residents living in 388 dilapidated MHADA buildings in areas such as Colaba, Girgaon, Mumbadevi, Byculla, Sewri, Prabhadevi and Mahim. Built during the British era, these buildings started to crumble in the '60s and '70s. The state government handed them over for redevelopment to MHADA, which demolished 900 of them. These redeveloped, standalone buildings – each with 80-100 flats – are once again crumbling but they have used up the benefits in the first redevelopment process. It's a conundrum no housing authority has cared to address. Eknath Rajapure, working president of the MHADA Sangharsh Kruti Samiti, draws a parallel with slum rehabilitation projects. He says successive state governments have been offering generous benefits to slum dwellers, consistently increasing the size of their homes, amending their eligibility criteria etc. Slum dwellers have always been a captive votebank for politicians, and they are expected to return the favour during elections. "I challenge you to give me an instance of a state agency that has fulfilled its housing mandate, where its goal is to simply get the job done.

"Rajapure is not being cynical; his comment merely reflects a sentiment shared by senior MHADA officials. As Sanjeev Jaiswal, vice-president and chief executive officer of MHADA, put it, "Bureaucrats, before taking charge of MHADA, pray that no building collapses during their tenure."

## Indian researchers find new method to detect Monkeypox virus

New Delhi : Researchers from JNCASR, an autonomous institution of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), have identified a new method to understand the virology of monkeypox virus (MPV). The new findings can help develop diagnostic tools for the deadly infection, declared a global health emergency twice by the World Health Organization (WHO) in the last three years. The 2024 global outbreak saw the disease spread to about 15 countries in Africa, and three out of Africa. The outbreak has raised serious concern about

its unanticipated spread across the globe, as the modes of transmission and symptoms are not well understood. A comprehensive understanding of virology, alongside the rapid development of effective diagnostic and therapeutic strategies, is of paramount importance. "MPV is a double-stranded DNA (dsDNA) virus. The detection of the extracellular viral protein gene through polymerase chain reaction (PCR) is a widely established technique for identifying MPV in clinical specimens," said the researchers.

# SC calls for reforms to empower elected female representatives

In a scathing critique of the regressive mindset entrenched in administrative systems, the Supreme Court has underscored the urgent need for reform in governance structures to empower elected female representatives and safeguard their autonomy. Highlighting how women in leadership roles are often subjected to systemic discrimination and treated as subordinates to bureaucrats, a bench of justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan called for introspection and significant structural changes to promote gender equality in governance. Delivering a judgment reinstating a young woman sarpanch in Chhattisgarh, the court noted that the bureaucratic machinery often undermines women in elected positions, disregarding their democratic mandate and imposing undue accountability upon them. The judgment, delivered on November 19, was released on Wednesday. The judgment focussed on the entrenched gender bias within governance systems that disproportionately affects female leaders, particularly those in rural and remote areas. Women in leadership roles are frequently subjected to selective accountability, discriminatory practices, and systemic harassment, discouraging their participation in governance.

In a particularly strong rebuke, the court held: "There is a recurring pattern of similar cases, where administrative authorities and village panchayat members collude to exact vendettas against female sarpanches. Such instances highlight a systemic issue of prejudice and discrimination. The removal of an elected female representative, especially in rural and remote areas, is frequently treated as a casual matter, wherein disregarding principles of natural justice and democratic processes is treated as a time-honoured tradition." This pervasive bias, the Court noted, reflects a failure of governance structures to adapt to the aspirations of a modern, progressive democracy. "It is disheartening that despite our nation's aspirations to become an economic powerhouse, these incidents of discrimination against women in governance continue unabated, bearing striking similarities across geographically distant regions. Such practices normalise regressive attitudes and must be met with serious introspection and reform," asserted the bench. Underscoring the broader need for systemic change, the court called upon administrative authorities to act as enablers of women's empowerment rather than obstacles to their leadership. "Administrative authorities, being custodians of actual powers, should lead by example, making efforts to promote women's empowerment and support female-led initiatives in rural and remote areas. Instead of adopting regressive attitudes that discourage women in elected positions, they must foster an environment that encourages their participation and leadership in governance," it noted. By adopting an inclusive and supportive approach, the bench emphasised, governance systems can create a level playing field for women leaders, ensuring that their voices are not stifled by bureaucratic overreach or societal prejudice. The bench further expressed concern over what it termed a "colonial mindset," where elected representatives are equated with appointed public servants, eroding the very essence of

grassroots democracy. It pointed out that the bureaucratic apparatus frequently imposes itself on elected representatives, undermining their authority and autonomy. This is particularly pronounced in cases involving women leaders, who are systematically marginalized and subjected to unfair treatment. "The administrative authorities, with their colonial mindset, have regrettably failed yet again to recognize the fundamental distinction between an elected public representative and a selected public servant. Elected representatives like the appellant are often treated as subordinate to bureaucrats, compelled to comply with directives that serve to encroach upon their autonomy and impinge their accountability," the court maintained.

Such practices, the bench emphasised, distort the democratic process, reducing the credibility and influence of those elected to represent the public. "This misconceived and self-styled supervisory power is asserted with an intention to equate elected representatives with public servants holding civil posts, completely disregarding the democratic legitimacy conferred by election," it noted. The judgment came in the case of a 27-year-old woman sarpanch from Sajbahar Gram Panchayat in Chhattisgarh, who was removed from office under what the court termed as baseless and discriminatory allegations. The sarpanch, elected in 2020 with



a significant mandate, had undertaken several development projects aimed at improving infrastructure and economic self-sufficiency in her village.

Despite her commitment, she faced systemic hurdles, including delayed issuance of work orders and subsequent accusations of delays in project execution. Bureaucrats, allegedly in collusion with panchayat members, initiated proceedings that culminated in her removal, lamented the court, adding she was also denied the opportunity to defend herself, violating the principles of natural justice.

"This appears to be a classic case of administrative imperiousness, where the authorities penalized a young, dedicated sarpanch for baseless and unwarranted reasons.

Rather than supporting her developmental initiatives, they sought to undermine her credibility and obstruct her work," the court said. It quashed the orders for her removal, reinstating her as sarpanch and awarding 1 lakh as compensation for the harassment she faced. It also directed the state government to initiate action against the erring officials responsible for her ordeal.

## Gvardiol errors emblematic of what is wrong with Manchester City

Kolkata: Erling Haaland had scored on either side of half-time and between the Norwegian's goals, Ilkay Guendogan's sweetly struck left-footer took a deflection beating the impressive Timon Wellenreuther in Feyenoord's goal. After Saturday's rout by Spurs, Manchester City were showing England, Europe and the world that their home was a fortress again. Wellenreuther denied Haaland early by getting to his header. He then flew to the other side to keep out a Phil Foden shot. In hindsight, it will feel like the lack of cutting edge, something that has bothered City through all their recent defeats. In real time it didn't.

When Haaland scored from the penalty he won for a foul by Quinten Timber, he celebrated by kicking the ball again. "With some feeling," said the commentator. Then came the quick second-half goals and by the 53rd minute, the gloom had lifted. The swagger was back, no one had seen the stumble coming. How could they? As per Opta, never in Champions League had a team leading 3-0 till the 75th minute not won. 3-0 is when Pep Guardiola gives bench players game time. Over the past two seasons it has been the City manager's way of conveying that the match was sewn up. So, in came Kevin de Bruyne, James McAtee and Jahmai Simpson-Pusey, the last named being eased into the Champions League after a difficult outing against Sporting Lisbon when Ruben Amorim said "obrigado" with such flourish.

Not since 1963, when they were rel-

egated, had City conceded at least two goals in six successive matches. Anis Hadj-Moussa, Santiago Jimenez and David Hancko ensured they did on Tuesday. If, after five successive losses, 3-3 ever felt like a defeat it will be this for a team that has not looked so vulnerable since becoming serial Premier League champions. "Fragile," said Guardiola. Against Spurs, there were passes from Savinho and Bernardo Silva that went nowhere in a way that was reminiscent of Casemiro against Liverpool. But Josko Gvardiol's brain fade leading to Hadj-Moussa strike is emblematic of what is wrong with City. Gvardiol had a breakout 2022 World Cup, carrying the ball forward with confidence rare in someone who was not yet 21. A complete defender, he will be the next big thing, Igor Stimac said before the games began in Doha. Everything the former India coach had said was borne out by how Gvardiol led Croatia's defensive line. Except when Lionel Messi surprised him with speed before sending him down blind alleys.

Since joining Manchester City in 2023-24, Gvardiol has rarely put a foot wrong. This term, he scored thrice in the Premier League and, though not his preferred position, has adjusted to the left back position. His losing the ball against Spurs for James Maddison's first goal therefore was a surprise. Just as his poor back-pass to Ederson on Tuesday. "I don't know if it is mental. The first goal cannot happen, the second as well," said Guardiola after the match. For Jimenez

chesting home, Gvardiol lost a 2-1 duel, failing to win a header. He and Matheus Nunes went for the same ball leading to the move that fetched the third goal. Ederson is also due his share of the blame for the goals. City have leaked 17 goals in their last six matches in all competitions.

Expected to provide width, Gvardiol was a threat when City attacked. But for Wellenreuther, he could have made it 4-0 in the 54th. But like with Kyle Walker against Spurs, when City lacked legs in midfield, the task of being effective on both ends of the pitch is proving to be too much for the full backs. "He will learn," Guardiola said, refusing to blame one player for City's collapse.

Losing control of the midfield is so unlike Guardiola's City that it feels unreal when it happens. Teams are playing through City, and all night there were gaps for Feyenoord to exploit. Lack of intensity in the midfield is a problem that cost Erik ten Hag the job on the other side of Manchester, one Amorim has said will take time fixing. Without Rodri and Mateo Kovacic, and with Guendogan now 34, City are porous in the middle.

When City won the treble, Rodri had played 52 matches, the most under Guardiola since Lionel Messi's 57 in 2011-12. Ruled out for the season with injury, Rodri cannot be replaced, Guardiola has said more than once. Ten of City's first 13 goals in 2024-25 came from Haaland but that was when Rodri was available.

# Landscape fires account for 2.5 million deaths from air pollution in India: Lancet

At least 2.5 million people in India have died on account of health issues arising from air pollution caused by so-called landscape fires (such as those caused by the burning of farm stubble) between 2000 and 2019, according to a study published by Lancet. The study added that the world saw at least 30 million deaths in the same period attributable to health issues arising from landscape fires, with at least 90% of these deaths occurring in low- and middle-income countries, with the highest burdens in China, India, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, and Nigeria. China, according to the study, saw a little over 2.81 million deaths. Landscape fires are fires that occur in natural and cultural landscapes, including both wildfires and human-planned fires. Between October and December, India's northern plains are choked by air pollution arising from cooler temperatures (a phenomenon called inversion), vehicular emissions, and, also, the burning of farm stubble, especially in Punjab. While these fires can result in direct fatalities, the majority of deaths associated with them stem from the air pollution they generate, which contributes to long-term health issues such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. For instance, according to the study, there were 221 direct deaths reported globally in 2018. However, the

health risks from landscape fires are much greater, as landscape fire-sourced (LFS) air pollution (particularly fine particulate matter with a diameter of 2.5 µm or less [PM2.5] and ozone [O3]) often travels hundreds and even thousands of kilometres away from the source and affects much larger populations than the flames and heat do, according to the authors. The authors claimed the study is the largest and most comprehensive assessment to date of the health risks associated with air pollution from landscape fires. It found an increasing number of global cardiovascular deaths associated with pollution from landscape fires with approximately 450,000 deaths per year attributed to cardiovascular disease, and 220,000 deaths attributable to respiratory disease.

The total number of deaths attributable to air pollution from landscape fires in India rose from 117781 a year in the decade between 2000 and 2009 to 137711 a year in the decade between 2010 and 2019, according to the study. The researchers said they calculated country-specific population-weighted average daily and annual fine particulate matter (PM2.5) and surface ozone (O3) arising from landscape fires during 2000–19 from a validated dataset. Annual mortality, population, and socio-demographic



data for each country or territory were extracted from the Global Burden of Diseases Study 2019. These data were used to estimate country-specific annual deaths attributable to LFS air pollution using standard algorithms. The authors also concluded that "immediate climate actions to limit the magnitude of climate change" could help with a modelling study suggesting that 60-80% of the increase in landscape fires by 2100 could

be avoided if the global mean temperature increase could be limited to 2.0°C or 1.5°C over pre-industrial levels. "Air pollution is a major health hazard, impacting almost all vital organs adversely upon prolonged exposure. Even short-term exposure leads to several health conditions such as sore throat, aggravated asthma, watery eyes etc.," said Dr GC Khilnani, former head of Pulmonology and sleep medicine department, Aiiims.

## Football holds many parallels for teen prodigy

"What were you doing at 13?" Rajasthan Royals's post on X bore a heart in pink, the team's colour, and the name of the youngest player in Indian Premier League (IPL) history: Vaibhav Suryavanshi. The left-handed batter wasn't born when the League began in 2008. Now, he's been signed on a ₹1.10 crore contract – more than triple his base price of ₹30 lakh – after Royals won a bidding war for him with Delhi Capitals in Jeddah on Sunday. There's no denying Suryavanshi has what it takes: he made his first-class debut aged 12, three years younger than Yuvraj Singh (15 years and 57 days) and Sachin Tendulkar (15 years, 230 days), scored a 62-ball hundred against the Australian U19s, and aggregated nearly 400 runs in the Vinoo Mankad Under-19 Trophy last year. But Suryavanshi is also in uncharted territory in IPL's brief history. No one as young as Suryavanshi -- and never mind the constant noise about age fraud that forced his father to speak out after the auction -- has made a mark in the league.

Not so in football, where young stars, albeit, not as young as Suryavanshi, aren't a novelty. Think the Busby Babes, Fergie's Fledglings. Think Pele winning a World Cup at 17 and Kylian Mbappe at 19. Think Lionel Messi and Lamine Yamal. Think Barcelona winning the 2022-23 La Liga with their youngest squad of the century, with an average age of 25 years and 169 days. Think Arsenal's Invincibles, which won the Premier League undefeated with an average age of 23.05. So who says you'll never win anything with kids? Except, of course, Liverpool legend-turned-pundit Alan Hansen who made that ill-fated prediction in 1995, while commenting on Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson turning to academy graduates. Eleven out of 13 of the graduates mak-

ing it into the first XI isn't bad, wrote Gary Neville, one of them, Fergie Fledglings, in his autobiography "Red." But the former Manchester United and England right-back also added: "We were a rare generation, so much so that I honestly wouldn't speculate when there will be another group like it." And therein lies a cautionary tale, for Suryavanshi as much as for Yamal, the 17-year old La Liga prodigy. Of all the top scorers in the men's under-17 football World Cup history, only Cesc Fabregas, Carlos Vela and Victor Osimhen have had success with senior teams. Several others fell by the wayside.

Remember Rhian Brewster? Along with Phil Foden, Morgan Gibbs-White, Callum Hudson-Odoi, he was one of the stars in the England team that came from behind to beat Spain in the 2017 under-17 World Cup final. After three years and zero first team appearances at Liverpool, the 2017 Golden Boot winner plays for Sheffield United in The Championship, England's second division. Adriano (top scorer in 1991) couldn't even go that far. Search for any version of "Promising Footballers Who Did Not Make It" and pretty much every Google search will throw up one name at the top: Freddy Adu. Before he was 15, they called him America's Pele and got him to shoot a commercial with the three-time World Cup winner. At 14, Adu played the under-20 World Cup and didn't look out of place against Marcelo and David Luiz of Brazil or Uruguay's Luis Suarez and Edinson Cavani. By then, Adu had a million-dollar deal with Nike. Aware that he was in the building, Shaquille O'Neal stopped training ahead of a Los Angeles Lakers game. Adu's salary of \$500,000 made him the Major League Soccer's highest paid player in 2004. "He had the same stature as Messi," former USA under-20 coach Thomas



Rongen told The Guardian last February. In 2006, at 16 years and 243 days, he became the youngest to play for the US senior team. That record remains unblemished. Then, Benfica came calling. The offer to play in Europe was too good to resist. But it began a spiral that never bottomed. That move was the first in a long saga of loans and transfers that unspooled a career promising so much more than 17 internationals and an MLS Cup winner's medal. Rongen said Benfica was a step too high for Adu. The man whose mother won a green card lottery and moved to the US from Ghana simply couldn't deal with the hype and the scrutiny that came with it. Or take Bojan Krkic, who was younger than Messi when he made his first team debut at Barcelona in 2007. He burned bright, but he burned short. In a nomadic career across continents, Krkic played only once for Spain. Javier Saviola, Adnan Januzaj, Jermaine Pennant – the list of those whose promise belied performance is long. And it

isn't just football. Only four – Stefan Edberg, Lindsay Davenport, Andy Murray and Andy Roddick – have won the US Open senior and junior singles titles. Edberg did the double at Wimbledon as well along with Roger Federer, Bjorn Borg, Pat Cash, Amelie Mauresmo and Martina Hingis. Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja are the only players from the 2008 under-19 World Cup winning squad to have had notable international careers. If, like Martin Odegaard who was a star already at 15 when Real Madrid signed him but whose career was revived only on joining Arsenal in 2021, Prithvi Shaw can find his way back, he would be the second after Shubman Gill to have consolidated a berth in the senior India squad from the side that won the 2018 under-19 World Cup. It is a trend that makes the quintet from the 2000 U-19 World Cup-winning squad who had senior international careers – Venugopal Rao, Ajay Ratra, Reetinder Sodhi, Mohammad Kaif and Yuvraj Singh – an exception.