

## Telangana witnesses rise in power demand, discoms put on high alert

Hyderabad: In the wake of an increase in power demand in the State in the last few months, State-run power distribution companies have been put on high alert to tackle the rising demand in the State. According to the latest report of the Central Electricity Authority (CEA), Telangana surpassed Rajasthan, Karnataka and Punjab and reached 5th rank with its power demand touching 15,573 MW in August. Uttar Pradesh with 29,126 MW, Maharashtra with 25,855 MW, Gujarat with 21,918 MW and Tamil Nadu with 17,843 MW are the first four.

Although discoms have been managing supply without much trouble, top officials in the energy department have cautioned the discoms to get ready to handle a further rise in demand in the coming months, especially during summer. Officials say electricity consumption of industries, IT industries, household, commercial and agriculture was increasing rapidly in the State, especially in and around Hyderabad. In recent times, the

power demand saw an increase by 23 per cent across the Greater Hyderabad limits. Generally, it goes up by 12 per cent every year and the peak power demand is seen during the summer. However, this time, the month of November witnessed a huge power demand due to prevailing weather conditions, power officials informed. Officials said the maximum power demand reached 3,756 MW in Greater Hyderabad last year, which rose to 4,352 MW this year. Similarly, power usage increased from 79 million units to 90 MU, recording 15 per cent growth. Discoms are spending Rs 1,000 crore every month to purchase power from the National Energy Exchange to meet the demand, the officials added. The power officials said that if the 5x800 megawatt Yadadri Thermal Power Station (YTPS) project being constructed in Dameracharla area of Nalgonda district by the Telangana State Power Generation Corporation Limited (TSGENCO), does not start production by March, there could be some problem to meet the power demand and the



discoms have to continue purchasing power from the open market. This would put addi-

tional burden on the discoms, which are already under financial stress.

## Caught between tiger and cotton, Asifabad farmers face do or die situation



Kumram Bheem Asifabad: Cotton farmers in many villages in the district are caught in a do or die situation. While their cotton crop is ready for harvesting, venturing out into the fields to harvest the cotton balls has become a risky affair, with more than one tiger on the prowl. One woman already lost her life to a tiger, while another farmer is still in hospital after a narrow escape from the jaws of a big cat. During the winter season, the cotton farmers expect they will reap riches by harvesting the commercial crop which they have raised, facing odds and borrowing loans at exorbitant rates of interest. They grow the crop toiling throughout the day for four months. They endure health problems caused by spraying of toxic pesticides and heavy rains and chilly

weather conditions in order to raise and protect the crop. The farmers cannot survive if they don't harvest the cotton crop regarded as 'White Gold' in November and December months. They have to repay loans by selling the produce to a trader. They need to rent out farms for another season by investing the earnings. They are required to keep funds ready for various needs of themselves and their family members in a year. "Farmers pin many hopes on the cotton crop. They use the profits gained through cultivating the cotton to provide education and to perform marriages of their children, to buy essential commodities, ornaments for their wives, to bear cost of medical services, and other emergencies. For them, tigers are part of their

lives," K Narayana, a farmer from Sirpur (T) opined. However, for the farmers, harvesting the cotton produce is now fraught with danger with the increased movement of tigers and some of the big cats attacking them. Still, they are forced to risk their lives to collect the cotton balls even as forest officials advise them against venturing out onto the fields to harvest the cotton considering the possibility of being attacked by tigers. "Despite repeated warnings, cotton farmers are reaching the farms by 8 am. They are not showing interest to leave the

fields even though field staffers explain consequences of their act. We are in a helpless situation," an official, who flew a drone camera to track movement of a tiger which mauled Morle Lakshmi (21) to death at Easgaon village in Kagaznagar mandal on Friday, said. According to officials, tigers increasingly roam in agriculture fields in search of territory and partners for mating in winter. They consider the cotton farms as their hide-outs. They pounce on humans if they bend down for picking balls by assuming them to be prey.

## Fernandez signs MoU with SSSH&ET to improve maternal, newborn healthcare

Hyderabad: Fernandez Hospital Education and Research Foundation, the research arm of Fernandez Foundation, on Wednesday announced partnership with Sri Sathya Sai Health & Education Trust (SSSH&ET), to collaborate and improve maternal and newborn health. The collaboration will strive to enhance quality of labour and child birth at Sri Sathya Sai Sanjeevani Hospitals run by the SSSH&ET across India with Fernandez orienting Sanjeevani obstetricians and staff to the midwifery philosophy of care.

A three-level midwifery training programme will be set up for Sanjeevani's nurses, combining virtual and in-person

modules, designed by the Fernandez Team. Dr Evita Fernandez, chairperson and MD, Fernandez Foundation said, "From the very beginning, Fernandez has pioneered childbirth practices including midwifery. We seek to optimise on our success with our midwifery programme by sensitising doctors and nurses to the philosophy."

"Through this collaboration, we hope to provide high-quality, evidence-based, and compassionate care for childbearing women, newborns, and families throughout the pre-pregnancy, pregnancy, birth, postpartum, and early weeks of life for underprivileged communities," added Dr C Sreenivas, Chairman, SSSH&ET.



# Trained Pakistani terrorists, local militants eluding capture – the big worry for security forces in J-K's Kishtwar

When one enters Kishtwar town nowadays, a flex banner is displayed at the entry, with three pictures and an announcement that any information leading to them will fetch a reward of Rs 30 lakh. The pictures are of three militants including Mohammad Amin, the longest surviving militant of Jammu and Kashmir. Similar posters have come up across Kishtwar district, all indicative of a worrying shift in militancy from Jammu's Pir Panjal region to the Chenab valley, illustrated by the attacks listed above.

The main reason for worry, according to security sources, is the geographic location of Kishtwar — its remote and inaccessible villages, dense forests and, most significantly, the presence of old militant hands that could help revive the militancy in the region. Kishtwar is the only one of 10 of Jammu's districts that has never been declared militancy-free. It is also home to Jammu and Kashmir longest surviving militant, Mohammad Amin alias Jahangir Saroori, whom police say has been active for over three decades and has a "good rapport" with some locals.

They also believe that it is the local connection — which includes advantages such as a vast network of the overground workers and access to hideouts — that could help Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba

militants who moved into the Chenab valley to get a foothold here. "We had inputs that these terrorists would tell people in Doda that they have to meet Jahangir," said a senior police officer, who has been part of the anti-militancy operations. "It seems Doda was just a transit point and they wanted to go to Kishtwar." Over the last few months, Kishtwar has seen a spurt in militant activities, including an increase in the number of gunfights witnessed in the region. According to official sources, there are "at least" two militant groups operating in the area. "Each group has four to five members. They are Pakistanis and are highly trained," a senior officer said. "They don't come down to villages but operate from the highly dense forests". Police believe that apart from Saroori, there are two other active local militants active in the area — Riaz Ahmad and Mudasar Hussain. All three belong to the Hizbul Mujahideen. According to security officials, Kishtwar's topography, with its 2,000 sq km of thick forests and high-altitude villages, also poses a significant challenge. Many of Kishtwar's villagers are so remote that they are accessible only by foot, and several of them have no cell phone connectivity. "This works to the advantage of the terrorists. Whenever there is some militant movement, we get the information very late," a counter-insurgency official told The Indian Express.



"Also, once we receive the information, we have to move on foot most of the time, and climb uphill." One major disadvantage for security agencies, according to this official, is that by the time they get to the spot, the militants would have already fled. The second is the vintage position that Kishtwar's mountainous forests offer militants. "Whenever we go for anti-insurgency operations, they (militants) watch our every movement," the official said. In addition,

Kishtwar's inaccessibility and poor road connections also gives militants a wider area to move. The district connects to Zaskar in Ladakh, Anantnag in Kashmir, Chamba in Himachal Pradesh and Doda in Jammu. "If we put pressure on them here (Kishtwar), they will move to other places," said a senior police officer. "If we have to tackle the militancy in Kishtwar, it has to be a joint effort from different police and security units in the valley as well as Ladakh".

# Its land allotted to hospital, inmates of India's largest open-air jail await verdict

If it weren't for the red-and-blue board outside, Sanganer's Shri Sampurnanand Khula Bandi Shivir open-air prison might look like your average government colony. There are no high-security walls, prison cells and jail uniforms. Instead, rickshaws and two-wheelers are parked outside residential areas, while kids play outside the local primary school and on open grounds. Within the prison, inmates are free to move around as they please. "Prison inmates renovate their own houses as they want," a 52-year-old inmate tells The Indian Express as she sits cross-legged on a dari (mat) in a large white shed that serves as a visitor's hall. The inmate, who's serving a life sentence for murdering her first husband, now lives in the open-air prison with her second husband, whom she met in jail, and their six-year-old son. "It takes years for the new ones to adjust and make money for renovations." Named after Sampurnanand, the former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh and ex-governor of Rajasthan, the prison, located 15 km from Jaipur and spread over four hectares of land, currently houses 422 prisoners — including 14 women — and their families. The Supreme Court is currently hearing a petition challenging an April 26 order of the Jaipur Development Authority (JDA) allocating two plots of land — totaling 0.41 hectare — from the jail for the construction of a satellite hospital. However, activists claim that the government's plan will affect a one-of-its-kind experiment of an open jail in the country. In her petition challenging the move, social worker Prasun Goswami, who had worked on the opening a primary school

at the open-air camp, said the JDA order was in contempt of the SC order.

The petition, filed in September, states that the revised allotment grants 21,948 sq. m of land, integral to the functioning of the jail, for the hospital, in addition to the earlier 0.41 hectares. Such a move will be an "imminent threat" to dispossess the prison of the land under its active use and occupation and stands in contempt of the Supreme Court's May 17 order that the areas of open jails should not be reduced, the petition argues. In a hearing on November 25, a Supreme Court Division Bench of Justices BR Gavai and Justice KV Vishwanathan appointed a "court commissioner" to inspect the site and submit a report. The court said that the report, to be submitted within four weeks, would have to look into the structures that stand on the area of the proposed hospital, and whether there can be a suitable relocation for those inmates residing in that area. "We are also of the considered view that there has to be a balance between the needs of having the Open Correctional Home and also a Hospital, which shall cater to the needs of the citizens residing in the vicinity," the court said. Open jails are used to house convicted prisoners who are selected after completing a certain term of their sentence, based on parameters such as good conduct. Unlike many high security prisons, these jails have minimum security and convicts are permitted to venture out of jail for work.

The open-air camp at Sanganer, which has been the longest functioning and the largest open-air jail in India, has a unique take

towards restorative justice. Set up in 1963, the open-air jail has experimented and adapted over the years into a place where prisoners can live with minimum security. Most open jails in the country either have convicts staying within the same closed jail premises, only permitted to go out for work around the jail premises, or have colonies for prisoners — usually older and closer to completion of their long-term incarceration. But the Sanganer jail permits prisoners to stay with their families, including children, venture out to work in the area or even have their own entrepreneurial starts like grocery stalls. Convicts who have completed 6.8 months of their term with remission can apply to be sent to the open jail. Inmates are allotted houses depending on their needs but are not given much else. Like regular homes, inmates must earn their keep, and pay for electricity, water, groceries and even home renovations. While families live in two-room-kitchen sets, there are also single rooms on campus. The prison also has bandi panchayats, where prisoners have set up their own ways of self-governance, including conducting roll calls twice daily. Apart from housing, the complex also has a primary school, anganwadis and a playground. For medical needs, they can visit nearby hospitals during the day, provided they return by 7 pm. Meals are cooked and taken in individual 'homes'. For security, the prison has a police station, and has three guards — including a woman — at any given time. Many inmates, like the one quoted above, find partners inside the prison. Based on the Sanganer

open jail, 52 such open-air camps have come up in Rajasthan — the highest in the country. On May 17, a Bench of Justices Gavai and Sandeep Mehta, which was hearing submissions on open correctional institutions in India, was informed that there was a proposal to reduce the area of the Sanganer open-air camp and said should be "no attempt of reduction in area of open-air camps/institutions/prisons, wherever they are functioning". In its response to Goswami's petition in September, the Rajasthan government said that there was no attempt to reduce the area of the open jail and that the hospital will come up outside the premises. But it also alleged that jail authorities had 'unauthorisedly constructed' certain structures for the prisoners and that additional area will be allotted to the jail to move the prisoners into new shelters. In a rejoinder she filed, Goswami says that there is an attempt to mislead the court and its actions are "arbitrary and unjust". It also says that while public health infrastructure is important, the construction cannot come at the cost of a "functional and pioneering" open prison. "This ecosystem is essential to their rehabilitation and reform and includes access to education, recreational facilities, and opportunities for livelihood. Relocation to another site would dismantle this ecosystem and disrupt the lives of the prisoners and their families." According to Kavita Srivastava, the president of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCIL), while the state argues that it had only given away "empty spaces" at the camp, the areas were crucial for the interaction between inmates and the outside world.



# OPPO India launches 'Find Your Bigger Picture' Campaign with Milind Soman for Find X8 Series

Hyderabad : OPPO India today introduced its latest campaign, 'Find Your Bigger Picture', featuring Milind Soman, to mark the launch of its flagship Find X8 Series in India. The main film underscores that the Find X8 and Find X8 Pro are designed for individuals who challenge conventions and hold the power to lead their lives on their terms, across all facets of their journey. Launched across social media platforms of OPPO India, the film opens with a shot of Milind who uses the Find X8 Pro's AI Telescope Zoom to lock in a distant mountain peak he is determined to conquer. As he begins his ascent, he reflects on a life defined by embracing new challenges at every stage – from leaving a thriving acting career, to running marathons barefoot, and becoming an author. The film concludes with Milind climbing the final boulder and taking in the stunning view, symbolising his life's journey of challenges and growth. Watch the inspiring video on OPPO India's Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter pages as well as Milind Soman's Instagram page.

Speaking about the campaign, Sushant Vasishtha, Head of Digital Marketing, OPPO India, said, "At OPPO India, we celebrate individuals who live authentically and push boundaries. That's why we are so excited about our 'Find Your Bigger Picture' campaign. Milind Soman's journey is inspiring and teaming up with him for the launch of the Find X8 Series feels like a perfect fit. The Find X8 Series is crafted for trendsetters, offering a cutting-edge camera system, robust performance, smart AI capabilities, and an elegant design to inspire users to view and capture the world in a new light."



The OPPO Ambassador Conclave led discussions on the evolving role of photography, technology, and AI in smartphones.

The campaign will continue with accomplished individuals such as CEOs, CMOs, VPs, co-founders, and photographers, sharing their inspiring journeys. Each will highlight how their unconventional choices have defined their success and set them apart. Building on the momentum of the OPPO Find X8 Series launch, the brand hosted an Ambassador Conclave in Mumbai. The event began with the unveiling of the Find X8 Series by Mr Peter Dohyung

Lee, Head of Product Strategy at OPPO, during his keynote address. The Find X8 Series features the MediaTek Dimensity 9400 SoC, a groundbreaking quad-camera system with two telephoto lenses, a high-density quick-charging Silicon Carbide battery, and advanced AI-powered features for photography and productivity—all in a durable yet lightweight design with IP68 and IP69 ratings. The event brought together industry leaders, including Viren Noronah, Co-

Founder of The New Thing; Anamika Singh, renowned photographer; Indu Sharma, Vice President, Siemens and Kuldeep Pawar, CMO of Spice Money, to explore the evolving role of photography, technology, and AI in smartphones.

Attendees also had the opportunity to experience the OPPO Find X8 Series first-hand, sparking in-depth conversations about how innovation is shaping the future of smartphones.

## Mahindra University signs MoU with Airbus to create a future ready talent pool in aerospace and digital technologies

Hyderabad: Mahindra University on Wednesday signed an MoU with Airbus to create a future ready talent pool in aerospace and digital technologies. The collaboration aims to foster innovation, research and education in aerospace and digital technologies by leveraging strengths of both the organisations to create a future-ready talent pool. Mahindra University vice chancellor Dr Yajulu Medury and Airbus India and South Asia president and managing director Remi Maillard signed the MoU in the presence of Mahindra University chancellor Anand Mahindra. Both institutions will collaborate in curriculum development, industry training, faculty and student exchanges, and advanced research in aerospace and digital technologies, including artificial intelligence and machine learning, advanced analytics and cybersecurity, a press release said. The MoU will also advance internship and placement opportunities for students, facilitate joint events such as symposiums and workshops, and enable connections with international institutes for aerospace-related projects. "This collaboration reflects Airbus's recognition of the value Mahindra Group brings to the aerospace and technology sectors," said Anand Mahindra. Maillard added the collaboration is part of the company's efforts to broadbase engagement with academia.





# Assassination Attempt on Sukhbir Badal: SAD And Congress Slam CM Mann For Deteriorating Law And Order

Chandigarh (JAG MOHAN THAKEN), December 4: Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and Congress have condemned the murderous attack on former Deputy Chief Minister and senior SAD leader Sardar Sukhbir Singh Badal on Wednesday and termed it as an attack on Sri Darbar Sahib. Badal, when attacked, was doing 'Sewa' at Sri Darbar Sahib as mandated by Sri Akal Takht. Addressing a press conference here, senior SAD leader Bikram Singh Majithia said the murderous attack was aimed at finishing the moderate Akali leadership of Punjab and spoiling the peace in the border State by creating a communal divide. We demand a high court monitored probe into the entire incident to unmask the entire conspiracy behind it. Taking on chief minister Bhagwant Man of lying and taking fake credit for nabbing the accused, Mr Majithia displayed video evidence to show the State police was nowhere near the scene of the crime and the militant was allowed to approach the Akali leader despite Punjab Police claims that attacker was under surveillance, a party statement states so.

"This indicates that this was part of a preplanned attack and that the attacker was a sponsored hit man of ISI and agencies besides being a close associate of Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa". He also thanked S Sukhbir Singh Badal's personal security personnel Jasbir Singh for thwarting the attack, saying "Jasbir has been part of Sukhbir ji's security detail since the last twenty years and is a part of the Badal family".

Giving details of the attacker Narayan Singh Chaura, the SAD leader said "Chaura is a dreaded militant from whom bombs, a MP-5 machine gun and an AK-47 have been recovered". Asserting that Narayan was the brother of Narinder Singh Chaura, Mr Majithia said "Congress leader Sukhjinder Randhawa got Narinder elected to the Panchayat Samiti unanimously". He also asserted that two cases against Narayan Chaura were cancelled when the Congress party was in power and that he was also freed in 2018 when Randhawa was a minister in the Congress government. He also gave instances how Randhawa had promoted associates of Sikhs For Justice (SFJ) earlier. Stating that Bhagwant Mann had completely failed as home minister, Mr Majithia said "the State DGP and the Amritsar Police have a lot to answer for". He said the police should explain how a dreaded militant was allowed to roam in the Sri Darbar Sahib complex for two days and why he was not nabbed earlier.

"The Punjab Police should also tell why it compromised the safety of S Sukhbir S Badal by allowing the attacker to approach him and fire at point blank range". He said earlier also the Punjab Police had been found wanting in the case of murder of Sidhu Moosewala as well as attacks on its Intelligence headquarter and even cover up of the media interview gangster Lawrence Bishnoi gave while in police custody. "Now a situation has arisen where a 'Guru ka Sikh' who has been mandated to do 'Sewa' by Sri Akal Takht is being prevented from doing this. How safe can Punjabis be?" Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, the President of the Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee interacted with the media and released a statement



regarding the firing on Sukhbir Singh Badal at Sri Darbar Sahib, Amritsar and expressed deep concern and unequivocally condemned the incident, calling it an alarming failure of governance that highlights the dire state of safety in Punjab. He claimed that the brazen attack on Sukhbir Singh Badal near the sacred precincts of Sri Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, is a shocking testament to the complete collapse of law and order in Punjab under the Aam Aadmi Party's administration.

"This horrifying attack near such a revered site exposes the utter negligence of Bhagwant Mann's government. The police, under AAP's rule, have turned a blind eye to their primary duty of maintaining law and order, allowing Punjab to slip into chaos. If even a Z+ category protectee like Sukhbir Badal is unsafe, how can the common citizens feel secure?" said Warring, slamming the administration for its incompetence. Amarinder Singh Raja Warring concluded with a stark warning to the AAP government: "Bhagwant Mann ji, how many more lapses will it take for your administration to wake up? The people of Punjab demand action, not excuses. The law-and-order situation has gone

from bad to worse under your watch, and your failure to act decisively is putting lives at risk. This negligence will not be forgiven." Leader of the Opposition (LoP) Partap Singh Bajwa also on Wednesday strongly condemned the assassination attempt on senior Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Sukhbir Singh Badal, calling it a deeply unfortunate and unequivocally condemnable act of violence. "The attack on Sukhbir Singh Badal outside Sri Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, where he was performing seva as directed by Sri Akal Takht Sahib, is a grim reminder of the deteriorating law and order situation in Punjab. Such incidents undermine the very fabric of societal harmony and have no place in a civilised society," Bajwa stated. Bajwa further highlighted the Union Home Ministry's failure in ensuring the safety of a Z-category protectee. "It is alarming that despite the Border Security Force (BSF) overseeing security up to 50 km from the international border and the presence of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) at the premises, an individual with a well-documented history of involvement in terror activities was able to move freely while carrying a deadly

weapon. This raises serious concerns about the effectiveness and coordination of both central and state agencies. The Union Home Ministry must be held accountable for its inability to detect and apprehend such a dangerous individual before this heinous act could be carried out," he asserted. He further cautioned about the potential for larger conspiracies, expressing concerns about the possibility of destabilizing Punjab. "The Sikh Panth has undoubtedly been aggrieved since the Dera Sacha Sauda chief's pardon during the SAD regime. However, this assassination attempt appears to be part of a more sinister plot. We cannot ignore the risk of Punjab slipping back into a period of turmoil," Bajwa warned. Bajwa called for a comprehensive and impartial investigation by a High Court-appointed committee into the incident. "Given the AAP-led Punjab government's dismal track record in maintaining law and order, it is imperative that a time bound committee appointed and monitored by a sitting High Court judge probes this assassination attempt to uncover the full scope of the conspiracy and ensure justice is served," he asserted.



# Telangana's Focus on FLN Highlighted at Leadership Circle in Lucknow, Hosted by DEVI Sansthan

Hyderabad :DEVI Sansthan, India's leading advocate for foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN), hosted the transformative "Leadership Circle" on November 28–29 in Lucknow. This two-day event brought together policymakers, corporate representatives, and grassroots organizations from 19 states from Jammu & Kashmir, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, etc and union territories like Puducherry to address regional challenges and accelerate progress towards the ambitious NIPUN Bharat goals. Shri Ashish Kohli, Director of Elementary Education, Himachal Pradesh, inaugurated the event. A strong 13-member team of Government officials from Telangana State were part of the 2 day event.

Dr. Shaik Peer Mohammad, Academic Monitoring Officer, Telangana State shared "The academic gap between the students and teachers needs to be filled, it will not be possible if both of them are irregular but it can be covered overtime. If there is an Implementation Gap, then we as educationists cannot cover it. Success of pedagogy depends on the 45mins spent together as teacher and student. If in those 45mins, a teacher can instruct the student on the subject and the students learns, it is a success for both of them. Currently we are at 38% in FLN in the state of Telangana. However, with the work we are doing in terms of training of the teachers in the Telangana State, we are confident to achieve 75% to 80% of the NIPUN goals for FLN."

Shri. Avanish Kumar Awasthi, Advisor to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Uttar Pradesh who was the Chief Guest on day 2 shared, "I am delighted to be here at the CMS campus, recognized as one of the largest schooling systems in the world. It is inspiring to see representatives from 19 states gathered for this important cause. For any country to achieve success, two critical pillars must be prioritized: improving learning outcomes and equipping youth with essential skills. During my interactions with representatives from various states, I was impressed by the dedication and insights shared. My message to all of you is to document your success stories, derive meaningful data, and share your results. Foundational literacy and numeracy must reach every block in the country. While you are working diligently in your respective states, the journey ahead is vast and challenging. By incorporating the feedback from CMS and implementing the ALfA pedagogy, we can collectively strengthen foundational learning and education. Together, these efforts will not only fortify our educational framework but also empower future generations to thrive and contribute to the nation's progress."

The summit featured an exceptional lineup of attendees, including prominent policymakers such as Ms. Sufeena Bano, Director of Elementary Education Office, Baramulla, J&K; Shri Tassaduq Hussain Mir, Director of Elementary Education, Srinagar, J&K; Shri Ramesh Prasad Lakher, District Program Coordinator (BSA), Samagra Shiksha, Madhya Pradesh; and Shri Mohd Amzad, FLN District Program Lead, Telangana, among others. Together, they explored innovative strategies to accelerate foundational literacy and numeracy, with a focus on regional adaptations and sustainable solutions. The Leadership Circle empha-



sized the need for strong foundational learning systems through evidence-based approaches like DEVI Sansthan's ALfA pedagogy (Accelerated Learning for All), which

has proven transformative in enhancing learning outcomes for underserved children, dropouts, and adults seeking literacy. Discussions highlighted regional challenges, such

as infrastructure gaps in Kashmir and rural literacy disparities, underscoring the importance of tailored solutions to accelerate FLN outcomes.

## 'There was nothing healthy going into my body': Sunaina Roshan shares her journey to healthier eating

Bollywood star Hrithik Roshan's sister, Sunaina Roshan, recently shared her own experience of moving away from unhealthy eating habits after being diagnosed with jaundice, a condition worsened by fatty liver disease. Taking to her Instagram, she shared, "I would basically eat everything and anything under the sun that was unhealthy. Pizzas, burgers, you name it and I was eating it. There was nothing healthy going into my body." She continued, "What made my jaundice severe also was that I had grade 3 fatty liver, and we all know that with jaundice, you can't eat masala, fried (food). For me, to make that switch became much easier and it happened day by day, step by step. My advice to all of you would be: don't let pain or illness change you to making healthier choices. Do not be lazy about it. Do not be fearful." Sunaina's story highlights a common struggle for those looking to improve their diet: staying on track without aiming for unrealistic standards. Small, steady changes are often more sustainable, and setbacks are part of the journey. Strategies for gradually transitioning from a junk food-heavy diet to a healthier, more balanced one

Ashlesha Joshi, senior nutritionist at Tone 30 Pilates, says, "Transitioning from a diet high in junk food to a more balanced, nutritious one can seem overwhelming, but small, consistent steps make it manageable. Start by incorporating more whole foods gradually — such as fruits, vegetables, and



whole grains — into daily meals. For instance, add a side salad with lunch or swap sugary snacks for a piece of fruit or a handful of nuts." Another helpful approach is meal planning, she adds. "Preparing meals in advance, even if it's just for a few days, can reduce the temptation to reach for convenient junk food when hunger strikes. This doesn't have to be complex; simple, easy-to-make recipes incorporating balanced nutrients go a long way." Lastly, aim for a "crowding out" approach — gradually replace one junk food item with a healthier alternative each week. Over time, this can shift dietary habits in a way that feels achievable rather than restrictive. A diet rich in antioxidants and fibre is particularly beneficial

A diet rich in antioxidants and fibre is particularly beneficial. Staying motivated to maintain healthy eating habits over time Joshi mentions that setting small, attainable goals can also boost motivation. "Achieving small milestones reinforces a sense of accomplishment and builds positive momentum over time." Tracking progress with a journal or app can also provide visual evidence of progress, helping reinforce commitment to healthy habits. Additionally, celebrating small wins, like choosing a healthier option or hitting a weekly nutrition goal, keeps motivation high and creates positive associations with lifestyle changes. Dietary changes for individuals dealing with conditions like fatty liver disease and jaundice



# How Arsenal have turned the previously-derided set-piece routine into a fine art and massive weapon

Arsenal's Martin Odegaard, center, celebrates with teammates after scoring his side's third goal during the English Premier League soccer match between West Ham and Arsenal at the London Stadium in London. (AP) Arsenal's Martin Odegaard, center, celebrates with teammates after scoring his side's third goal during the English Premier League soccer match between West Ham and Arsenal at the London Stadium in London. Two events foreshadow an Arsenal corner kick. The moment the referee decrees one, Gabriel, the strapping centre-back, ambles to the vicinity of the far post. On the touchline, manager Mikel Arteta, perennially on an emotional edge, slouches onto his seat in the dug-out; set-piece coach Nicolas Jover, with a twinkle in his eyes, veers onto the touchline.

Two events often follow an Arsenal corner kick too. The soaring giant of a man, Gabriel leaping above his markers, sliding and stretching his neck as though it were made of rubber and heading the ball into the net. Jover would leap and swipe the air. Since the start of last season, Arsenal have converted more set-pieces than any other club (25 excluding penalties) in the Premier League. Gabriel, unsurprisingly, has netted more goals than any other centre-back since his arrival in the 2021-22 season (15, the next best Virgil van Dijk has scored nine times). It's so frequent that their supporters buzz as though they have earned a penalty. The action — from the time the ball goes out and the corner is swung — barely takes half a minute. In this time, the players move to their designated positions, which vary from match to match. But the most common pattern features one of Arsenal's players rubbing shoulders with the goalkeeper inside the six-yard box, giving a false impression that he is the intended target. He is rather the decoy, his only intention being to distract the goalkeeper, manufacturing space for the intended target (often Gabriel, but not always him, as it could become too predictable). 4 Arsenal's Bukayo Saka celebrates scoring their fifth goal with Arsenal's Jurrien Timber and Arsenal's Martin Odegaard. Gabriel lurks on the edge of the six-yard box, on the left. Three of them usually hover behind him, inside the 18-yard box. They are the dummy runners, trying to clear out the far post area. When the ball swings in, they often move towards the ball, dragging markers to the near post. One or two might linger just outside the box and the rest stand behind them, to thwart any counter-attack. So far, it's straightforward. The deliveries, Bukayo Saka from the right and Declan Rice from the left, are largely in-swingers fired either on the goalkeeper or to the back post. Some bend late into the goal; some don't. It's then the intricate patterns set in a fury of limbs moving this way or that. The runners from deep in the box charge in, the shield dishevels the goalkeeper or the nearest defender (sometimes controversially, and a reason perhaps the more stringent referees of Champions League award a foul against them). Gabriel's opening goal against West Ham United this weekend was a classic instance, when Jurrien Timber bumped into the back of Lucas Paqueta at the front post, denying him the space to jump

and clear the ball. It swirled into the path of Gabriel, who hit the target. West Ham players rebelled for a lost cause. As have several other teams the last two seasons. Ben White tried to undo the gloves of Tottenham goalkeeper Guglielmo Vicario before one of the corner-kick goals. Keeping opponents guessing. Whereas Gabriel's movements have been similar — a shimmy to the right (when delivered from the right), an explosive leap as he scuds the ball goalward — the rest of their movements are unpredictable. Sometimes, they drift into the box like a swarm of bees. Sometimes, they scatter like a regiment after a drill. It's synchronised chaos, so second-guessing their patterns becomes difficult.

These are movements chiselled to perfection on the training ground under Jover's watch. The coach, who joined Arteta from Manchester City after he thought he was not getting enough time to work on set-pieces with the champions, more reliant on open play than set-pieces for goals, polished their set-pieces with intense, opponent-specific drills. The onus is on specific runs to sharpen their movements. Players are given just two seconds to run into a specific point to receive the ball, with Jover insisting on repeating and re-repeating the action until it becomes second nature. Arsenal's Gabriel Magalhaes, Martin Odegaard and Declan Rice ahead of a West Ham United free kick. (Reuters) Arsenal's Gabriel Magalhaes, Martin



Odegaard and Declan Rice ahead of a West Ham United free kick.

The season before Jover took over, Arsenal had scored just six goals from set-pieces in the entire season. Arteta can't stop praising him. "Him and the rest of the staff have injected the belief into the players that there are many ways to win football matches. This is a really powerful one and he has given us a lot," he once said. Jover is not the pioneer in set-piece coaching, but its most efficient exponent. The 43-year-old Frenchman has never played competitive football, but after completing his sports degree in

Canada, joined the French club Montpellier as video analyst, before camping with the Croatian national team as match analyst. It was at Brentford in 2016 that he assumed the role of free-kick specialist. This was around the time teams were starting to focus more on set-pieces than ever before rather than decrying its lack of aesthetics, even though 28 percent of all goals every season arrive in this fashion. Earlier, it was seen as the refuge of teams in the relegation zone (as Brentford was when Jover joined the Bees). But no team has mastered the set-piece art like Arsenal. At the heart of it is Jover.

## Delhi's gangster who directs bloodshed from behind bars

In June 2018, two notorious gangs that operate in northeast Delhi — one led by Abdul Nasir and the other by Irfan alias Chhenu Pehalwan — held a meeting at a mosque to end their decades-long rivalry and resolve their differences. During the meeting — attended by Nasir and relatives of both gang lords, along with at least 10 clerics — the two criminal groups reached a consensus: they would divide their areas of operation, and would not interfere with each other's businesses, senior Delhi Police officers aware of the matter told. The outcome of this meeting was mostly positive — skirmishes between the two gangs had led to the death of at least 17 people, but after June 2018, the bloodshed stopped, and the police could sigh with relief, officers said. However, one consequence of the peace between the two groups was that Nasir's lieutenant and key confidant Ashim Ahmad — better known as Hashim Baba — split away from his boss, forming his own gang that continued hostilities with the Chhenu gang and emerging as one of the most notorious criminals operating in north India, according to a senior officer from the Delhi Police special cell.

"What followed after Hashim Baba splitting away was a series of killings and attempted killings that he committed along with his associates in eastern and southern parts of Delhi in a bid to establish himself as the new undisputed king of Delhi's crime and illegal betting world," the officer said, declining to be named. "The killings would have continued had a special cell team not arrested Baba after a shootout in Shahdara on November 12, 2020," the officer said. But even

from behind bars, Hashim Baba wields a considerable influence on the streets of Delhi, said police, linking him to several murders in the Capital post his arrest, including the gunning down of Nadir Shah, a gym owner, outside his Greater Kailash-1 establishment on September 12 this year. His brazenness also caught the eye of jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, who operates north India's largest criminal syndicate, said the officer quoted above. The two met while both were lodged in Tihar jail, and Hashim Baba is now considered one of Bishnoi's closest allies, the officer said.

Making of a murderer Hashim Baba was born in 1982 to a poor Muslim family in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh. In the early 1990s, his father moved the family to Delhi in an attempt to better their fortunes and started a footwear manufacturing business. It was here, in the Capital, that a young boy — then still known as Ashim Ahmad — started committing petty crimes, police said. He was a juvenile, so no records of his crimes were kept. But soon, this boy — now known as Hashim Baba — joined the Nasir gang and quickly rose through the ranks, becoming a hitman for the group. Officers said his role in the gang came into the limelight in 2013, after his name was mentioned in the failed assassination of rival Akil alias Mama — who was supported by the Chhenu gang — during a funeral in Jafrabad.

Hashim Baba's rise in the gang did not stop there — after Nasir's arrest in April 2017, he led the gang in his leader's stead, continuing the rivalry with the Chhenu gang. However, Nasir's release from jail in

June 2018 and decision to make peace with the Chhenu gang did not sit right with Hashim Baba, and he split away from his one-time mentor, said police. Today, Baba is involved in more than 35 serious crimes — including 12 murders — and is presently lodged in jail, the officer quoted above said. On September 12, Nadir Shah was gunned down outside his gym on a busy GK-1 street. At least nine people have been arrested in connection with the case so far.

"An interrogation of the arrested accused revealed that the killing was orchestrated by Hashim Baba from inside Mandoli jail. The investigating team sought his custody from jail and interrogated him. However, investigators are finding it difficult to nail him down in the case due to insufficient evidence," an officer from the Delhi Police crime branch said, on condition of anonymity. But this is not the first time that Hashim Baba has been linked to a crime while still being incarcerated — according to police, there have been at least four more high-profile murders on the streets of the Capital between June 2023 and August this year that were carried out at the behest of the jailed gangster. One of these incidents was the brazen murder of a 32-year-old man at Guru Teg Bahadur hospital on July 14: four thugs — allegedly Hashim Baba's associates — burst into a ward and shot Mohammad Riyazuddin. It would later emerge that the murder was a case of mistaken identity — the assailants' actual target was 33-year-old Waseem, a rival of the gangster, who was undergoing treatment in the same ward of the hospital.



# A liberal arts degree is worth much more than realised

We are all too familiar with the recession of 2008 and its subsequent impact on the decline of the humanities and more generally, the liberal arts, in North America and Europe. In the context of the 'existential crisis' facing classic liberal arts programmes, questions have often centred on their relevance and whether they offer tangible 'real-world' skills, resulting in a diverse range of outstanding career outcomes. An article in *The New Yorker*, 'The end of the English major', published in 2023 argued that traditional liberal arts study has become the 'quaint province of a privileged elite, comprising students who do not expect a return on their investment and can afford to spend time on unremunerative pursuits'.

The 'getting a job' concernAs a result, liberal arts degrees face increasing criticism in policy discussions for failing to equip students with the knowledge and the skills valued in the labour market, often leading to inadequate financial returns on their educational investments. Given the discursive link between higher education and job prospects, domain-specific experts and counsellors advise aspiring high school graduates to pursue degrees in business, finance and economics, in order to secure jobs. The statistics are striking: in 1966, 14% of all college graduates in the United States were majors in the humanities (central to the liberal arts); by 2010, that figure dropped by half to only 7%. The discourse is not simply limited to the low likelihood of finding jobs after a liberal arts degree, but also suggests that associated majors are concerned only with abstract ideas. This might have something to do with the context within which liberal arts emerged in early modern Europe, as a means of avoiding manual labour or working with hands. A liberal arts education that combined humanities with science was thought to produce a 'thinking' individual. In many ways, the idea of a liberal arts education seems antithetical to expectations of regional development that involves some technical training and knowledge. Despite its beginning, liberal arts have evolved in practice to be so much more.

Liberal arts enable students to comprehend those things that quite literally make us human. The skills that they cultivate in reasoning and critical thinking are every bit as important to future success in the workplace as learning to code, calculate, or raise capital. To paraphrase the longest serving President of Harvard University, Charles Eliot, a liberal arts education teaches a student a little bit of everything, and a great deal of one thing. Given such a powerful approach to generating scholars possessed of all-round disciplinary, and indeed, life skills, it appears peculiar that anyone would want to quibble with the exciting possibilities of such an outcome. Let us also note that while liberal arts is experiencing a decline in North America, it has seen a re-emergence in Europe and shows no sign of abating. Only five years ago, the University of Nottingham, U.K., opened a new liberal arts programme, promising that this new initiative will enable students to explore what it means to be human. Today more than 20 universities in the U.K. offer some form of liberal arts and sciences programme. For some, this re-emergence has arisen partly as a corrective to the

region's more recent over-specialisation in education. Towards the east, a decade ago, in Hong Kong, a major educational overhaul saw numerous institutions move from a British-style three-year degree model to a U.S.-style four-year model, with the aim of incorporating the greater breadth evident in a 'liberal arts' approach. This compromise between the full breadth of a liberal arts degree and the specialised approach of a traditional British-style bachelor has also been taken up in other parts of Asia, where liberal arts is often seen as a component of a specialised degree, rather than being offered as a degree in its own right. The idea is that specialised education can be supplemented with a humanistic approach to produce a well-rounded individual who practises critical thinking.

The world versus IndiaSo, as an international phenomenon, the promotion of liberal arts education emerged within countries usually as a combination of indigenous educational reform movements and inchoate transnational advocacy networks. Of course, now there is universal consensus that liberal education prepares students well for life in a globalised, multicultural, society — one that makes them more aware of a variety of cultures and the need to communicate effectively across cultural differences; teaches them to evaluate new ideas with evidence; and formulate opinions, not make assumptions. Today's students also want an education that will address their desires for justice, service and self-expression, while equally wanting to develop the non-cognitive skills that will allow them to be successful in a globally competitive job market.

India offers an intriguing case in point. For a nation where higher education has traditionally focused on professional courses, including engineering and medicine, the last couple of decades has witnessed a sudden interest in liberal arts education. Businesses, non-governmental organisations, and government entities increasingly recognise that a discipline-specific technical education alone is not sufficient for the wholesome growth of the country's economy and society. 'Soft skills', which can be honed through a classical liberal arts education, are crucial in this context. While the rapid development of liberal arts in India has been welcomed by several, others ask — and, quite rightly — whether students will get jobs after liberal arts training; whether liberal arts is suitable for a developing country; whether critical thinking skills help students solve India's societal problems — poverty, hunger, caste, and class inequalities. Preparing students to be global citizens

Even for parents without the experience of studying for a degree, it does not take too much imagination to produce a 'usefulness' argument in favour of encouraging their children to take a scientific or technological subject. Even pure science holds out the prospect of a practical application one day. But for the liberal arts, the arguments are much more nuanced. The liberal arts impart the so-called soft skills associated with how to think for yourself, how to research and find things out for yourself, and how to communicate the results to other people. And there is a lot of truth in this. It is for these reasons that the new generation of liberal arts institutions in



the country pioneered a model of education that appeals to several stakeholders.

Employers highlight the communication skills and the creativity that liberal arts students bring to their workplaces and praise their ability to engage with multidisciplinary teams for effective problem-solving and creative thinking. The technique of threading dif-

ferent kinds of content, conversations, and curriculum is the genius of the faculty in liberal arts institutions, who curate and incorporate the best of substance and knowledge in terms of interdisciplinary and experiential learning, the use of technology, and mentorship to attract young minds towards the best educational experience and to prepare them to be global citizens.

## Isostatic rebound: Mount Everest is growing faster



Hyderabad: Mount Everest, towering at 8.85 kilometers above sea level, is still increasing in height, according to recent findings. The Himalayas, including Everest, began forming about 50 million years ago due to the collision between the Indian subcontinent and the Eurasian plate. While this historical tectonic activity has contributed to the region's steady uplift, researchers have discovered that Everest's rise has been more significant than previously expected.

A major factor behind this unexpected growth is the interaction between two nearby river systems, the Kosi and Arun Rivers. These rivers merged roughly 89,000 years ago, and their unification has influenced the mountain's elevation. This change has contributed to an uplift of about 49 to 164 feet, with the rate of elevation increasing at around

0.01 to 0.02 inches annually.

This phenomenon, known as isostatic rebound, explains how Earth's crust reacts to changes in surface weight. When heavy materials, such as ice or rock, are removed, the land beneath gradually rises in response, much like a boat lifting when cargo is offloaded. In this case, the extensive erosion caused by the merging of the rivers reduced the weight of the region surrounding Everest, enabling the crust to rise.

Researchers used numerical models to simulate how these river systems evolved and found that isostatic rebound accounts for about 10% of Everest's annual uplift rate. GPS measurements have confirmed this ongoing increase in elevation, which surpasses the effects of surface erosion from wind, rain, and river flow.



# Tax cuts may have saved 3 lakh crore rupees for India's largest corporates: Data

Taxed at a significantly lower rate following the introduction of the concessional tax regime in 2019, India's largest corporates may have saved over ₹3 lakh crore in tax payments since then. This is in addition to over ₹8 lakh crore in revenue foregone through various deductions granted to companies in the decade since 2012-13 (FY13). Experts note that while the tax cuts point towards the need to rationalise tax incentives, a decline in corporate tax-gross domestic product (GDP) ratio could limit the government's ability to finance additional development expenditure. Until 2019, a corporate tax rate of 25% was levied on domestic companies with an annual turnover of up to ₹400 crore. It was 30% for the rest. The new tax regime slashed the rate to 22% as long as the companies forgo certain deductions under the Income Tax (IT) Act. In addition to this, tax rates for new manufacturing companies were lower, provided they fulfilled certain conditions. Suranjali Tandon, Associate Professor at NIPFP, explains that the new tax regime is indicative of a preference for a "simpler tax system with lower rates" as corporate tax rates have undergone changes at different points before to align with the country's economic priorities. "However, there is no consensus on the optimal corporate tax rates as this may vary as per economic circumstances and context," she says.

R. Nagaraj, Distinguished Senior Fellow at IIT Bombay, argues that a reduction in corporate tax rates mainly serves the "class interests" of the "business community" — evident in the simultaneous increase in luxury consumption. "This is the standard Laffer curve argument which was popular during the Reagan administration in America. But we do not have any evidence of this working anywhere in the world, especially not in India." To get a sense of the amount saved in taxes as a result of this incentive, data of India's largest companies, those on the BSE 500 index, were considered, which were sourced from the Capitaline database. So, until FY19, The Hindu's analysis shows, the effective tax rate for these companies, which is the average rate at which the profits (before taxes) of corporations are taxed, was 30% or higher. The ratio declined in the subsequent years, and touched a low of 21.2% in FY24. Moreover, the top 10% of the BSE 500 companies continued to enjoy lower effective tax rates compared to the overall average for all companies, even as the gap has considerably narrowed in recent years. Table 1 shows the effective tax rate (in %) Charts appear incomplete? Click to remove AMP mode As large companies opt for the new regime, the lower effective tax rate is expected," says Prof. Tandon. In absolute terms, this could have translated into a tax saving of roughly ₹3.14 lakh crore for these companies since FY20. The figures were estimated by calculating the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) in taxes paid by companies in the five years ending at FY19 (which was 11.5%) and also assuming a similar rate of growth for the subsequent years until FY24 had the tax cuts not been introduced, provided all other factors remained constant (Table 2). Table 2 shows the tax data for BSE500 companies for which

figures were available^

Company profits grew at a much slower pace at 10.4% in the five years ending at FY19. In the five years since FY20, however, company profits have grown at a rate of 32.5% while corporate taxes paid by these companies have done so only by 18.6%. Apart from tax rates and profits, the level of economic activity also influences corporate tax collections, says Zico Dasgupta, Assistant Professor of Economics at Azim Premji University. While the intent behind such changes was to encourage private investment, create jobs and "establish a globally competitive business environment for certain domestic companies", Prof. Dasgupta says there is little evidence to suggest that tax incentives make businesses more competitive. But since tax concession also means forgone expenditures by the government, it seems to me that the more important policy question pertains to a cost-benefit analysis of providing greater tax concession. "He says, "The corporate tax concessions announced in the pre-COVID-19 period do not seem to be based on such considerations." Prof. Tandon notes that since the incentives coincided with the pandemic, the evidence to suggest increased private sector investments due to rate cuts is "mixed". "Nevertheless, the profitability of companies has allowed them to create reserves and to invest in current assets. In part,



the anticipated demand can influence the decision to make capital investments." Companies also avail tax concessions in the form of deductions under various sections of the IT Act. For instance, tax incentives are granted on donations made to charitable trusts, contributions to political parties, expenditure on scientific research or on profits of undertakings set-up in north-eastern States among others. The government calculates the revenue impact of such concessions in the Budget document each year and this is done for a larger database of

over 10 lakh companies. Revenue forgone due to such deductions amounts to ₹8.22 lakh crore in the decade ended FY22 (latest data).

The data show an underestimation of the revenue impact in six of the ten years considered (Table 3). Table 3 shows the revenue impact of major tax incentives for corporate tax payers (in Rs. crore). It also shows the projected revenue impact (in Rs. crore). The data show an underestimation of the revenue impact in six of the ten years considered.

## Seeing Silicon: Robo cops are here. Do you trust them?

The other day, I was taking a post-dinner walk around the neighbourhood when I bumped into two security robots. One of them, a video camera contraption hanging on a post next to the sidewalk, chirped, "Hi, you're being recorded." Startled, I stopped. It wasn't the rather bulky CCTV-replacement that had made me freeze. In the darkness, an oval purple light gleamed beyond the sidewalk, in front of the office building. I squinted to see a 6-foot-tall security robot, moving towards me. At first, I thought it was eyeing me and I froze — surprised and fascinated. Could it see me? Was it recording me? A few moments later, the security robot turned away from me, whirring from one corner to the other, doing its rounds around the perimeter of the building.

Most American homes come with security cameras which sometimes warn you that you're being recorded. It wasn't the voice that had unsettled me, but a moving autonomous metal lump twice my size. Late at night, something moving around you, is a potential threat. There was no human manning it. If I walked closer to the office building, what would this security robot do? Will an alarm go off somewhere? Will something come out of its oblong metal body to apprehend me? Could it harm me — a human — in any way?

The autonomous security robot I had encountered on my night walk, as I later found out, belonged to an American com-

pany called Knightscope Inc which sells autonomous security robots with an aim to replace human guards at airports, residential communities, and buildings. The robot that I had seen and which had seen me — called the K5 — is one of their most advanced robots. It is loaded with tech — multiple cameras, microphone, heat sensor, light detection, motion sensor and wheels to walk around. It can record eye-level videos, detect, and interact with people and recognize license plates. It can also call emergency services and operate 24/7 in all kinds of weathers including hazardous ones, and can head to the charge station when it needs some juice. So no, it could not attack me if I had laid a hand on its body. It would have merely frozen. And probably would have recorded my behaviour and logged it with appropriate priority levels in its system for humans to see in the morning.

I didn't try, though. It was six feet tall — that was enough to deter me and keep to the sidewalk. This deterrence, the company's website says, is a security strategy called 'force multiplying physical deterrence' where the mere visible, physical presence of a security robot is enough to stop potential troublemakers. Like it did for me. (Only for the first time though. What will happen when I encounter the security robot again? Knowing it cannot harm me?) With AI advances, robotics has taken wings and is a growing market, projected to grow to \$165.2 billion

by the end of 2029. The securities robot market, which includes patrolling, monitoring, surveillance, and emergency response was at \$2.3 billion in 2023 and is expected to grow at a CAGR of 12.6% per annum till 2030.

My cautious approach to autonomous robots was thanks to what I've seen and read in all those dystopian science fiction movies and books. In *The Terminator*, the cyborg assassin lands from the future to kill a young woman. In *RoboCop*, a terminally wounded cop is turned into a cyborg to deal with citizens. Human will is also subsumed in *Universal Soldier* where dead soldiers are brought to life as superhuman warriors. But perhaps the most endearing security robot of our times in literature has been created in *The Murderbot Diaries* by Martha Wells, where a former sentient killing machine gets addicted to family dramas and self-realises that it has the horrible desire to protect humans. But if you move away from these dystopian imaginations that are ever-present in our lives, we are already surrounded by autonomous robots we trust and rely on. Around the corner from my co-working space, a Waymo autonomous car drives by, without any human driver carrying a human passenger to their destination. Autonomous cars have been around for three years now and has become a normal part of the Silicon Valley roads. I'm used to it and barely notice it now.