

## RTC fare hike: Will Telangana govt follow Karnataka?

**HYDERABAD:** The repercussions of Karnataka cabinet's decision to increase RTC bus fare hike by 15 percent are already being felt in Telangana with many fearing that the Congress government here may also follow suit. The Karnataka cabinet's decision will come into force from January 5. It is expected to generate additional revenue of Rs 7.84 crore per day for the cash-starved four-State operated road transport corporations. The decision has already triggered verbal duels between the BJP and Congress leaders. The BJP blamed the Congress government's free bus travel scheme for women for the financial crisis in the four corporations, besides imposing additional burden on the travellers.

Considering the fact that Telangana government is also implementing the free bus travel scheme for women in the State many are apprehensive that RTC fares could be increased here as well. There was no option left for the Congress government but to follow its counterpart in Karnataka. Given the increasing fuel prices and operational costs, Telangana government would also increase the fares, charged BRS Greater Hyderabad in charge Dasoju Sravan. The State government has failed to manage the economy effectively. Investments were getting affected

and things had come to a standstill due to poor administration, he slammed, stressing that the corporation should be made self-resilient. With many women boarding RTC buses (Express and Palle Velugu), men are complaining that they do not get seats despite paying the fares. On the contrary, the Congress government has been claiming that the free bus travel scheme for women had in fact aided in increasing the seat occupancy ratio in RTC buses. Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy had said ever since the scheme was launched in December 2023, over 84 crore women had travelled in RTC buses. The scheme had helped the women to save Rs 2,840.71 crore, he had announced.

During a meeting in September, the RTC officials had informed the Chief Minister that due to utilization of funds from different banks, employees funds and pending dues to be paid to retired employees, the debts had accumulated to the tune of Rs 6,332 crore. This apart, the State government has been claiming that the expenditure incurred due to implementation of free bus travel for women was being paid to the corporation regularly. Himachal government faces criticism over power supply scheme. Like the Congress government in Karnataka, its counterpart in Himachal



Pradesh is also facing severe criticism over its power supply scheme. Before the Assembly elections, the Congress had promised to extend 300 units free power supply to consumers, irrespective of category. However, it was now appealing to the consumers to surrender 125 units of free power voluntarily. This has not gone well with the people and opposition parties are coming down heavily on the Congress government. Leader

of Opposition Jai Kumar Thakur had demanded that Sukhvinder Singh Sikku should step down for failing to fulfill promises made to the people. He asked as to why the Congress government was not able to implement its decision to withdraw power subsidy for income tax payers. It was absurd that the Congress government was asking people to surrender the subsidy voluntarily, he said according to reports.

## Individuals can now set up EV charging stations, earn income in Telangana!



"If the people are not interested in setting up their own EV charging stations, they can even lease their land to agencies and get monthly rent," officials suggested.

Hyderabad: With many potential EV buyers expressing concern over running out of battery power without access to a nearby

charging station, the Telangana State Renewable Energy Development Corporation (TGREDCO) has decided to encourage in-

dividuals to set up charging stations in the State, especially in Hyderabad and surrounding areas. According to TGREDCO officials, individuals who have plot sizes ranging from 300 to 500 square yards could approach REDCO for establishing EV charging stations and start a business.

"If the people are not interested in setting up their own EV charging stations, they can even lease their land to agencies and get monthly rent," officials suggested. It will cost Rs 5 lakh for creating a basic EV station that caters to the needs of one four-wheeler and two two-wheelers, the officials said. The Centre is allowing individuals to set up electric vehicle charging stations without any licence, but it was crucial to meet the government guidelines to ensure the safety and efficiency of the charging station, officials said. The first step in setting up an electric charging station is choosing the location, which involves considering various factors such as proximity to power supply, accessibility to users and more. After choosing the location, it is crucial for EV charging station owners to obtain all necessary permits or licences from the local authorities. A licence

is not needed to start an EV charging station, but individuals need to obtain a permit to install a distribution system. The process needs to be carried out by the area's electricity department. After obtaining the licence and permit, you can install the charging equipment, such as chargers, connectors and other things, on the site. Furthermore, setting up the payment infrastructure is also crucial for receiving the payment from customers. All the equipment must meet the government standards. Another requirement is to have a designated or safe parking area where customers can park their cars and charge them. All the charger models installed on the electric vehicle charging station need to meet international and national standards. Installation of different EV chargers used by vehicle owners, such as slow chargers, rapid chargers and others has to be done. Safety measures need to be fulfilled at the charging stations to avoid any incidents or hazards. Currently, there are about 425 charging stations, both private and government, functioning across the State. At present, there are 1.7 lakh EVs — 1.3 lakh bikes and 12,765 cars — in the State.



# Grave new world: humans are killing the elders species need to survive

So do animals. From elephant matriarchs to shark grandmothers, the elders of the animal kingdom carry a treasure trove of knowledge, having guided, and still guiding, their families through the uncertainties of life in the wild. The earth's life forms are very diverse and unsparingly complex. No two species age the same. Yet there is also a growing body of evidence that older, wiser individuals are crucial in similar ways to many species.

"Because of the diversity in animal social systems, the important position that older individuals often occupy can be a variety of reasons, but often involves them either being particularly dominant individuals who stabilise the social hierarchy in some way through their presence or by acting as repositories of information that they've acquired over their lifetime — which can be particularly important when times get tough," Josh Firth, an associate professor at the University of Leeds, said. "There are a range of potential benefits of older individuals across different types of animals. They are not the same for all species," Keller Kopf, a senior lecturer in ecology at Charles Darwin University, Australia, added. Without these elders, fish may never find their spawning grounds and birds would get waylaid as they flew across continents. Ageing in the wild, a review published in *Science* on November 21 suggested that the worldwide loss of old individuals due to shrinking habitats, hunting, climate change, and other human-caused disturbances can be particularly detrimental to long-lived species. According to the researchers, protecting a species' elders is important for all its members to be able to pass on their cultures and what they know about adapting to changing weather to their future generations, and to help buffer them against human disturbances. While this may go for both short- and long-lived species — the mayfly lives for a day whereas the Antarctic glass sponge can live for millennia — the focus on long-lived species in particular is partly because of data. "Evidence for the contributions of older individuals in short-lived species is limited," Kopf, the lead author of the study, said.

Scientists have been studying ageing for decades but most of their research has focused on the negative effects of biological ageing on human health. Only recently have they been looking at the benefits of ageing and in wild populations. "Research on the benefits of old individuals has been happening in different disciplines in silos," Kopf said. What old means

He and his team analysed more than 9,800 peer-reviewed studies from 1900 to 2023, investigating the roles of elderly individuals in several species. These roles included knowledge transmission, assisted parental care, nutrient cycling, and coping with extreme weather. "Until now, no study has pulled together data across different taxonomic groups to highlight the range of potential benefits of growing old," according to Kopf. Before the team could analyse the data, it had to agree on what "old" meant. A three-year-old mouse could be considered old whereas a 30-year-old elephant could be considered young, Kopf said. But the lack of data on short-lived species limited the researchers' options to two groups: long-lived

mammals and birds (which are often social species that invest significant time and efforts in parenting their offspring) and cold-blooded animals (like fish and reptiles, which continue to grow throughout their lifespan). "Traits such as social behaviour, migration, parental care, and increased reproductive output make older individuals in moderate to long-lived species essential for their ecology and therefore conservation," Kopf said. "However, this importance exists on a continuum and is not a binary." Of elephants and orcas, climate extremes and human activities such as habitat destruction can hasten the loss of elders in a species and disrupt the stability of populations. Ecologists have documented a cascade of consequences moving through the population when the elders disappear, altering social structures and behaviour. For example, young elephants of both sexes depend on help from the matriarch, the oldest female and often the largest. One 2011 study of African elephants in the wild found that when they were played recordings of lions roaring, a herd's members would create a defensive formation. Groups led by matriarchs more than 60 years old gathered faster and confronted the threatening calls with more aggression. "If older individuals are removed from the wild, by capture or unnatural death, younger ones struggle to survive without their knowledge," Anindya Sinha, a professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru, said. "Because they are directionless there might be an increased risk of negative interactions with humans."

"Our work on Asian elephants in Bandipur and Nagarhole National Parks in Karnataka shows that females in herds [with calves] and fewer experienced individuals exhibited high levels of stress hormone," Sanjeeta Sharma Pokhreal, an assistant professor at Kyoto University in Japan, said. A 2018 study she co-authored suggested that the higher stress could be due to lack of help with parental care, the high energy demands of vigilance, and the responsibility of protecting calves from predators. Studies have also found that older female orcas (*Orcinus orca*) undergo menopause. According to experts, one compelling explanation for this phenomenon is called the grandmother hypothesis. Grandmother orcas stop being able to reproduce so they can help their daughters care for calves, protect them from predators, and guide them to the best feeding grounds. A new conservation paradigm Because of the great benefits of protecting the older members of a species, the researchers have advanced a new paradigm called longevity conservation. "Biodiversity conservation and threatened species policies should protect age structure," Kopf wrote in *The Conversation*. "This is particularly important in long-lived species that produce more offspring with age, or where migration, social networks and cultural transmission of knowledge are required for survival." For example, in fish and reptiles, the older individuals lay more eggs and give birth to offspring better equipped to survive environmental fluctuations. So Kopf advocates age- and size-based fisheries management strategies that better protect older individuals. But significant challenges arise when the longevity conservation paradigm comes in contact with ground realities,



such as in India. More than 700 marine fish species are caught every year along both coasts of the country, with fishing vessels targeting multiple species simultaneously. How experts can implement a management strategy that protects individuals while allowing uninterrupted harvesting is unclear.

Protecting larger, older fish is important for conservation, but in a multi-species fish-

ery like India, it's extremely challenging," Mayuresh Gangal, a research affiliate at the Nature Conservation Foundation, said. "Different species vary in size as they age and their life histories differ significantly. On top of that, the fishing gears cannot be very target specific in multi-species fisheries. It is difficult to tailor gear to target specific species or sizes effectively."

## Shortage of hepatitis B vaccine continues to plague Kerala's private hospitals



There is no end in sight to the shortage of hepatitis B vaccine in Kerala's private hospitals even as many of them are unable to vaccinate the newly recruited staff. A viral infection that affects the liver, hepatitis B is transmitted from the mother to the child during birth and delivery and in early childhood. It occurs also through contact with blood or other body fluids during sex with an infected partner, unsafe injections, or via exposure to sharp instruments. The infection can be prevented through vaccination. According to a senior doctor at a leading private hospital in central Kerala, patients who are undergoing dialysis regularly are at "extremely high risk" of getting infected. The risk can be mitigated only through vaccination.

If unvaccinated people get exposed to the infection, hepatitis B immunoglobulin will have to be administered to them in a single

dose within 48 hours. The cost is in the range of ₹5,800 and ₹13,000 depending on the brand, he says. Newborns, especially the children of mothers with hepatitis B infection, who need to get the injection within 12 hours of their birth, are also severely affected by the shortage. Newly recruited healthcare staff get it as a safeguard against the infection.

Sources say that hospitals in many other States too have been facing a similar situation for some time. Though it was expected that the supply will be restored by September, many doctors in Kerala say that the vaccine is still not available as a stand-alone dose in the market. Some of the private hospitals are procuring it from government hospitals, where the scarcity is not that severe. Companies such as Serum Institute of India are among the main manufacturers of this vaccine.



# Women wing of Punjab farmers' union to swing into MSP Battle

Chandigarh (JAG MOHAN THAKEN), January 7: The women wing of Bharatiya Kisan Union Ekta (Dakonda) has made all preparations to swing into farmers' battle for MSP and will participate in Samyukta Kisan Morcha's Moga Rally to be held on January 9. Under the leadership of women wing convener Bibi Amrit Pal Kaur, special preparation has been done for women participation. The Punjab farmers' union BKU Ekta (Dakonda) has completed groundwork to participate in the Kisan Maha Panchayat to be held at Moga, on the invitation of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha. The press secretary of the organization Anrez Singh Bhadour informed through a press release that our organization has planned to reach the Maha Panchayat by holding meetings in 13 districts of Punjab. These meetings were specially addressed by the state leaders and informed about the attacks of the governments against the farmers and labourers. The state president of the organization Manjit Singh Dhaner, senior vice president Gurdeep Singh Rampura and general secretary Harnek Singh Mahima said that the draft of the National Agricultural Marketing Policy is a conspiracy to undermine the rights of the states. There is a plan to re-impose the repealed three black farm laws through the back door, which were rejected during the historical Kisan agitation on the borders of Delhi. The leaders said that this has once again exposed the pro-corporate and anti-farmer face of the Modi government. In yet another attack on farmers, the central government is paving the way for amendments to the Land Acquisition Act in the name of strengthening railways and urban infrastructure so that land can be taken away from farmers and given to corporates at cheap rates. The leaders of the organization said that in this large Kisan Mahapanchayat of Moga, the major demands of the farmers to be raised are – cancellation of the draft of the National Agricultural Marketing Policy and the land acquisition law, debt relief to the farmers and labourers, ensuring MSP and purchase guarantee law of all crops. Also, the other demands will be raised to ensure supply of canal water to every farm, clean water to every house and to repeal the Dam Safety Act. Supporting the farmers' demands the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) Tuesday alleged the union government as well as the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) party led Punjab government were equally responsible for the deepening agriculture crisis in the country, even it appealed to both governments to engage with farmers and do their utmost to save the precious life of Kisan leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal.

In a statement here, senior SAD leader Dr Daljit Singh Cheema said besides this the union government should also withdraw the draft agriculture policy as farmers felt many clauses contained in the three agricultural laws were being reintroduced in the policy through the back door. "Once this policy is withdrawn then an open-hearted dialogue can be initiated with all stakeholders to chart out all future policies on agriculture". Cheema said it was shocking that even though the Supreme Court was monitoring the fast unto death of the Kisan leader almost on a daily basis, both the union government as well as the State government in Punjab were resort-



ing to a blame game and playing politics on such a sensitive issue. "Efforts are also on to polarize the entire issue which is condemnable and could be dangerous for a border State like Punjab". Dr Daljit Cheema appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take the lead and create an atmosphere which could lead to the end of Jagjit Singh Dallewal's fast. "For this to take place the Prime Minister should notify the guarantee on Minimum Support Price (MSP) immediately. This is in keeping with the assurance made to the people of the country when the Prime Minister withdrew the three agricultural laws which

led to the end of the Kisan Andolan". While asserting that these steps would go a long way in removing the aggravating factors which had resulted in the present Kisan agitation, Dr Cheema condemned chief minister Bhagwant Mann for failing to shoulder the requisite responsibility to ward off the present crisis. "Even now it is not too late. The chief minister must approach the Prime Minister immediately and impress upon the latter to take the necessary steps to save the life of the fasting Kisan leader whose health is in an extremely precarious condition. Mr Bhagwant Mann should impress upon the

union government that the angst of the farmers of Punjab should be assuaged and that not doing so would spell trouble for the border State". The SAD leader also appealed to both the union government and the Punjab government not to indulge in legal formalities to save their skin in case the fasting Kisan leader's health takes a turn for the worse. "The situation is extremely alarming and sincere efforts should be made to save Mr Dallewal's life and repair the relationship with the farming community which will be severed irreparably in case any harm comes to the fasting Kisan leader".

## IIT Hyderabad to host its 10th International Convention from May 26 to June 1

Hyderabad: IIT Hyderabad will be hosting the prestigious Spic Macay 10th International Convention from May 26 to June 1. This year's convention promises to be an exceptional cultural event that celebrates the timeless beauty of Indian classical music and dance. Renowned cultural artists from across India will grace the stage, bringing the rich heritage of Indian classical music, dance, and art to life. Their performances will showcase the depth and diversity of India's artistic traditions, offering audiences an immersive experience in cultural excellence. It aims to bring together students, artists, and cultural enthusiasts from around the world for an unforgettable experience of artistic exchange and immersive learning through intense workshops. As a prelude to the event, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, the legendary sarod maestro and Padma



Vibhushan awardee, mesmerized the audience at IIT Hyderabad with his soulful performance on 6th January 2025. His concert

marked the beginning of a series of cultural events leading up to the Spic Macay 10th International Convention.



# Dr. Ajai Kumar Agarwal Receives Maharaja Agrasen Global Iconic Award 25 for Excellence in Public Relations

Hyderabad:Hyderabad based Dr. Ajai Kumar Agarwal has been awarded the prestigious "Maharaja Agrasen Global Iconic Award 25", The award was given by Maha Mandelersshwar Param Pujya Geeta Manishi ji Sri Gyanananda Ji Maharaj in the presence of Mr. Om Birla, Hon'ble Speaker of Lok Sabha, during a grand ceremony held at the Ambedkar Auditorium, Janpath, New Delhi. This distinguished award was conferred by the Akhil Bhartiya Agarwal Sangthan (ABAS) in recognition of Dr. Agarwal's significant contributions to the fields of Public Relations and Social Services on a national scale. Known for his unwavering commitment to social betterment and professional excellence, Dr. Ajai Agarwal has previously been recognized with numerous accolades, including the Bharat Gaurav Award in the British Parliament, Guinness World Records holder, and various lifetime achievement awards from prestigious organizations. In his acceptance speech, Dr. Ajai Agarwal stated, "I am deeply honored to receive the Maharaja Agrasen Global Iconic Award 25. It serves as a reminder of the responsibility we all share in our professions and communities. My aim is simple: to not die unheard. We must ensure that our voices for social change and betterment echo through our work." Currently serving as the National President of the International



Chambers of Public Relations and the Chairman of Scintilla Communications, Dr. Agarwal has significantly influenced the landscape of Public Relations in India. He is also

a published author, with his book "PR: A Tool for Success," and a visiting faculty member at various universities in India and abroad.

The event was graced by Mr. Pradeep

Mittal, National Chairman, Mr. Girish Gupta National President, Shri RN Gupta, Working National President and other esteemed dignitaries.

## BPSC exam row: Impact on mental health of aspirants

The recent Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) examination controversy has reignited debates surrounding the credibility, fairness, and transparency of competitive examinations in India. The issue, which surfaced due to alleged irregularities and instances of malpractices, has not only raised questions about the integrity of the examination system but has also profoundly impacted the aspirants preparing for these exams. For millions of young individuals, particularly those from less privileged backgrounds, these exams represent a pathway to social mobility and career stability. When controversies like these arise, they disrupt not just the trust in the system but also the mental and emotional well-being of the students involved.

Competitive examinations in India are often seen as life-altering events, and the BPSC exams are no exception. For many students, these exams symbolise the culmination of years of hard work, sacrifice, and dedication. Families pin their hopes on the success of their children, and societal expectations often compound the pressure to perform well. In such an environment, the slightest hint of irregularities can be devastating. Reports of question paper leaks, corruption, and favouritism create an atmosphere of uncertainty and disillusionment. Students who have devoted years of their lives to rigorous preparation are left questioning the fairness of the process and whether their efforts have been in vain.

The immediate impact of such contro-

versies is a sense of betrayal. Aspirants, especially those who have invested significant time and resources in preparation, feel disheartened when the sanctity of the examination is compromised. This sense of betrayal can lead to a loss of motivation, as students begin to doubt whether their hard work will ever be rewarded. For many, these exams are not just tests of knowledge but also of character and resilience. When the system itself is perceived as flawed, the psychological toll can be immense. Aspirants may find themselves grappling with feelings of helplessness, frustration, and anger. The mental health implications of such controversies cannot be overstated. The stress of preparing for competitive exams is already immense, with students often facing long hours of study, limited social interaction, and the constant pressure to outperform their peers. The added uncertainty caused by examination irregularities exacerbates these stressors, leading to anxiety, depression, and even burnout. The stigma associated with seeking help for mental health issues further complicates the situation, leaving many students to struggle in silence. The fear of judgement and the perception that they must appear strong and resilient can prevent them from reaching out for support.

The fallout of the BPSC exam row also extends to younger aspirants who are in the early stages of their preparation. The controversy sends a message that merit and effort alone may not be sufficient to succeed, which can be deeply demoralising. It erodes

trust in the system and creates a sense of cynicism among students. This loss of faith in the examination process can deter talented individuals from pursuing these opportunities, thereby depriving the system of capable and deserving candidates. The impact on families is another dimension of this issue that often goes unnoticed. Parents, who have often made significant sacrifices to support their children's education, experience their own share of disappointment and anxiety. The financial burden of coaching classes, study materials, and other resources can weigh heavily on families, especially when the outcomes are jeopardised by systemic failures. The emotional strain on families can lead to fractured relationships, as students and their parents struggle to cope with the aftermath of such controversies.

In addressing the mental health challenges faced by students, it is crucial to foster an environment that prioritises emotional well-being alongside academic achievement. Educational institutions, coaching centres, and policymakers must recognise the importance of mental health support and take proactive measures to provide resources and assistance. Counselling services, peer support groups, and workshops on stress management can help students navigate the challenges of competitive exam preparation. Normalising conversations around mental health and encouraging students to seek help without fear of stigma are essential steps in this direction. At the systemic level, restoring trust in the examination process is im-

perative. Authorities must take swift and transparent action to investigate allegations of malpractices and hold those responsible accountable. Reforms in the examination system, such as the use of technology to enhance security and reduce human intervention, can help minimise the risk of irregularities. Regular audits and reviews of examination protocols can ensure that the process remains fair and reliable. Communication with students and stakeholders should be clear and consistent, providing reassurance that their concerns are being addressed. For students themselves, cultivating resilience and adaptability is key to navigating the uncertainties of competitive exams. Building a strong support network of friends, family, and mentors can provide emotional stability and encouragement. Developing healthy study habits, maintaining a balanced lifestyle, and setting realistic goals can help students manage stress and prevent burnout. Engaging in activities that promote physical and mental well-being, such as exercise, meditation, and hobbies, can serve as effective coping mechanisms. It is also important for society as a whole to shift its perspective on success and failure. The hyper-competitive culture that equates success with exam results places undue pressure on students and perpetuates a narrow definition of achievement. Recognising and celebrating diverse talents and career paths can help alleviate some of this pressure and encourage students to explore their interests and strengths without fear of judgement.



# Gaza and the moral crisis facing us

Even as the world marked the New Year with cheer and hope, it was just another week of ceaseless terror for the people of Gaza. In its latest round of airstrikes, Israeli troops have killed over 200 Palestinians in barely three days, according to latest reports. Israeli airstrikes killed at least 14 Palestinians in three separate attacks in the Gaza Strip on Sunday (January 5, 2025), Palestinian medics said, as U.S. and Arab mediators said they were stepping up efforts to conclude a ceasefire deal. The latest effort comes just days before Donald Trump takes office as president of the United States on January 20. The world has a lot going on, and countries are understandably preoccupied with their own political or economic crises. All the same, how long can the world be indifferent to the biggest moral crisis of our times? As the death toll surges past 45,000 in this brutal war spanning over a year now, big powers backing Israel are showing no signs of stepping back from their blatant complicity in this mass murder and destruction. The rising death toll of children, women, journalist, aid workers — nothing seems to deter them. Amid claims of an attempted ceasefire, the Biden administration has informally notified the U.S. Congress of a proposed \$8 billion arms sale to Israel that includes munitions for fighter jets and attack helicopters, Axios reported on Friday (January 4, 2025), citing two sources. “The President has made clear Israel has a right to defend its citizens, consistent with international law and international humanitarian law, and to deter aggression from Iran and its proxy organisations,” a U.S. official was quoted by Axios as saying. Except, all leading humanitarian agencies and rights watchdogs are repeatedly flagging gross violations of humanitarian law.

## India's Israel tilt

In this context, how do we understand India's tilt towards Israel, given that India has remained a steadfast supporter of Palestine in the post-Independence years? “The BJP,



free of the Congress's foreign policy legacy, made it a priority to improve ties with Israel. The party's rank and file watched Israel's tough security model with admiration. The majoritarian character of Zionism in Israel-Palestine and the majoritarian ideology of Hindutva of the BJP saw ideological resonance in each other. All these factors expedited India's gradual tilt towards Israel,” writes Stanly Johny. Read an excerpt from his new book *Original Sin*, published in *The Hindu* this weekend.

Top 5 stories this week:1. Bangladesh:The strain in New Delhi's ties with Dhaka persists. Bangladesh on Sunday (January 5, 2025) cancelled the visit by a del-

egation of its judicial officials to India. The cancellation is being interpreted as a hint that Bangladesh will reconsider some of the agreements and MoUs that were signed during the Hasina era as the training of judicial officials was part of one such bilateral MoU, Kallol Bhattacharjee reports.2. Balancing act: As the interim government of Muhammad Yunus is being pushed and pulled by different actors in a chaotic Bangladesh, the powerful military chief, who is already in charge of law and order, continues to play a balancing act between different power centres. Kallol Bhattacharjee profiles Gen. Waker-uz-Zaman. Hope you are following our weekly Profiles page, where we feature key figures

making news across the world.3. The Hindu Editorial on the latest in India-Bangladesh relations - Cost and benefit: On Bangladesh, India and Sheikh Hasina.4. Border dispute:India said it has lodged a “solemn protest” with China over the formation of two counties in the Hotan Prefecture that incorporates territory of India's Ladakh. Speaking to reporters during the weekly briefing on Friday (January 3, 2025), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal reminded China that India “never accepted” Beijing's “illegal occupation of Indian territory in this area”.5. The IS threat:In an Editorial on the New Orleans truck attack, *The Hindu* noted: “

## Thank Nehru for his One Nation, One Calendar reform

India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was not only an ardent nationalist and secularist, he was also a pragmatist who strongly felt the need for adopting a single calendar at least for public purposes. At the time of independence there were at least thirty different almanacs being used across different regions, religions and communities. Therefore, government of India set up a committee under the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research in November 1952 to “examine all the existing calendars which are being followed in the country at present and after a scientific study of the subject, submit proposals for an accurate and uniform calendar for the whole of India”. In 1955, the committee, which was headed by eminent scientist Meghnad Saha and had as its members other distinguished scholars A C Banerji, K L Daftar, J S Karandikar, RV Vaidya, N C Lahiri and Gorakh Prasad, precluded the Gregorian and Islamic calendars and focused on the Buddhist, Hindu and Jaina calendars. At its request to Panchang (almanac) makers, the committee received 60 different calendars from across India reflecting the problem that had been underlined by Nehru. “I am told that we have at present thirty different calendars, differing from each

other in various ways, including the methods of time reckoning. These calendars are the natural result of our past political and cultural history and partly represent past political divisions in the country. Now that we have attained independence, it is obviously desirable that there should be a certain uniformity in the calendar for our civic, social and other purposes and that this should be based on a scientific approach to this problem”, Nehru wrote to the committee. Measuring time in terms of regnal years or since the time of coronation of a king is one of the oldest forms of a calendar that we have evidence of in India. In the Ashokan edict discovered at Rampurva (Bihar) bordering Nepal, the great Mauryan emperor forbids the needless killing of animals. The edict begins with establishing time, “King Devanampriya Priyadansin speaks thus. After twenty-six years had elapsed since coronation...”, the rest of the edict goes on to prohibit the killing of various kinds of animals, including fishes and birds. In another part of the edict there is reference to various days according to the movement of the moon, it says, “On the eighth paksa, on the 14th, and the 15th (new moon) on the Tisya and Punarvasu Naksatra days (On these days, he forbids the castration of bulls).” Based on this edict we know

that regnal years were used for dating and the moon was used to identify days of full-moon and so on. It is generally accepted that emperor Ashoka's reign lasted for over 36 years between 268 BCE and 232 BCE. It appears that other than regnal years such as cited above, Indian in the pre-Ashokan era must have relied on the lunisolar system to mark seasons and days. The Committee referred to the corpus of Vedic literature as a part of its study and found that “the most commonly used word for year in the Indian literature is Varsa or Vatsara. The word Varsa is very similar to the rainy season, and is probably derived from it. But curiously enough, this word is not found in Rig-Vedas. But the words Sharad (Autumn), Hemanta (early Winter) etc., are very often found to denote seasons and sometimes years.” The Committee studied the Brahmanical-Hindu almanacs and found they were based on Siddhanta Jyotish, which succeeded Vedanga Jyotish in the early centuries of the Common era i.e around 400 CE, since then Hindus have relied on Siddhanta Jyotish to create almanacs. They also found that there were several eras that were used such as the Vikram Samvat (prevalent in north India), the Saka, Kushan among others. The Com-

mittee noted, “In India, nearly 30 different eras were or are used which can be classified as follows: (1) Eras of foreign origin, e.g., the Christian era, the Hijiri era, and the Tarikh Ilahi of Akbar. (2) Eras of purely Indian origin Vikram, Saka etc (3) Hybrid eras which came into existence in the wake of Akbar's introduction of Tarikh Ilahi.” Bemoaning the situation and attributing it to ‘Kalyuga’ is a common Indian trait, its historicity is taken for granted. However, the earliest evidence for Kaliyuga dates back to about 499 CE. “It is first mentioned by Aryabhata, the great astronomer of ancient Pataliputra, who says that 3600 years of the Kaliyuga had passed when he was 23 years old which is Saka year 421 (499 A. D.). It is not mentioned earlier either in books or in inscriptions. The first mention of this era in an inscription is found in the year 634-35 A.D., the inscription being that of king Pulakesin II of the Chalukya dynasty of Badami, or somewhat earlier in a Jain treatise. It was most probably an era invented on astrological grounds just like the era of Nabonassar, by Aryabhata or some other astronomer, who felt that the great antiquity of Indian civilisation could not be described by the eras then in use (Saka, Chedi or Gupta era), as they were too recent”, the Committee noted.



# Hospital admission after taking hallucinogens triples risk of schizophrenia: study

A link between taking hallucinogenic drugs and psychosis has long been suspected. Given the recent increase in people taking these drugs, a research group in Canada wanted to know if there was an association between people going to hospital because of problems related to these drugs and subsequent mental ill health – specifically, schizophrenia spectrum disorder. Schizophrenia spectrum disorder, or SSD, is defined as either schizophrenia itself or “schizoaffective disorder” – a condition with similar symptoms to schizophrenia (such as hallucinations and delusions), but including depression or mania. This was a retrospective study where hospital records of people living in Ontario were examined from the years 2008 to 2021. Over 5,000 people were found to have visited the emergency department for a reason related to hallucinogen use. Of these, 208 (4%) were subsequently found to develop SSD within three years. After taking age and sex into account, this equated to a 21-fold increase in the chances of developing SSD. However, after the data was further adjusted to take into account other mental health factors and other drug use, the increased likelihood of developing SSD dropped to 3.5-fold – which is still a considerable increase in risk. Alcohol is a much bigger risk factor

Further analysis of the data revealed that emergency department visits because of problems related to alcohol use resulted in a 4.7-fold risk of developing SSD. In contrast, visits to the emergency department for cannabis use resulted in a 1.5-fold increased risk. So alcohol-related visits were more likely to result in a diagnosis of SSD than hallucinogens, with visits associated with cannabis the least likely to result in an SSD in the next three years. Much has been said about how dangerous certain drugs are, but this was often done without looking at all the evidence. In 2009, Professor David Nutt, then the UK government’s drugs adviser, published a rating of drug dangers – not only danger to the user but also to others. Controversially, it was revealed that alcohol, despite being freely available, was the most dangerous drug, followed by heroin and crack cocaine. LSD and magic mushrooms (both hallucinogens) were found to be at the opposite end of the scale – and of relatively little danger. If the Canadian study holds true, then hallucinogens may need to be nudged slightly higher up the danger scale. The first study to definitively show a link between cannabis use and schizophrenia was conducted in 1987 and examined 45,000 Swedish soldiers. They found that those soldiers with high cannabis use (more than 50 uses) had a sixfold greater chance of developing schizophrenia over 15 years. It is unclear why the Canadian study’s risk for cannabis is so low (1.47) compared with the findings from the Swedish study, but it might be related to differences in cannabis use and length of follow-up period (three years versus 15 years). Hallucinogens to treat psychiatric conditions There is a lot of excitement among the psychiatric community about recent clinical trials showing that LSD and psilocybin could be useful for treating several psychiatric conditions.

The doses used in these trials are, presumably, similar to those used by illicit drug

users as both groups of users need to achieve a psychoactive effect. The main difference may be in frequency of use. For example, a single dose of psilocybin can improve depression symptoms for up to three months in those who haven’t responded to other treatments. Similarly, a single dose of LSD can reduce anxiety for up to 16 weeks. Illicit users would take these drugs more often. There is little evidence to suggest that occasional clinical use of hallucinogens has long-term harms. Nevertheless, those patients being treated with hallucinogens should be followed for ten or more years to ensure that these treatments are safe. One of the limitations of the Canadian study is that it has no details on the types of hallucinogens taken. Another issue is that these drugs, being illicit, may well have had contaminants cut into them, so it’s unclear what exactly these patients had taken. Despite these draw-



backs, this study does pose important questions about the use of hallucinogens in the

clinic and provides further evidence of the dangers of alcohol abuse.

## The most spectacular technologies you’ll see in 2025

In many ways, 2024 was a pivotal year for many technological upheavals, long coming crashing towards us. From new advances in AI, space travel to automated vehicles and robots, from carbon engineered clouds to carbon sequestration, from astronomical achievements in telescope tech to decoding DNAs for genetic therapy, this past year has suddenly accumulated a lot of breakthroughs in pivotal technologies humanity has been striving in for decades. It’s a spectacular time to be in. It’s also uncomfortable and downright scary. The world as we know will soon change dramatically. Two weeks ago, Google’s quantum computing lab announced Willow, its new computer chip that takes five minutes to perform a task that’ll take today’s supercomputers 10 septillion (that is, 10<sup>25</sup>) years to do. That’s more than the age of the Universe.

If computing becomes that efficient at the cost of a shampoo bottle, we will all be able to mine our own bitcoin with nail-sized computers. Google’s announcement has already shaken up the crypto industry, right after Trump’s second presidential win had made them bullish. At these speeds of computing, not only crypto, but banking and governmental systems and digital security are also predicted to fail. AI and quantum computing have started a new era of digital tech race between US and China. After banning sales of semiconductors to China, a couple of months ago, the US government has finalised rules that will limit investments in critical technologies like AI and quantum, citing national security as a reason.

We have entered a new singularity. Frankly, we’ve already been grappling with tech singularity ever since ChatGPT was released and we started using AI to compose, summarise, design and create videos and photos for us. As Sergey Brin told me earlier this year in Google I/O, AI has gone way beyond anyone’s expectations. When the 2024 Nobel prizes in Physics and Chemistry were awarded to

computer scientists for their work in AI, it was clear there would be a gold rush to use this new technology in basic science. Potentially, artificial intelligence could be a new tool for the 21st century, as much like microscopes or telescopes were for the 17th century. Though there are challenges to this – science labs need engineers to create their own AI models to run simulations and massive amounts of data in their sub-field – we are already seeing new breakthroughs. AI is being used with other technologies like CRISPR to create new proteins and improve precision, efficiency and affordability of genome editing. Gene therapy and customised medication for individuals will soon become a reality. Robotics has also been revitalised thanks to new directions in AI. Autonomous vehicles have become the norm on Bay Area roads, security robots and household robots are also making headway into our lives. With the launch of Meta RayBan Smart Glasses, lens technology has finally caught up with Mark Zuckerberg’s dreams. Augmented reality is being introduced in cheaper, more accessible products. Solos has just launched a camera-equipped smart glass AirGoVision for \$299 which has inbuilt AI. In 2025, we will see new, finer versions of AR gadgets that will allow us to scan the room, know names of strangers through face recognition and translate what we’re seeing through our glasses. Apple’s attempt at bulky virtual reality, the Vision Pro, didn’t take off, but it shows that the most style tech product company has committed to the AR/VR space. There’s also been a quiet revolution in the area of decentralised webAs Big Tech strangles the internet and our communication with walled gardens, tired of monocultures of Internet, and of businessmen and politicians taking over, people online are moving towards decentralised subcultures, subreddits, newsletters, RSS feeds and even blogs. Earlier this year, folks at ActivityPub launched fediverse – a protocol much like phone porting, but for social media. Post anything on Instagram, X, SnapChat, TikTok,

LinkedIn, YouTube and all your followers will see it. If you want to move followers and content from one platform to another, you can. It’s still under the radar but has already been gaining ground thanks to walled frustrations. We will see more people choosing social network porting in 2025 and it will yet again change digital communications. AI needs massive electricity, so fusion is back. As energy drove the industrial age, it’s set to drive these technological advances. Some estimates say that one ChatGPT query requires 10 times the electricity as a Google search. More electricity means more fossil fuels, pushing back any advances we’ve had tackling climate change. Instead of tempering their pace, power-hungry Big Tech have instead powered up research in alternate fuels and clean energy to try and keep their Net Zero goals commitments. This year saw all Big Tech from Amazon to OpenAI to Google are setting up massive datacentres that’ll need lots of energy and fund carbon capture and fusion startups. Microsoft has already bought fusion power that Helion will begin producing, Alphabet is behind California-based TAE. Two global initiatives will push government-funded fusion energy in 2025 – ITER, a flagship intergovernmental fusion collaboration and SPARC, a reactor sitting in MIT that’ll be tested in the next year. In November this year, COP29 agreed on international carbon market standards. This allows countries and companies to trade credits to meet their climate targets. Activities include protecting carbon sinks, but also clean-energy alternatives and carbon sequestration. Formalising this means the carbon capture startups and initiatives will get a huge leg-up and new infusion of funding. Already, Heirloom Carbon, a direct air capture company has secured \$150 million. Though it’s still in a nascent stage, carbon capture and other technology initiatives have caught on the imagination of tech-optimistic billionaires and we will see more headway in this in the coming years.



# Astronomers build galaxy-sized 'detector' to map universe's vibrations

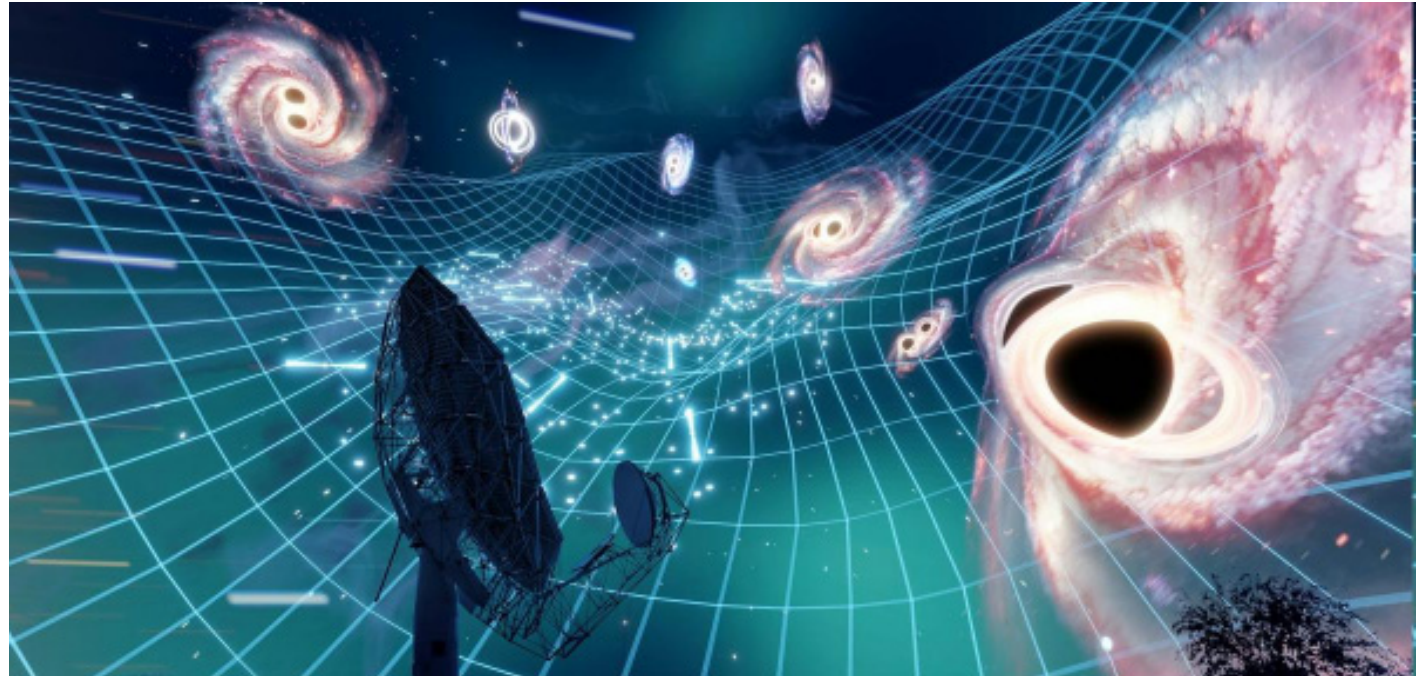
Using the largest gravitational wave detector ever made, we have confirmed earlier reports that the fabric of the universe is constantly vibrating. This background rumble is likely caused by collisions between the enormous black holes that reside in the hearts of galaxies. The results from our detector – an array of rapidly spinning neutron stars spread across the galaxy – show this “gravitational wave background” may be louder than previously thought. We have also made the most detailed maps yet of gravitational waves across the sky, and found an intriguing “hot spot” of activity in the Southern Hemisphere. Our research is published today in three papers in the *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society*. Ripples in space and time Gravitational waves are ripples in the fabric of space and time. They are created when incredibly dense and massive objects orbit or collide with each other.

The densest and most massive objects in the universe are black holes, the remnants of dead stars. One of the only ways to study black holes is by searching for the gravitational waves they emit when they move near each other. Just like light, gravitational waves are emitted in a spectrum. The most massive black holes emit the slowest and most powerful waves – but to study them, we need a detector the size of our galaxy.

The high-frequency gravitational waves created by collisions between relatively small black holes can be picked up with Earth-based detectors, and they were first observed in 2015. However, evidence for the existence of the slower, more powerful waves wasn't found until last year. Several groups of astronomers around the world have assembled galactic-scale gravitational wave detectors by closely observing the behaviour of groups of particular kinds of stars. Our experiment, the MeerKAT Pulsar Timing Array, is the largest of these galactic-scale detectors. Today we have announced further evidence for low-frequency gravitational waves, but with some intriguing differences from earlier results. In just a third of the time of other experiments, we've found a signal that hints at a more active universe than anticipated. We have also been able to map the cosmic architecture left behind by merging galaxies more accurately than ever before. Black holes, galaxies and pulsars

At the centre of most galaxies, scientists believe, lives a gargantuan object known as a supermassive black hole. Despite their enormous mass – billions of times the mass of our Sun – these cosmic giants are difficult to study. Astronomers have known about supermassive black holes for decades, but only directly observed one for the first time in 2019. When two galaxies merge, the black holes at their centres begin to spiral towards each other. In this process they send out slow, powerful gravitational waves that give us an opportunity to study them.

We do this using another group of exotic cosmic objects: pulsars. These are extremely dense stars made mainly of neutrons, which may be around the size of a city but twice as heavy as the Sun. Pulsars spin hundreds of times a second. As they rotate, they act like lighthouses, hitting Earth with pulses of radiation from thousands of light years away. For some pulsars, we can pre-



dict when that pulse should hit us to within nanoseconds. Our gravitational wave detectors make use of this fact. If we observe many pulsars over the same period of time, and we're wrong about when the pulses hit us in a very specific way, we know a gravitational wave is stretching or squeezing the space between the Earth and the pulsars. However, instead of seeing just one wave, we expect to see a cosmic ocean full of waves criss-crossing in all directions – the echoing ripples of all the galactic mergers in the history of the universe. We call this the gravitational wave background. A surprisingly loud signal – and an intriguing ‘hot spot’ To detect the gravitational wave background, we used the MeerKAT radio telescope in South Africa. MeerKAT is one of the most sensitive radio telescopes in the world. As part of the MeerKAT Pulsar Timing Array, it has been observing a group of 83 pulsars for about five years, precisely measuring when their pulses arrive at Earth. This led us to find a pattern associated with a gravitational wave background, only it's a bit different from what other experiments have found. The pattern, which represents how space and time between Earth and the pulsars is changed by gravitational waves passing between them, is more powerful than expected. This might mean there are more supermassive black holes orbiting each other than we thought. If so, this raises more questions – because our existing theories suggest there should be fewer supermassive black holes than we seem to be seeing. The size of our detector, and the sensitivity of the MeerKAT telescope, means we can assess the background with extreme precision. This allowed us to create the most detailed maps of the gravitational wave background to date. Mapping the background in this way is essential for understanding the cosmic architecture of our universe. It may even lead us to the ultimate source of the gravitational wave signals we observe. While we think it's likely the background emerges from the interactions of these colossal black holes, it could also stem from changes in the early, energetic universe following the Big Bang – or perhaps even more exotic events. The maps we've created show an intriguing “hot spot”

of gravitational wave activity in the Southern Hemisphere sky. This kind of irregularity supports the idea of a background created by supermassive black holes rather than other alternatives. However, creating a galactic-sized detector is incredibly complex, and

it's too early to say if this is genuine or a statistical anomaly. To confirm our findings, we are working to combine our new data with results from other international collaborations under the banner of the International Pulsar Timing Array.

## LG to unveil its “AI Home” concept vehicle at CES 2025



LG Electronics (LG) is redefining the boundaries of home and mobility at CES 2025 with its “Lifestyle Solution for Mobility” concept vehicle. At the heart of this vision is the LG Mobility Experience (MX) platform, an AI-powered innovation that seamlessly integrates the comfort and convenience of LG's AI Home solutions into vehicles. By leveraging advanced appliance technology and AI capabilities, LG introduces the concept of “Space-as-an-Experience.” The MX platform transforms a vehicle's interior into a multi-purpose, modular space that functions as an extension of the home, a media lounge, or even a creative studio. The concept reflects evolving consumer trends, where vehicles are being seen as personalized lifestyle spaces.

The MX platform features a dual-cabin design. The front cabin is dedicated to driving and operational functions, and the rear cabin can be customised to users' preferences. To make the MX platform widely accessible, LG plans to offer it as a subscription service

To make the MX platform widely accessible, LG plans to offer it as a subscription service | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement The modular rear cabin can be configured to suit various needs, such as a business lounge, relaxation zone, or creative studio. Users can select appliance and technology combinations that align with their lifestyles. The MX platform is powered by LG's ThinQ ON AI solution, an offering that personalises climate and lighting settings.



# The sorry state of India's parliamentary proceedings

The competitive disruptions of Parliament by both the Opposition and, more surprisingly, the Treasury benches, made the recently-concluded winter session of the legislature a travesty. There were more adjournments than discussions, hardly any work was done and the session was adjourned with the widespread sentiment that we had let down the people of India. A new nadir was plumbed when duelling demonstrations by Members of Parliament (MP) on the steps of the House led to accusations of assault and injury on both sides. For many of us who were brought up to regard Parliament as the temple of our democracy, its precincts as hallowed and its procedures and conventions as sacred, this seems a betrayal of everything the institution is supposed to represent as a cornerstone of our democracy. Why have things come to such a sorry state? One obvious reason (as in everything to do with Parliament) is precedent. The recent demise of the distinguished director, Shyam Benegal, reminded me of the time when he and I both served, as private citizens in 2007, on a round table of eminent Indians invited by then-Speaker Somnath Chatterjee to advise him in the performance of his duties. Our group, which included N.R. Narayana Murthy of 70-hour work week fame, unanimously called for strict enforcement of the rules to ensure higher standards of decorum and debate, and were promptly disabused by the Speaker of our illusions. Disruptions, he said, occurred because an outnumbered Opposition saw them as part of their democratic rights; to thwart them by invoking the rule book would be condemned by all parties, including the ruling party, as undemocratic. So suspending, let alone expelling, MPs was not an option he could easily exercise.

'Part of convention' now, decline of civility Whatever the merits of this method of parliamentary protest — and, personally, it is not something I have ever cared for — it has become part of the convention of Indian parliamentary practice. Speaker of the Lok Sabha Meira Kumar, whose decency and gentility were shamefully abused by a belligerent Bharatiya Janata Party, still averred that it would be wrong to expel unruly Opposition members without an all-party consensus on doing so.

Though Speakers of the Lok Sabha Sumitra Mahajan and Om Birla have proved more willing to suspend members — Mr. Birla essentially denuded the Lok Sabha of all opposition while steamrolling several Bills through the 2023 winter session — they have usually preferred adjournment to expulsion. A second factor is, undoubtedly, the acrimony that now prevails between the government and the Opposition. Traditionally, a sense of civility has always reigned in our politics: Atal Bihari Vajpayee loved telling the stories of Jawaharlal Nehru's courtesy to him as a young firebrand Opposition leader, Rajiv Gandhi contriving to get him medical attention in the United States, and, most famously, P.V. Narasimha Rao sending him to Geneva as the head of the Indian delegation to a United Nations meeting on Kashmir.

Today, such episodes are inconceivable. Each side sees itself as the embodi-

ment of righteous virtue, and the others of irredeemable evil. To the ruling party, the Opposition is "anti-national"; the Opposition in turn imagine themselves as doughty outnumbered Pandavas facing the might (and the unfair means) of the Kauravas in power. Democracy requires both sides to accept, as a presumption, the good faith of the other; on all sides of our political divides, we must believe that those on the other side also have the best interests of the nation at heart, and that our disagreements are only over how to achieve them. But in Indian politics today, government and Opposition see each other as enemies, not mere adversaries. Common ground then becomes hard to find. It is sad that our national politics has witnessed such a breakdown in the relationship of trust that, in any democracy, ought to exist between the government and the Opposition. Both sides are equally guilty: the present ruling party was just as bad when it was in Opposition. The very BJP politicians who had argued the case for disruption — who had used sophistry to justify obstructing the work of Parliament for years in the cause of the higher principle of accountability — suddenly decided that on this issue, where you stand depends on where you sit. Now that they are sitting on the Treasury benches, disruption is wasteful and condemnable. The Opposition, once their victims, will have none of it. Those of us who attended missionary schools learned the golden rule: do unto others as you would have them do unto you. The new golden rule of Indian politics has become: do unto them what they did unto you. The representative in today's Parliament Third, arguably, is the public's own diminished expectations from parliamentarians. Gone are the days when skilled debaters and orators held sway on the floor of the legislature, winning public adulation (in those pre-television days) from admiring accounts of their speeches alone. A Ram Manohar Lohia, a Nath Pai, a George Fernandes, a Madhu Limaye, a P. V. N. Mody, or a Minoo Masani acquired political importance and stature, out of all proportion to the size of their parties, because of accounts of their verbal duels with a Nehru or an Indira Gandhi. Today there are no equivalents: while the occasional reasoned or impassioned speech enjoys a brief virality on YouTube or WhatsApp, these are few and far between, and the opportunities to deliver them are rarer still. Instead, there is a clear disconnect between electability and parliamentary performance. People are elected or re-elected for reasons other than their ability to skewer a Minister in Question Hour or tear a government proposal apart through reasoned argument. The quality and the character of political representation has a direct correlation to the quality and the character of floor debates as well. When MPs are corralled by their Whips into breaking all the rules they are sworn to uphold, to troop into the well of the House and disrupt the proceedings through shouting and sloganeering rather than effective preparation and forensic skill, they are being judged by their leaders on qualities other than effective parliamentarianism. The talent that should be exhibited on the floor of the House is now paraded in television studios instead. The



public in turn no longer judges their representatives by their performance in Parliament but by the constituent services they render and the local political weight they command. Most of the names I mentioned earlier would not find it easy to be re-elected in today's environment. Disruption and contempt

Parliamentary standards have been in free fall for a generation. No one is elected or defeated at the polls because of their performance in Parliament. Most MPs have limited interest in legislation and prefer to disrupt the proceedings rather than debate the principles. Meanwhile, the BJP government refuses to reach out to the Opposition and is content to ride roughshod over it to pass its Bills. Its contempt for the legislature is barely concealed. Unlike Jawaharlal Nehru, who attended Parliament daily, Prime Minister Narendra Modi barely deigns to grace the

House with his presence. In the last few years, the government has been increasingly treating Parliament as a noticeboard for the announcement of its decisions and a rubber stamp for legalising them, rather than as a consultative body in a deliberative democracy. The diminishing of Parliament in our political life is deeply damaging to our democracy. Sadly, its custodians are allowing it to be robbed of all value, to the point where the public will not miss it when it is gone. But when it is gone, what will remain of our democracy? Shashi Tharoor is the fourth-term Congress Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) for Thiruvananthapuram and the Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs. He is the award-winning author of 26 books and the recipient of the Sahitya Akademi award, the Crossword Lifetime Achievement Award, and other distinctions



If you sell China Manja, you will go to jail: SI Sangareddy: Local SI Narayana has warned that strict action will be taken if China Manja is sold by the government in Raikode mandal. He said that a special drive is being conducted on the sale of Manja as per the orders of the District SP. He said that cases will be registered against the shops

and those who sell China Manja will be sent to jail. Legal action will be taken against those who sell China Manja as well as those who use it. He said that people should be aware of the dangers of China Manja to people as well as motorists and birds. If anyone is selling China Manja in the area, he asked them to call the local police station or dial 100 and provide information.