

A decade of transformation, outpacing India's major cities in growth, says Knight Frank report

Hyderabad: Hyderabad has emerged as one of India's fastest-growing cities, outpacing other major urban centers over the past decade. Under the BRS government led by K. Chandrashekar Rao and K.T. Rama Rao, the city has achieved significant strides across multiple sectors, becoming a key player in the nation's urban transformation.

According to a latest report by Knight Frank India, Hyderabad's real estate market has been a standout performer, with a 10 per cent Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR 2013-2023) in residential launches over the last decade—the highest among the six cities analyzed. In 2023, residential prices rose by 11 per cent. Not only is Hyderabad thriving in real estate, but it is also making waves in socio-economic growth. The city ranks second in socio-economic parameters, fueled by a growing population of High Net-Worth Individuals (HNWIs) and Ultra High Net-Worth Individuals (UHNWIs). When it comes to physical infrastructure, Hyderabad secured second place in rankings, following Delhi-NCR. The report attributes this growth to city's robust and well-

planned network of roads, flyovers, underpasses, and wide ring roads. "The government has also invested strategically in key infrastructure projects, such as Hyderabad Metro Rail, ring roads etc," it added. These infrastructure upgrades have not only bolstered real estate but also strengthened Hyderabad's position as a competitive economic hub.

The city also shines in governance, ranking second alongside Ahmedabad. In a comparative analysis with other major cities like Bengaluru, Delhi-NCR, and Mumbai, Hyderabad stands out. While Bengaluru excels in talent and its start-up ecosystem, and Delhi-NCR leads in physical infrastructure and governance, Hyderabad has maintained consistent leadership in real estate growth and balanced progress across all other parameters. This positions the city as a model of sustainable urban development in India. Ranking based on Socio-Economics (Source: Knight Frank India): 1. Bengaluru 2. Hyderabad 3. Mumbai MMR 4. Chennai 5. Delhi-NCR 6. Ahmedabad. Ranking based on Real Estate (Source: Knight Frank India): 1.



Hyderabad 2. Bengaluru 3. Mumbai MMR 4. Delhi-NCR 5. Ahmedabad 6. Chennai. Ranking based on Physical Infrastructure (Source: Knight Frank India): 1. Delhi-NCR 2. Hyderabad 3. Mumbai MMR 4. Bengaluru 5. Ahmedabad 6. Chennai. Ranking based on Governance (Source: Knight Frank India): 1. Delhi-NCR 2. Hyderabad 3. Ahmedabad 4. Mumbai MMR 5. Bengaluru 6. Chennai

Tensions escalate again over Nagarjuna Sagar Project control and surveillance



Hyderabad: It has been nearly one year since the confrontation between Andhra Pradesh and Telangana over the operational control of the Nagarjuna Sagar Project, which was statutorily assigned to Telangana under the State Reorganisation Act. Telangana tourism Despite efforts to defuse the situation, tensions continue to escalate. Adding a fresh flare-up to the situation, efforts made for restoration of the CCTV camera network on the 13 gates of the AP stretch of the Nagarjuna Sagar Dam were thwarted. The cameras were allegedly smashed by the

security personnel engaged by AP causing a setback for surveillance and water management. The damage to the CCTV equipment, valued at Rs 40 lakh, raised serious concerns about the dam's security and the monitoring of water resources. Even the weekly appraisal of water drawl made by the two States from the project conducted by the officials from both States, had become increasingly contentious. Telangana engineers, who travel to the AP end of the dam to take water readings, are reportedly being obstructed, adding to the tensions in executing

this routine exercise. Telangana tourism These issues have been taken up with the Krishna River Management Board (KRMB), which oversees the management and distribution of water resources in the Krishna basin. With AP has reverted to its earlier tactics of disrupting cooperative project management, friction is being built up once again between the two States. The efforts being made to restore the surveillance cameras are being thwarted. Despite these challenges being taken up with the KRMB, a concrete action plan has yet to be formulated. The project needs to be entirely under the operational control of Telangana, demand irrigation officials from the State. On November 29, 2023, AP police descended on the

dam site, causing considerable damage to the infrastructure and blocking the passage from the Telangana end to the AP stretch. They occupied 13 of the gates on its side calling for the intervention of the Union Home Secretary who called for the status quo to be restored.

As per his directions the project's operational control should be handed over to Telangana. However, this has not yet happened. Telangana tourism The Telangana government plans to make a strong case for regaining control of the project at the upcoming Krishna River Management Board meeting, originally scheduled for November 21, but postponed at the request of the AP government.

IOCL donates boom lift vehicle and Rs 2.2 lakh grant to AWCS for rehabilitation centre in Sangareddy

Sangareddy: Impressed by the work of the Animal Warriors Conservation Society (AWCS), Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) donated a boom lift vehicle by spending Rs 28 lakhs to the AWCS at its rehabilitation centre on Friday. The IOCL also had given another Rs 2.2 lakh grant to the AWCS to help the society to build a press-release unit for injured birds at AWCS's rehabilitation centre at Bommanikunta in Patancheru. Executive Director of IOCL Anil Kumar

handed over the boom-lift vehicle to AWCS founders Pradeep Nair and Santoshi and also inaugurated the pre-release unit. Speaking on the occasion, Anil Kumar said that they were impressed by the work of AWCS woman volunteer Santoshi, whom they saw rescuing a black kite trapped on a tower at IOCL head office in Hyderabad. He said then they have decided to support them in carrying out such work and do their bit for the cause.

Are personal coaches better or could Indian shuttlers benefit from training in a group?

It's been a slow, fraying year for Indian badminton – its first without an Olympic medal in a dozen years. Unsurprisingly, it has coincided with scant results worth noting and a breathless wait by fans for assorted coaches to wave magic wands, that will throw up results, even while the athletes haven't been in peak shape or greatest of headspaces. And while forgetting that there's been a steady slide in the number of matches won, let alone titles secured. For the form that he went into the Olympics with, Lakshya Sen over-achieved. A semifinal finish where neither Chinese nor Indonesians made the Last 4, and a leadup where he himself hadn't been amongst titles, will be considered creditable. For the physical preparation he had put in, and what his eclectic, clever game is capable of, losing to Lee Zii Jia was a disappointment. Especially when top coaches agree he could have even taken down Viktor Axelsen, had he kept his nerve. The two losses from leading positions in the semis and bronze play-off, simultaneously highlight the importance of the coach in pinpoint strategy, and their helplessness in getting their players to deliver at the crunch. A coach is only as good as the results. This welds into the larger, heated debate of whether personal coaches are good for the shuttlers. And by being good, we solely mean whether they can get the athletes the results on the court, in sheer Ws. Wins. For a long time, the chatter about in-bound foreign coaches, who athletes prefer for personalised attention, has been a source of mid-level annoyance for the national coach, Pullela Gopichand. It's simply because the results have not followed in singles. And doubles went down the same route in Paris.

PV Sindhu was good for gold in Tokyo but pushed herself into one right corner, dominated by a coaching conundrum. Park Tae Sang wasn't the smartest of career choices, given the nature of her game, which went into reverse with the defensive overtones. And without a second voice telling her to retain the attacking verve, and nerve. Agus Dwi Santoso was much the same – a brilliant coach for rally specialists, but dimming the spark of the tall athlete's ferocious offensive attack. Prakash Padukone couldn't quite prop up the backsliding game, though Anup Sridhar and Lee Hyun-il will now attempt the improbable. In hindsight, the whole world will chorus in with this insight, but Sindhu opting for a support team with a personal coach, needed the dissenting voice, even if abrasive, to get her back on track five years ago. Both Park and Agus were not particularly strict coaches, they would coax and convince and it kept her in a reasonably happy space. But they weren't necessarily great for her game, and results. Kidambi Srikanth blundered from one wrong call on personal coach to the next, and then the next, looking for that elusive magic-wand that could set things right. He reckoned the World Championships silver in 2021 was the formula, and continued to chase the mirage of a wonder-coach. A precociously, creative talent, all he needed was some detached honesty in telling him that physically he wasn't at the level where he could consistently trouble big names. And beautiful, bold game styles like his, needed a very strong base, to pull it off in big events, where he had a natural disadvantage in his perpetual irritation for slow courts. Srikanth's

game was more special than the rest, and everyone from Gopichand to Parupalli Kashyap would agree. But it did not warrant special seclusion, and would have bloomed even in group sessions.

HS Prannoy put in those hard yards to resuscitate a career, albeit late in the day. But what he did not demand, as right, was personalised attention of the chief coach, by simply trusting him to plan and chip in exactly when needed. Even B Sai Praneeth briefly fell into the quagmire of wanting monopolised attention and never recovered from that. These are intelligent, highly talented and skilled shuttlers with no malice in them. Passing envy? Sure. But nothing too unhealthy. Lasting resentment? Not at all. They won India a Thomas Cup, on sheer teamwork. They bond reasonably well. But self-defeating career calls on the coaching choices? Those are plenty. Perhaps the one male shuttler who genuinely had the right to feel ignored was Kashyap. Because Gopichand was far too focussed on taking Saina Nehwal and then Sindhu to the very top. He once even left him midway through a match at the World Championships, to tend to Saina's game. It cost him a World's medal, but Kashyap went on to marry the source of his grief, and the two vowed to merrily joke about it, ever after. Kashyap had the maturity to understand that Saina's and Sindhu's careers were headed for dizzy heights. The one notable success was Saina Nehwal, seeking out monastic focus in Bengaluru, as she searched for an elusive World Championships medal. But Nehwal was always self-driven, and could squeeze the best knowl-



edge out of any coach. There's no telling if both she and Sindhu could have achieved far more had they sparred together and not chased exclusivity of attention. At any rate, they extracted plenty out of their rivalry – it added to India's titles. But both careers eventually careened off the track, when even greater feats were possible. Lakshya has demanded a similar bespoke, unique status with his coaching calls, though letting go of Anup Sridhar with whom he won his last title and bringing back the Korean months before Paris are debatable. And he was chastised by Padukone. While it is utmost important for athletes to be happy and relaxed, they often need to step out of comfort zones where they are the centre of their universe, and listen to harsh words, and feel not-so-special, so that the game gets better. It is here that group training acquires relevance. It keeps egos in check, self-assessments are non-delusional, the sparring is infinitely better, and the feedback is diverse. Even a trivial 3v3 session, fooling around trying trick shots can

pep up the drudgery and reduce inwardly-obsessed stress. Multiple coaches can offer varied insights, and it's easier to move from one title success to the next, or one first-round exit to the next sobering failure, in the company of others traversing the same path. The finances too work out better – one reason why Chinese and Indonesians prefer that system, and eventually even Viktor Axelsen and Anders Antonsen rejoined their national centres. Shared resources are better utilised, expertise is readily available and wheels don't need reinventing. Star tantrums will be tolerated as long as the success comes but the wins have gone missing recently. And though the biggest names of Indian badminton will continue to resist group training, and fixate on personal coaches, they might just in heart of hearts know, that when success started trickling from 2008, it tossed up 10 different names, who each succeeded more than they do now. They thrived at a time when India boasted multiple title contenders who trained together.

More than one dataset can breach the 1.5°C threshold this year

The Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) forecast last week that 2024 is almost certain to be the first calendar year when the world's average temperature is warmer than the pre-industrial average by more than 1.5°C in its ERA5 dataset. The importance of this event was explained in this column last week. What is concerning about this year is that ERA5 is not the only dataset this year where global temperature is likely to be at least 1.5°C warmer than the pre-industrial average. An HT analysis shows that there is a good likelihood of this happening in at least two other datasets. Here is why.

Before one explains how multiple datasets are likely to breach the 1.5°C threshold this year, it is important to understand why there are multiple datasets for global temperature and why the level of global warming appears different in each of them. The reason why multiple datasets exist is that our measurements of temperature are not spread out uniformly across the globe. The multiple ways of making this data uniform produce the differences in the global average of different datasets. This is especially true of the temperature in the pre-industrial period (usually taken as the 1850-1900 period), where there are bigger geographical holes in the data. That's why different datasets disagree more on the pre-

industrial average than the current temperature or rate of warming.

The divergence between datasets also means that the breach of the 1.5°C threshold can be a staggered event, with different datasets reporting the event in different years. For example, of the five prominent global temperature datasets analysed here, one breached the threshold in 2023 itself; another three came close to the breach in 2023 and would appear to do so if the deviation in temperature was rounded off to one digit after decimal; and one was still around 0.2°C away from the threshold last year.

In the data we have for 2024 so far (for nine months in three of the five datasets and for ten months in two), the average warming is above the 1.5°C threshold in all but the dataset produced by NOAA. This means that most of them will breach the threshold for the year as a whole even if the remaining part of the year deviates less than 1.5°C above the pre-industrial average.

Since we know the average deviation required in the remaining part of the year for breaching the 1.5°C threshold, we can also calculate how much sequential temperature change is required. For example, the data produced by Berkeley Earth will show a breach unless the average temperature in October-December cools down compared

to July-September by at least 0.42°C. On the other hand, the data produced by NOAA will not show a breach unless the last three months warm up by 0.42°C compared to July-September.

Calculating the required sequential temperature change is useful because it is not very easy to quickly change the global average temperature in a big way. If the world needs to cool down by a large quantum in a particular dataset for the breach to not happen, the dataset will likely record a breach.

For example, the GISTEMP data produced by NASA requires that the world cooldown by at least 0.28°C in November-December compared to September-October. This level of sequential cooling has happened in 31 such sequential changes out of 1,735 available in the data (1.8%).

This means that the likelihood of GISTEMP not recording a breach is low. On the other hand, ERA5 data has never recorded the required sequential cooling of 0.54°C in its dataset that begins in 1940. This is one reason why C3S is almost certain of a 1.5°C breach in its dataset this year. As the accompanying chart shows, on the basis of past statistics alone, the probability of the breach not happening is very low in three out of five datasets.

India's race to eliminate dog-mediated rabies by 2030: experts stress the need for a 'One Health' approach

India has made significant strides in reducing human rabies deaths over the past two decades. However, achieving the goal of eliminating dog-mediated rabies by 2030 will require accelerated efforts and a focused, 'One Health' approach, experts say. The One Health strategy highlights integrating human and animal health measures to address rabies at its roots. Key steps identified include strengthening both human and animal surveillance systems, ensuring timely and complete administration of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for those exposed to the virus, and scaling up dog vaccination efforts across the country. While rabies cases have declined, experts warn that without these integrated actions, India may struggle to meet the 2030 target. A recent study published in *The Lancet* highlights the public health challenge of rabies in India. Using a nationwide, community-based cross-sectional survey, researchers gathered data from 3.37 lakh individuals residing in 78,807 households across 60 districts in 15 states. The survey results estimated that India experiences approximately 9.1 million animal bites annually, with 76.8% attributed to dogs. The annual dog-bite incidence was calculated at 5.6 per 1,000 people.

Significant gaps in post-bite care were noted, as 20.5% of dog-bite victims received no anti-rabies vaccination (ARV), and among those who did receive ARV, nearly half of the 1,253 people who started the vaccination course did not complete it. This lapse in vaccination adherence poses severe health risks, as the study estimates around 5,726 human rabies deaths each year, despite an overall reduction in deaths over recent decades. "To make rabies a disease of the past in India, it is essential to prioritise prevention, awareness, and vaccination efforts," says Ranga Reddy Burri, president of the Infection Control Academy of India. "Although human rabies deaths have declined, achieving the goal of eliminating dog-mediated cases by 2030 requires accelerated action. A robust One Health approach, combining human-animal surveillance, timely post-exposure prophylaxis, and extensive dog vaccination is vital. With the increase in pet ownership, responsible pet care and vaccination are also critical to this mission," Dr. Burri adds. In answer to a question in the Lok Sabha on July 30, 2024 on the stray dog menace in the country, Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Rajiv Ranjan Singh said that in 2023, India reported a total of 30.43 lakh dog bite cases, with 286 fatalities linked to these incidents. This data was gathered under the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. "According to the National Centre for Disease Control, 46,54,398 anti-rabies vaccinations were administered to individuals who sustained dog bites throughout the year," the Minister said.

The Minister also said that the government had introduced a rabies helpline (15400) in five States, with plans to expand it nationally. Additionally, the Rabies-Free Cities Initiative was launched to create rabies-free zones in Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities, with a structured rabies prevention and action plan. Shailaja Tetali, dean of research at the Indian Institute of Public Health (IIPH) Hyderabad, however noted that while the National Rabies Control Programme (NRCPP)

has successfully reduced rabies cases, addressing dog bites requires a comprehensive One Health approach. "To tackle dog bites effectively, we need coordinated efforts across surveillance, resources, training, collaboration, and public awareness," she explains. She highlighted the need for enhanced surveillance of dog bites across both public and private facilities, especially in remote areas. "Every case should be recorded, as data is critical to tackle the issue in underserved regions," she said. Dr. Tetali also stressed on stockpiling anti-rabies vaccines (ARV) to avoid shortages, and filling gaps in veterinary resources to support humane dog population control.

Specialised training for para-veterinary staff is essential, as many are often shifted into animal care without preparation. Collaboration among animal welfare boards, municipalities, NGOs, and resident associations is also necessary for effective dog population management. Dr. Tetali added that public awareness is also vital. "People need to respect animals' space and understand the importance of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) after contact with potentially rabies-carrying animals," she advised, noting that these measures can reduce rabies and dog bite incidents significantly. Awareness remains low

According to information in India's National Action Plan for Dog-Mediated Rabies Elimination (NAPRE) booklet, in India, rabies is transmitted commonly by dogs and cats (~97%), followed by wild animals (2%) such as mongoose, foxes, jackals, and wild dogs, and occasionally by horses, donkeys, monkeys, cows, goats, sheep, and pigs. Rodents, rats and bandicoots, squirrels, rabbits, birds, and bats are generally not known to transmit rabies. The presence of unvaccinated free-roaming dogs (FRD) or street dogs, amidst human settlements is a major contributor to the high incidence of rabies in India, which is



endemic. Apart from humans, rabies also causes significant mortality among livestock animals such as bovine, cattle and small animals. Kiran Madhala, professor of critical care medicine at Gandhi Medical College, Secunderabad, highlighted key findings from the multicentric rabies survey conducted by World Health Organization (WHO) in collaboration with the Association for Prevention and Control of Rabies in India (APCRI) in 2017 and 2018. "According to the study, almost 40% of participants had never even heard of rabies, which is alarming for a country aiming to control this disease," Dr. Kiran said. He explained that even among those who knew of rabies, one in four was unaware of its fatal nature. "While nearly everyone recognised bites as a means of transmission, only about half considered scratches, and only a third saw saliva contact as potential sources of infection." Dr. Kiran said the perceived risk varies by animal type. "Three-quarters of respondents viewed dogs as a rabies source, yet only about 20% associated the risk with cats or monkeys." Surprisingly, wild animals like mongooses or bats were rarely consid-

ered sources, with only 5-10% mentioning them, whereas some mistakenly believed rodents, birds, and even snakes were rabies risks, he added. The Supreme Court of India has issued several rulings and guidelines related to dog bites, addressing public safety, the responsibilities of dog owners, and animal welfare. In the *All Kerala Stray Dogs Eradication Group v. State of Kerala & Ors.* (2015) case, the Supreme Court dealt with rising concerns over stray dog attacks in Kerala, where the public expressed alarm at increasing incidents. The petitioners advocated for the eradication of stray dogs to protect public safety. However, the Supreme Court underscored a balanced approach, reiterating the need to handle stray dog populations in a humane and lawful manner. The Court directed the state to implement the Animal Birth Control (ABC) programme, which involves sterilising and vaccinating stray dogs as a sustainable solution to population control. Rejecting any immediate, drastic measures such as culling, the Court underscored the importance of protecting animal rights while ensuring public safety.

AI startup Perplexity adds shopping features as search competition tightens

The firm, backed by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos and leading AI chipmaker Nvidia, will give users product cards showing relevant items in response to questions related to shopping. Artificial intelligence search startup Perplexity on Monday launched a shopping hub to attract users, in a bid to beef up its platform as it attempts to take on Alphabet-owned Google's dominance in the search engine space. The firm, backed by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos and leading AI chipmaker Nvidia, will give users product cards showing relevant items in response to questions related to shopping.

Each card provides product details in a visual format, the company said. The new feature is powered by platform integrations including Shopify, which gives access to recent and relevant information on products from businesses on the Canadian e-commerce platform globally that ship to the United States. E-commerce platforms have focused on employing more AI-powered tools in an



effort to pull in more merchants. Perplexity's online shopping-focused rollout includes 'Snap to Shop' - a visual search tool that shows products based on users' photos of an item. The features are first launching in the United States and will later expand to other

markets, the timeline for which was not specified. Perplexity is also introducing a 'Merchant Program' to allow retailers to share product information with the company. The startup is raising new investment that would value it at \$9 billion.

Manipur as a case for imposing Article 356

The state of Manipur reflects a classic case of the failure of the constitutional machinery, necessitating invocation of Article 356 by the President of India. The President need not wait for the report from the Governor because, under this Article, the President can act if, "otherwise", satisfied that a situation has arisen in which the government of that State cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. In Manipur, the unprecedented and horrific violence that erupted in May 2023, continues unabated. B.R. Ambedkar, defining this extraordinary provision to the Constituent Assembly, on August 3, 1949 said, "I think I can well begin by reminding the House that it has been agreed by the House, where we were considering the general principles of the Constitution, that the Constitution should provide some machinery for the breakdown of the Constitution...." He further said, "I think as a necessary consequence to the introduction of article 277-A, we must also give liberty to the President to act even when there is no report by the Governor and when the President has got certain facts within his knowledge on which he thinks, he ought to act in the fulfilment of his duty."

Why Manipur is proving to be different

The President of India, Droupadi Murmu, has proved that she is conscious and sensitive about her constitutional functions. And she has the power coupled with duty to act as soon as possible. No State in India has seen such continuing violence among the common people. Violence on account of insurgencies did take place in Nagaland and Mizoram a long time ago and terrorism continues unabated in Jammu and Kashmir. But Manipur is a different situation where the ordinary people are not only becoming victims of violence but are also being forced to indulge in violence to protect themselves. It is important to refresh the nation with the lively debates on this Article in the Constituent Assembly proceedings of August 3-4, 1949. H.V. Kamath strongly opposed it, calling it as "A constitutional crime to empower the President to interfere", while Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar defended saying, "In the first place, I would explain the reason why the Article has been put in[,] making it the duty of the Union 'to maintain the Constitution'... if there is any unit ... any difficulty with regard to the proper working of the Constitution, it would be the obvious duty of the Union government to intervene and set matters right...." K. Santhanam stated, "Now, let us broadly analyse the circumstances in which these Articles can come into operation. There may be a physical breakdown of the Government in the State, as for instance, when there is widespread internal disturbance or external aggression or for some reason or other, law and order cannot be maintained. In that case, it is obvious that there is no provincial authority which can function and the only authority which can function is the Central Government, and in that contingency these articles are not only unobjectionable but absolutely essential and without it the whole thing will be in chaos." Thakur Das Bhargava said, "May I point out that the situation is one in which the entire machinery has failed, and ordinary people do not enjoy the common liberties? Internal disturbance to peace and tranquillity are all covered by this." Dr Ambedkar again rose on August 4, 1949 and responded, "...The expression 'failure of machinery' I find has been used in the Government of India

Act, 1935. Everybody must be quite familiar therefore with its de facto and de jure meaning..." and that, "...If at all they are brought into operation, I hope the President, who is endowed with these powers, will take proper precautions before actually suspending the administration of the provinces." The Article was thus passed.

The Supreme Court of India in a Public Interest Litigation on May 8, 2023, passed an order merely recorded, "The Solicitor General states that as a consequence of the measures which have been adopted, no violence has been reported in the State during the course of the previous two days and the situation is gradually returning to normalcy." It laid stress on the point of "the need to preserve law and order and, in particular, to provide relief and rehabilitation" and observed that "utmost vigil should be maintained to ensure that there is no recurrence of violence". The Court recorded assurance from the Union, "The Solicitor General has assured the Court that the concerns which have been placed on the record in the petition and in the additional affidavits which have been filed in the proceedings, shall be duly taken note of and such remedial steps as are required would be adopted on a proactive basis." But in July 2023 the Court, suo motu, took notice of the incident of May 4 where women were paraded naked by a mob. It observed, "The Court is deeply disturbed by the visuals which have appeared in the media since yesterday depicting the perpetration of sexual assault and violence on women in Manipur. What is portrayed in the media would indicate gross constitutional violations and infractions of human rights.



Using women as instruments for perpetrating violence is simply unacceptable in a constitutional democracy. "This Court must be apprised of the steps which have been and shall be taken by the government to (i) hold the perpetrators accountable; and (ii) ensure that such incidents are not repeated."

Between May 3 and November 11, 2024, more than 250 people have been killed and over a lakh of people displaced from their homes in the ethnic violence. Hundreds of temples, churches, homes and other places have been destroyed. Even on November 9, a mother of three was raped and killed and 17 houses set on fire. Clearly, the Supreme Court's intervention was slow and ineffective despite there having been 27 hearings. It is shocking that under the watchful eyes of the ultimate protector of fundamental

rights, the mayhem continues, depriving the three million people of Manipur of fundamental rights and their lives, liberty, dignity, and peace. Why have the top judges who were on the Bench been silent spectators? Does this not show that the Supreme Court is becoming weaker in recent years? Sectarian violence in Manipur is a matter of concern for India. It is surprising and shocking that the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is not able to stop the carnage. Whatever may be its compulsions, it should have acted decisively a long time ago. The Prime Minister should have acted decisively to bring back peace, harmony, justice, relief and rehabilitation. The situation demands the immediate intervention of the President. It is true that Article 356 has been more abused than used. But today, its invocation will be lauded nationally.

If your child is getting contact lenses, here's what you need to know

We live in the digital age and everything we, children included, do, involves digital devices – mobiles, tablets, and laptops. The amount of time children spend on these devices is enormous, given that there is no choice owing to the total transition from the manual, analog habit to the techno-digital habit. Reading is the most telling instance of this – with everything now on devices. While it is natural to think that children would increasingly wear glasses owing to this intense exposure, it is interesting to note that the use of contact lenses among them has gone up sharply. What are the benefits and risks involved and what are the precautions that kids need to take with regard to use of contact lenses? Here are some facts for you: the global children's eyewear market is poised to reach a valuation of USD 77.0 billion by 2034, showcasing a consistent growth trajectory. This anticipated expansion reflects a CAGR (compound annual growth rate) of 7.4% during the forecast period. And the Indian contact lenses market is expected to hit USD 314 million by 2030, growing at over 6% per annum by 2025-2030.

The use of contact lenses among children has gone up, as they increasingly seek alternatives to wearing glasses. While data on this varies by region and population, some reasons for the rise in the use of contact lenses may be because children feel self-conscious about wearing glasses, many

believe contact lenses are a style statement, they face peer pressure and comparisons, and many prefer the convenience of not having to wear glasses during sports or physical activities. The largest group of contact lens wearers are children in the age group of 13-17 years, who yearn for greater freedom in everything they do. There are younger ones in the age group of 8 to 12 years who wear contact lenses too, but the difference is their vision correction needs may be significant. Some children may also have certain medical conditions like severe nearsightedness or keratoconus for whom contact lenses may be necessitated. Modern contact lenses are also designed to be more comfortable and easier to care for, making them a more viable option for younger users. Additionally, innovations in materials used to make lenses have improved the overall safety and comfort for wearers. Interestingly, the high rate of myopia in children, particularly in urban areas, has led to more kids needing vision correction at a younger age. Contact lenses (such as ortho-k, to reshape the cornea) are also part of strategies to manage and slow down the progression of myopia. Advantages of contact lenses On the face of it, there are many positives that contact lenses have. They offer sharper and more comfortable vision compared to glasses, especially for those with high prescriptions or astigmatism. They are also practical for children who play

sports or are involved in physical activities, where glasses might be a hindrance or get damaged. Among many users, contact lenses boost confidence, particularly if they are self-conscious about wearing glasses or if glasses impact their social interactions. Most children use daily disposable lenses because they are more hygienic and don't require cleaning or special care. This also reduces the risk of infection, which can be a major concern for children. Ortho-k lenses to correct myopia have provided children with a non-surgical option that has gained traction, as they provide clear vision during the day without needing to wear contact lenses or glasses. Coloured lenses are also used for cosmetic reasons though this is not predominant.

What are the challenges?

While these are some advantages, there are also challenges involved in the use of contact lenses. Wearing contact lenses requires a certain level of responsibility and children need to understand how to insert, remove, clean, and store their lenses properly. Parents may have to help a great deal as many children may be too young to maintain them properly. The incorrect use of contact lenses may also increase the risk of eye infections, dryness, or irritation, and hence it is crucial to follow hygiene protocols -- wash hands before handling lenses and properly clean or dispose them.

Tanvi Patri – Indian badminton’s latest rising star

At the entrance of the sprawling Padukone-Dravid Centre for Sports Excellence in Bengaluru, a giant billboard showcasing the best achievements of the Centre’s wards welcomes visitors. Some of India’s most noted athletes, including Lakshya Sen, have had their photos splashed across, lending an additional circle of light to their already luminous halo. The latest to be given this prize of place is Tanvi Patri, the 13-year-old from Odisha who won the Asian U-15 girls’ singles title at Chengdu, China in August. A month later, at the sub-junior Nationals in Chennai, the Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy (PPBA) trainee clinched the U-15 and U-17 singles titles. Such was her dominance that in China she did not lose a single game across five matches. In Chennai, she dropped one across 12.

To be fair, Tanvi is not the first Indian girl to triumph in Asia in recent times; Samiya Imad Farooqui and Tasnim Mir have both notched up victories, in 2017 and 2019 respectively. But what’s astonishing about Tanvi’s success is her quality to not fall off the emotional cliff after winning one big tournament. It is this repeatability, coupled with the desire to constantly improve, that is perhaps telling her coaches and parents that she is really made for the big stage. What an incredible achievement! ?? Join us in congratulating Tanvi Patri from Odisha for her outstanding performance as the NATIONAL CHAMPION in both Under-15 and Under-17 Girls Singles! ?? We also celebrate Prateek Koundilya for earning a Bronze Medal in Under-17 Boys Singles pic.twitter.com/pWLRuCRkzy

Tanvi has had a beginning in badminton unlike many others’. She picked up the game as a six-year-old in China, where her father Rabinarayan Patri was working for an IT firm near Shanghai. A recreational player in his college days, Rabinarayan started playing the racquet sport in China and Tanvi just followed him. With English-medium schools hard to find, Tanvi played sport full-time while being home-schooled by her mother, Sailabala Panda, also an IT professional. Strong foundation “Till around eight-and-half years, she worked very hard,” Rabinarayan tells The Hindu. “We practised almost daily. Not only badminton, but even swimming and skating. The infrastructure there was outstanding and they were very welcoming. She won practically every badminton tournament she played, all the way up to the U-12 category. “I then found a couple of coaches there and they were very good. She received the basic foundation from them. It was not a very big academy; more like a club. But those two coaches had enough time and they spent that with Tanvi”.

When they saw Tanvi developing quickly, her training was shifted to Shanghai where there were senior coaches. They drove Tanvi 60 odd kilometres daily to Shanghai, made her train for five to six hours and got her back home in the evening. This went on for well over two years and celebrated Chinese coach Jiang Yong Yi, who has tutored many Olympic and World medallists, was among Tanvi’s early trainers. When the family had to return to India after Covid struck, it was this rigorous mentoring that held Tanvi in good stead. Jiang, in fact, has made mul-

iple visits to the PPBA to conduct coaching clinics, for the legendary Prakash Padukone and Dronacharya Awardee and PPBA director Vimal Kumar hold Jiang in high regard. In 2022, Rabinarayan sent a few videos of Tanvi for enrollment at PPBA and she was quickly absorbed after a few trial sessions. Celebrating success: Tanvi’s photo splashed across a billboard at the entrance of the Padukone-Dravid Centre for Sports Excellence. “It was her ability to play without making mistakes that impressed us,” recalls Vimal. “This is what we observed in Lakshya, Saina [Nehwal] and others. Even at a very small age, even when they did not have the strength, they somehow managed to keep the shuttle inside the court. The second thing we liked was the temperament. One should not be scared about playing anybody. That thrill was there, to just play and compete”. To punch above her weight and compete to higher age categories without fear is something Tanvi has done splendidly so far. It is a trait that binds her to the very best in Indian badminton – Saina and P.V. Sindhu. In fact on Sunday, Tanvi made the final in her maiden senior tournament, the CM Trophy India International Challenge in Raipur, before losing over three close games to Rakshitha Ramraj, four years her senior. From the qualifying rounds, she won seven matches in all, including the straight-games semifinal victory over 20-year-old Isharani Baruah, one of the best Indian youngsters. Tanvi picked up badminton as a six-year-old in China, where her father was working. Noted coach Jiang was one of her trainers and she made a mark by winning multiple titles up to U-12 category. The 13-year-old and her family shifted to India in 2020 after Covid struck. She joined the Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy (PPBA) in 2022, and now trains under Dronacharya Awardee Vimal and his team. Coaches at PPBA believe Tanvi is a quick-learner and match-aware. Her endurance and ability to stay in long rallies will keep her in good stead, they feel. Recently, she finished runner-up in her maiden senior tournament. Tanvi can further grow and realise her potential by competing more in East Asia, and with improvements in her strength and conditioning and net game, say experts

“Tanvi has that staying power,” opines Vimal. “Badminton is fast and intense. After you play a long rally, you are breathing to be normal for the next two or three points before gathering yourself. “But one has to understand that when you are playing a tough rally, your opponent will also be gasping for breath. In that next point, can you do better without catching a break? If you have that ability at a young age, that’s a plus. That’s what has helped her across age groups”. Umendra Singh Rana, a SAI coach who has been at PPBA for nearly a decade, says that Tanvi is a dream student when it comes to understanding and implementing strategies without letting competitive pressure get to her. “She is quite a quick learner,” Rana observes. “Whatever input she’s getting from you [the coach], she tries it immediately in the match situation. She’s also very consistent and will not make many mistakes. “There won’t be frequent changes in playing patterns which may lead to mis-



takes and the pressure being released. Whatever she does in practice, we can always expect her to do better in the competition. That is very rare,” he adds. All eyes: Tanvi’s concentration levels and poise under pressure have come for praise. All eyes: Tanvi’s concentration levels and poise under pressure have come for praise. | Photo Credit: SUDHAKARA JAINTanvi’s fledgling teenage promise comes at a time when Indian women’s singles is looking for the next big star after Saina and Sindhu to keep the conveyor belt of success moving. At the Uber Cup earlier this year in Chengdu, there were a few green shoots when a young team, sans Sindhu, qualified for the last eight. Tanvi’s rise is yet another green strand, and if not for her tender age and resultant ineligibility, she was even in line to be selected for the India U-19 team for the junior World Championships that were held in Nanchang (China) recently. But Vimal, ever the man to keep his students grounded, believes Tanvi’s attainments so far are at best small indicators of the seemingly endless possibilities, and that she has a mighty long way to go.

Growth opportunities The trio of Rabinarayan, Vimal and Rana stresses that

only with exposure to higher levels of competition and by playing more in countries such as China, Japan, South Korea, Thailand and Malaysia will Tanvi grow further. “She needs to improve her strength,” Vimal points out. “To build on anything in badminton, you have to have good endurance and she’s reasonably good there. But against an opponent with a little deception, she struggles a bit. This is something you can improve with better strength. “A good singles player should be good at the net, because only by approaching the net and playing a tight tumble does one create opportunities. She needs work there. For a small girl, the downward punch is quite good. But she can get better,” he adds. Regardless, Vimal concedes that Tanvi is quite different to the scores of girls he has coached. “Players like her [Tanvi] just come,” he says with a smile. “The likes of Sainas, Sindhus... they just come. How you can help them realise their potential is the key. “There are a lot of different off-court factors, but if Tanvi can survive all that, she can be really really good. I don’t know whether she will be an Olympic medallist; that is a long way to go. But the potential is there to become a very good international player”.

Google unveils seven new AI updates for enhanced search, maps features

New Delhi: From Maps to Search, Google has recently announced seven new artificial intelligence (AI) updates that offer more ways people can ask questions, search for information and get an AI overview across products. Now, you’ll be able to ask Maps more complex queries, like “things to do with friends” to get answers curated with Gemini, quick answers to questions about a place — in addition to helpful review summaries when you don’t have time to read through each one, according to the tech giant. “The latest AI update in Maps means that whether you’re traveling across town or around the world, you can get the most up-to-date information possible, when you need it. Make sure to also check out the new updates we’re making to Waze, Google Earth and our developer products,” said the company. Now, the users can also upload PDFs, Google Docs, websites, YouTube vid-

eos and more to NotebookLM to glean new insights and get deeper dives on new topics. Google Shopping has rolled out new AI to help you pick the right product for you. The new Google Shopping — which is available in the US to begin with — uses AI to help take the guesswork out of finding the right products. “For example, when researching a product, an AI-generated brief will give you more details about the most important things to know before buying. And, as you browse the results, you will see AI-generated briefs about what to consider before making a purchase, plus the products that may (or may not) be a good fit for your needs,” explained Google. Google Search got a major AI update, expanding the types of questions people can ask. In October, the company added even more updates, including helping people to identify songs in Circle to Search.

If diamonds and pencils are made out of carbon, how is it that pencils can write?

I awkwardly resist and say “I actually do need a pencil.” She judges me a bit and hands me one, probably wondering why an adult might need this. As it turns out, ‘pencil’ is one of many words young adults use to refer to cigarettes, which is unfortunate because a pencil should just mean a pencil. While tables and smartphones are all the fad, some of us still prefer the pencil. They are a technological marvel and very resourceful. They can help push in electrical sockets, keep your teeth fit (if you chew on them), and punch open a food packet. And of course they can help you write. Each pencil has a black-grey core surrounded by wood. When you sharpen the pencil, the core becomes more exposed, and the pencil can write better. We regularly use pens to write but they have a thick liquid ink inside. This is essentially a coloured liquid that flows like any other liquid, be it water or oil. Since it flows on paper and has a colour, it leaves its footprints behind as it flows, and in this way pens write. But the core of a pencil is solid, like a metal spoon. If we move a steel spoon on paper, no amount of metal spills on the paper. How then does a pencil write?

Carbon and its phases The core of the pencil is made of carbon — the same carbon most of us are primarily made of. Carbon is one of the most common elements on our planet. It can come in different phases and forms. In ambient conditions, water is a liquid. When it’s hotter, it becomes vapour, a gas. When it’s cold enough, it becomes a solid called ice. These phases of matter have completely different properties. You could sit (with some inconvenience) on a block of ice but you shouldn’t risk sitting on a pool of water. Yet both are made of the same molecules of hydrogen and oxygen: H₂O. The difference is in how these molecules connect to each other. Similarly, when carbon atoms are arranged and stacked in different ways, they have completely different properties. Imagine each carbon atom has four hands. Each hand is a restless electron. If the hand forms a bond with another carbon, the atoms share the electron and it becomes calmer. In this way, if the carbon atoms arrange themselves in the form of an Egyptian pyramid-like structure, they form a diamond. Diamonds are shiny, transparent, and the hardest material known in nature. This is why it’s often used to cut other metals. No wonder diamonds are expensive and, for no fault of their own, often confused with expressions of love. The real magic lies with the carbon in a pencil. Graphite and sandwiches Pencil cores are made of carbon, too, but a different form called graphite. Unlike in diamonds, the carbon atoms in graphite are arranged in sheets, like slices of bread in a sandwich. Each layer contains carbon atoms connected to each other with three hands — that’s a very strong bond. However, the bonds between sheets are weak. Each layer in this arrangement is called graphene. When graphene is stacked in multiple layers, it creates graphite — which is at the core of a pencil. If you like, imagine the pencil’s core to be a tower of your favourite sandwich, containing millions of layers of bread with some cheese, patties, and/or sauce in between. If both graphite and diamond are made of carbon atoms, why can’t we write with diamonds? Writing by sliding When you write using a pencil, you are

sliding the core of the pencil on paper. In the process, you’re forcing the carbon atoms of the pencil to slide on the atoms of the paper. If you slide a hard material like diamond or a steel spoon on paper, the atoms of the material are so tightly bound to each other they have absolutely no interest in leaving and moving to the surface of the paper. But something amazing happens when you slide graphite. Graphite has layers of graphene. And just as it is slightly harder to remove a slice of bread from the middle of the sandwich than from the top, sliding graphite on paper sloughs off graphene-like layers onto the paper. This is how scientists first discovered graphene, too. They stuck cellophane tape on graphite and then ripped it off. When they looked at the tape under a microscope, they found thin layers of carbon stuck to it, i.e. graphene. As you go on wiggling the pencil, more and more layers of carbon come off. Each of these layers is black and shiny and is readily apparent to the human eye. This is how a pencil can write even though it lacks liquid ink. Condensed matter physics Carbon atoms arranged in one way behave so differently from when they’re arranged in a different way — even though each carbon atom itself behaves the same way. Diamond is whitish transparent while graphite is shiny



and black. These differences arise based on how the electrons the carbon atoms share behave even though, again, all electrons are the same. The underlying physics here is similar to why birds form patterns in the evening sky or how even humans behave so differently when they are in large groups. We may not be able to predict the behaviour of even a single bird or a person in general, but when they get together, they can acquire altogether new behaviours. The same is true

for cars in traffic and ants in a colony. This field of study is called condensed matter physics. If you want to explore it more, consider taking an undergraduate degree in physics. And the next time you have some time to spare on a casual evening, consider getting yourself a pencil. Sharpen it well and sketch. As you find your lines shaping up your thoughts, don’t forget to thank those hundreds of carbon atoms selflessly sliding off at your will.

Cultural Encyclopedia of the Dard Tribe by Suheel Rasool Mir

The Dard tribe, once a pivotal element in the sociocultural and historical matrix of the Kashmir region, now exists as a spectral presence. Their erasure reflects history’s selective memory that leaves only traces of their past significance. Suheel Rasool Mir’s latest work delves into the intricate origins of the tribe. His Cultural Encyclopedia of the Dard Tribe: Journey Through Gurez and Ladakh is a rigorously researched and intellectually audacious endeavour that deftly captures the socio-historical essence of the Dard-Brokpa tribe in the regions of Gurez and Ladakh and illuminates their rich culture, traditions, rituals, and social structure. Drawing on a diverse array of methodologies — local knowledge, storytelling, memory, case studies, ethnography, and participatory research — the author weaves an intricate narrative.

Through 15 meticulously structured chapters complemented by ethnographic diagrams, Mir presents an exploration of the Dard-Brokpa experience. He delves into the Dardic ethos that manifests in festivals, music, sports, ornaments, culinary traditions, and also examines the climate’s profound influence on the tribe’s way of life. In the opening chapter, Dardistan emerges as a multifaceted realm, comprising Gilgit-Baltistan, Gurez, and Ladakh — the sacred terrains of the Dards and Brokpas. This section not only delineates the nuanced distinctions between the two groups but also intricately weaves together their linguistic heritage, illuminating the rich interconnections and cultural dialogues that have shaped their identities within this historically vibrant land-

scape.

The forthcoming chapters provide a nuanced analysis of the Dards of Gurez, Kargil, and the Dha-Hanu Valley. By exploring the sociolinguistic dimensions and ethnographic aspects of the tribe, the text reveals the interplay of heritage and identity as these communities adapt to the challenges of modernity while remaining rooted in their traditions. The author, a researcher on ethnicity and a keen observer of cultural dynamics, possesses a profound understanding of the sociolinguistic intricacies of Dard communities. With a background in sociology, his work seeks to illuminate the diverse identities of these groups, contributing valuable insights into the rich tapestry of Himalayan heritage. A captivating synthesis of cultural anthropology and ethnography, the book reveals the intricacies of Dard identity across these regions. Through this lens, the work not only enriches scholarly dialogue on Himalayan cultures but also invites readers to appreciate the subtle complexities that define the Dard experience.

The social structures of the tribe are characterized by intricate family dynamics, where kinship extends beyond biological ties, fostering a strong communal identity. Their language serves as a cultural cornerstone, while religious beliefs shape rituals surrounding life events, including death, which reinforce communal bonds. The author explores the tribe’s social structures by highlighting the adaptability of family and kinship dynamics. Through an examination of marriage customs, language, and religious practices, alongside discussions of education and caste

stratification, the work illuminates the challenges faced by Dard communities and their evolving identity. The chapter entitled Dard-Brokpa Women of Gurez & Ladakh vividly portrays the lives of women in those specific areas and celebrates their remarkable resilience. It highlights their vital roles within their communities, showcasing how they navigate challenges and ultimately embody the enduring spirit of Dard-Brokpa culture. Modernization and globalization are exerting profound pressures on indigenous cultures, and threatening traditional practices and identities everywhere. As global influences infiltrate local communities, the challenge of preserving cultural heritage while adapting to change becomes increasingly complex. The author examines how the Dardic community has embraced a localized economic system and resilient agricultural practices, effectively shielding their identity from the encroachments of modernization. The book offers a rare insight into the sociocultural fabric of a people who are often overlooked in mainstream discourse, making this an essential read for anyone interested in indigenous Himalayan cultures. It captures the emergence of Gurez as a tourism hotspot within Jammu and Kashmir, offering a fresh perspective on the impact of modernization on traditional lifestyles. Suheel Rasool Mir’s Cultural Encyclopaedia will serve as a vital conduit for the community, allowing them to reconnect with their past and paving the way for the sustainable evolution of their rich cultural traditions. It will also serve as a vital resource for policymakers, scholars, and anyone interested in understanding these unique people.

Craig McMillan: It's always been a strength of New Zealand sides, men's or women's — everyone chips in

"It was a tough period for the White Ferns leading into the World Cup, but I always felt that we were a dark horse and we were going to surprise people," says McMillan during an exclusive interview with The Hindu, at Ahmedabad, where New Zealand played India in a three-match ODI series, right after the World Cup triumph.

When the stars align "We have worked hard over a period of time, and we know the improvements they've made over the last 12 months. Sometimes the stars align, but you still have to be good to make the most of those stars aligning." Amelia Kerr was the biggest star for New Zealand at the World Cup. The leg-spinning all-rounder, who is the youngest cricketer — male or female — to score a double hundred in ODIs, was the player of the final and the tournament. She was the competition's leading wicket-taker. "She bowled beautifully," says McMillan, who played for New Zealand in 260 internationals across formats. "In the final, she stepped up when we needed her."

Kerr was the top-scorer in the final, with a 38-ball 43. She then took three for 24 to lead New Zealand to a 32-run win over the team that seems destined to suffer heart-break in every major match, for women or men — South Africa. McMillan, however, is quick to add that everyone contributed. "It has always been a strength of New Zealand sides, whether men's or women's — everyone chips in," he says. "Rosemary Mair did a great job with the ball, Lea Tahuu, who has been around a long time, picked up key wickets." New Zealand's fielding was also very good throughout the tournament. "That is so important in the T20 game," he says. "We had only one bad game against the West Indies, but apart from that, against India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and then in the final against South Africa, we took our catches, and that was crucial." He points out that the win against India in New Zealand's opening match was very important. "It was a very strong group, as Australia was also there," he says. "And we knew that we probably had to win one of those first two games to actually be able to go through to the next stage. So we really targeted those games. Against India it was almost probably our best performance. It got us off to a great start. And momentum is really important in the World Cup." All-round expertise As important, he feels, is the fact that the New Zealand women's team had several all-rounders. Some of them, like skipper Sophie Devine and Suzie Bates are, in fact, double internationals, in hockey and basketball respectively.

McMillan says playing multiple sports is something of a tradition back home and that helps, regardless of what sport one chooses as a career eventually. "I think it's really important that not only females, but males too, play as many sports as they can," he says. "I myself played a lot of football up until 18 and then I had to make a decision. I was a tough centre-back. I used to cut strikers down. But I just think you get multi-skilled players when they play other sports. That helps them when they come and have to make a decision at some stage." Go, get a game! McMillan feels it's important to play as many sports as possible growing up — this produces multi-skilled athletes who can then excel at the sport they choose. | Photo



credit: Vijay SonejiGo, get a game! McMillan feels it's important to play as many sports as possible growing up — this produces multi-skilled athletes who can then excel at the sport they choose. | Photo credit: Vijay Soneji

McMillan believes women's cricket will grow further. "It will get stronger and stronger," he says. "I think even in the last two or three years, you have seen the development, with the WPL and all that. Those franchises play a big part in terms of the development of the players. But we are just seeing some really talented females who are given the opportunity to show how good they are around the world. It is important that it not only grows in Australia, England and India, but in all the countries." While the women's team was playing the ODI series at Ahmedabad, elsewhere in India the New Zealand men were making history, too, as they won the Test series, ending the host's 12-year unbeaten home record. And New Zealand was winning a Test series in India for the first time — after the maiden tour way back in 1955-56. "Obviously it was a great week for New Zealand cricket, winning the T20 World Cup for the women, and then the men securing the first-ever Test series in India," says McMillan. "I watched the boys playing on television. To outplay India like that was great." Looking back at his own career, he says he loved playing for New Zealand. He scored 3,116 runs from 55 Tests and 4,707 runs from 197 ODIs. He hit nine international hundreds, one of which came off 67 balls, in a 2007 ODI against Australia. It was a record for New Zealand at the time. In 2001, he had knocked off 26 runs off an over from Younis Khan in a Test against Pakistan at Hamilton. He had broken the world record with that effort.

Fond memories "I feel very fortunate that I was able to play for New Zealand for over 10 years," he says. "And we had a lot of good times. We had a good side through that period. We had some really good victories over those years. And, you know, we made the

semifinals of World Cups, but couldn't quite get over the line and get to a final. And then in 2015 and 2019, the New Zealand side took it to the next level." He recalls with pride New Zealand winning the 2000 ICC Champions Trophy, beating India in the final at Nairobi by four wickets with just two balls to spare. "It was a tough match, but before that we had to beat Pakistan in the semifinal. It was a very strong Indian side, with men like Sourav Ganguly, Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid and Yuvraj Singh. And it was tough to beat India in those conditions. So it was great to

win our first trophy." The New Zealand women had to wait a while before they could celebrate their T20 World Cup win, though, as they had to fly to India from Dubai just a couple of days after the final. So didn't the administrators back home expect New Zealand to play the final when they made the schedule to travel to India for an ODI series? "I don't know," says McMillan. "You know, there's a certain amount of one-day games for the ICC championship that you have to get through. And the women's cricket calendar is also getting crowded these days."

Vistara flies into sunset as its last flight takes off to Singapore

New Delhi: After operating for nearly 10 years, full service carrier Vistara flew into the sunset on Tuesday early morning operating its last flight from the national capital to Singapore. Vistara — a joint venture between Tatas and Singapore Airlines — has now merged with Air India, creating an enlarged entity that is now the country's largest international carrier and second-largest domestic carrier. UK115 flight from Delhi to Singapore was the last flight of Vistara with the code 'UK' while UK986 from Mumbai to Delhi was the carrier's last domestic flight.

Starting a new chapter in India's fast-growing civil aviation space, the merged entity operated its first flight with the code 'AI2286' from Doha to Mumbai. In the domestic sector, the integrated entity's first flight AI2984 took off from Mumbai to Delhi. All the four flights landed at their respective destinations early in the morning on Tuesday, according to information available on the flight tracking website Flightradar24.com.

According to an official, the two airlines have been merged, passengers are being issued Air India boarding passes and check-

in counters of Vistara at airports have become that of Air India. The code 'AI2XXX' is being used for Vistara flights that are being operated by Air India post the merger to help passengers identify the Vistara flight at the time of booking.

On Monday, an official said the integrated entity will be operating services on 103 domestic and 71 international routes. With the merger, first announced in November 2022, Singapore Airlines will have a 25.1 per cent stake in the integrated entity, which will operate more than 5,500 weekly flights on local and international routes. A formal announcement about the merger is expected later in the day. Tata Group has led the consolidation wave in Indian aviation with two major mergers in less than two months — AIX Connect was integrated with Air India Express on October 1 and now the merger of Vistara with Air India. Air India, Vistara and AIX Connect together had a domestic market share of little over 29 per cent in September, as per latest official data. Together, the Air India group has an operational fleet of 298 aircraft — around 208 with Air India and about 90 with Air India Express.

The tale of timekeepers of Vizagapatam

As hard as it may seem to imagine for the current generation exposed to mobile phones and digital clocks from birth, until two centuries ago, only a few had the luxury of knowing the precise time of the day, and the majority had to wait for the hourly public announcement of time. However, the style of the public announcement is unique to the era, and those who were in their youth during the 70s and 80s must have heard about it from their elders. "Nearly two centuries ago, the people of Visakhapatnam had a different way of knowing time. Old records of Visakhapatnam mention that the Army unit at the fort (at Old Town) used to fire a time-gun every day at 9 p.m. to inform the public and all the ships at the port of the correct local time. Later, the time-gun firing location was shifted from the fort to the Dolphin's Nose Hill," says Vijjeswarapu Edward Paul, a history chronicler and a member of the Indian National Trust for Art, Culture and Heritage (INTACH).

Godey Venkata Jagga Rao, a local zamindar and a trained astronomer, built an observatory at the Dabagardens area in 1840 to conduct both astronomical and meteorological observations. He established the longitude and latitude of Visakhapatnam from his observations. For many years, the time recorded in the observatory was the local time for Visakhapatnam. He erected a flag-staff on Dolphin's Nose Hill to provide time signals for the public as well as for the ships to know the correct local time at 9 a.m. every day. The system adopted was to raise two flags together, one above the other on the flagstaff precisely at 8 a.m., which continued to fly till 9 a.m. They were lowered down precisely at 9 a.m. to indicate the time. After the death of G.V. Jagga Rao in 1856, his son-in-law Ankitham Venkata Narsinga Rao took over the observatory and continued the astronomical and meteorological observations. He continued the hoisting of time-flags, which his father-in-law had started. The time-gun being fired by the Army on Dolphin's Nose Hill was discontinued in 1871. At that time, A.V. Narsinga Rao offered to maintain the firing of that time-gun at his own expense to provide the correct time to the public and to the ships at Port. He also constructed a new flagstaff on Dolphin's Nose in 1886 for hoisting time flags. A public notification was issued by the Government to this effect, which is given hereunder.

It is hereby notified for the information of the public that A.V. Nursing Row has erected an expensive and durable flagstaff on the Dolphin's Nose, and the time signals are now hoisted on it under his orders every day between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. to indicate time. The flags are hauled down at 9 a.m. with great precision, and it is intended thereby to indicate the precise time of that hour not only for the information of persons whose distance from the Fort renders the report of the 9 p.m. time gun inaudible but also to afford the Shipping in the Roads the means of finding the error of chronometers and to indicate the error of the time gun. The clocks installed in the observatory, which were periodically corrected according to astronomical observations, kept accurate time. The time-gun and time-flags were regulated according to the observatory's time.

After the death of A.V. Narsinga Rao in 1892, his wife, the only daughter of G.V. Jagga Rao, continued the time-gun and time-flag for about two years. She is the same

lady on whose name the present Mrs. A.V.N. College was established. As wished by her father and her husband, she handed over the Observatory, the Flag Gun, and the Flagstaff on the Dolphin's Nose Hill to the Government in 1894 with an endowment of ₹3 lakh for permanent maintenance of the institution. The government managed the observatory and continued the time-gun and time-flag until it closed in about 1898.

It appears that the time-gun and time-flag were discontinued after the observatory was closed. Records are not clear as to why the observatory was closed. "In the olden days, there was also a system of ringing hourly bells in Taluk and Collector's offices, striking a bell once at 1 O'clock, twice at 2 O'clock.....12 times at 12 O'clock to signify the time of the hour. It is not known when this practice was started in the State. The same system continued up to the mid-1960s in the Visakhapatnam Collector's office as remembered by some senior citizens," says



Mr. Edward Paul. "Records show that notifying time in Visakhapatnam passed through different stages like time-guns, time-flags, time-bells and clock towers and people used

to look to those for knowing time. All these practices of the olden days may appear very strange to the present generation. But these are all facts of history," he says.

Why men are lonelier in America than elsewhere

ARE ISOLATED men driving American women up the wall? A recent sketch on "Saturday Night Live", which refers to studies concluding that males in America are increasingly friendless, suggests that they are. A young woman, frustrated by her boyfriend's inability to open up to anyone else, takes him by the hand and leads him to a "man park" (like the dog version) where, after a shy start, he finds fellow males to make friends with. Some viewers disliked the likening of men to dogs, but the sketch, which went viral online, illustrates fresh concerns about an old worry: the loneliness of American men. As people in rich countries work longer hours, marry later and spend more time with their children, not friends, research suggests loneliness is increasing. A study by the University of Pennsylvania found a direct link between social-media usage and loneliness. More time spent online means less time building friendships. The problem may be particularly severe in America. A large international study by British academics found that people in individualistic countries (a measure on which America scores highest) reported greater loneliness. America also has one of the highest divorce rates; men may be more likely to lose mutual friends after a split. A strong work ethic and geographical mobility (meaning friendships are liable to be lost or weakened as people relocate) is likely to exacerbate the problem. A survey published in 2021 by the Survey Centre on American Life, part of the American Enterprise Institute, a think-tank, found that friendship groups have shrunk in the past three decades. The decline has been particularly marked among men. In 1990, 55% of American men reported having at least six close friends; today only 27% do. The survey found that 15% of men have no close friendships at all, a fivefold increase since 1990. Those who study male loneliness believe that a particularly American version of masculinity is in part to blame. Since 1990 Robert Garfield, a psychotherapist and author of "Breaking the Male Code", has run



"friendship labs", men's therapeutic groups, which have shown him that men crave emotional connection. But American boys, says Dr Garfield, who has also run such groups in Europe, are often taught that successful men exhibit particular traits—restraint, independence, competitiveness—at the expense of others. As women's and LGBT rights have advanced in recent decades, along with more emotional ways of connecting with others, "men are being asked to stretch themselves", Dr Garfield says. Over time, this is likely to have a positive effect on the way men relate to each other, but at the moment, "males are in a fighting phase". Marc Schapiro, a 24-year-old English teacher from Maryland, agrees. He says he was taught male friendship is "stoic and lacking outward affection". But now he sees a different portrayal of friendship on social media, particularly by women and LGBT people. He would love, he says, to be able to "show more affection and drop the constant snide comments and ribbing", but he finds the disconnect between what he grew up believing about friendship and how he sees other people relating to each other unsettling. The "quasi-socialising" he and his

friends do online, via games and various message boards, meets no real need, he adds. All this comes at a heavy cost. Suicide is more common among young men than young women. Niobe Way, a psychologist at New York University who studies adolescent male friendship and is the author of "Deep Secrets: Boys' Friendships and the Crisis of Connection", says it is no coincidence this divergence begins to happen around the age that many boys move away from close friendships. In childhood, she says, boys tend to be as open as girls about their need for friends. As they get older, they "feel they have to get into a gender strait-jacket" and define their masculinity primarily as not being feminine. By the age of 15, many boys start saying they don't need friends and worrying that close friendships will make them seem "girly". This "clash of culture and nature", Dr Way says, is much more marked among white boys than black ones. The effects are far-reaching. Research has linked loneliness to poor health. It can make men angry and violent. Male loneliness also affects women. Dr Garfield observes that two-thirds of divorces are initiated by women, many of whom complain their husbands are emotionally incompetent. "