

Key areas in Hyderabad's old city dotted with mounds of garbage

Hyderabad: Hit by the civic administration's apathy and its failure to ensure garbage clearance in a streamlined manner, unhygienic conditions have been taking over several areas of the old city. The failure of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation to ensure proper sanitation is not going well with the residents who are venting out their ire on social media platforms by sharing pictures and videos of the deplorable civic conditions in their place of residence. Several areas of the once-walled city on Wednesday were found to be dotted with mounds of garbage at key areas such as Doodh Bowli, Vattepally, Chandulal Baradari, Bagh Amjad Dowla, Jahanuma, Aghapura, Mallepally, Nashemannagar, Falaknuma post office road among other neighbourhoods.

Near the Falaknuma post office, one could notice a carpet of garbage on the roadside. A local resident, Habeeb uddin, said once in two days the GHMC truck comes and lifts the garbage. "Locals have to bear the foul smell from the rotten household trash.

People are falling ill due to the unhygienic conditions. Repeated pleas to authorities to find a permanent solution fall on deaf ears," he complained. Close to Shujath Hotel at Bagh Amjad Dowla, the boundary wall of a Darga is reduced to a garbage disposal spot with the locals in absence of any proper mechanism for garbage collection, disposing the trash bags near the electric transformer.

"On instances, mischievous children set ablaze the garbage and the fire spreads to electric transformer causing explosion," said Shaik Shafi, a local shop keeper. A little away from this place is the middle class area of Chandulal Baradari. Here, one can notice a huge mound of garbage dumped at the place behind the local government school. Ironically, the Doodh Bowli ward office is located a stone throw distance from this dumping ground. A dozen odd cattle regular feast on the trash bags at the place. "The garbage collection auto rickshaws don't regularly turn up. So people themselves pack the trash in bags and dispose it whenever they get time.



The GHMC workers once a while bring a truck and clear it or someone sets it on fire to clear it," said Jani Miya, a local resident. The local residents want the higher

officials to visit the area and find a solution to their problems. "We are ready to cooperate with the corporation to ensure cleanliness," Shahed of Chandulal Baradari said.

Kaleshwaram unlikely to provide water for next two crop seasons



Hyderabad: The delay in National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) report is causing anxiety among farmers in the State as it could affect water availability for the ensuing agricultural seasons also. According to officials, the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme is unlikely to provide water for at least two more crop seasons. Farmers in the command area are likely to face the same scarcity condition in the command area of the project even in 2026. Medigadda barrage, being the primary source of water for the project, the structural issues with it have to be addressed in the next 120 days if the gov-

ernment is keen on putting it back to operation shortly. But such prospects look bleak. All the three barrages have been left non-operational for three crop seasons so far. The investigation into the construction and structural issues of the project barrages is facing delays. It has not yet reached a final conclusion in respect of its findings and recommendations to the State on the rehabilitation of the Medigadda barrage. Delays in the studies initiated for gathering geotechnical data has been a point of contention for the NDSA in the investigation. The Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme has a

total of 104 pumping units across its 22 pumping stations. Almost all of them were kept overhauled and ready for lifting water before every crop season. Only the Gayatri underground pumping units were operated for giving water from Yellampalli reservoir for feeding the reservoirs integrated with the KLIS during the Kharif and Rabi this year. The government decision on the fate of the barrages will depend on NDSA final recommendations. Implementation of works would require adequate time before the onset of monsoons in June.

Once the barrages start receiving inflows, the department would not be able to implement any works till the end of October

next. By all means, there would be no water from Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation project for the next Rabi as well. No repairs were made even to the Medigadda barrage road connecting Telangana and Maharashtra States. The road was also affected with the sagging of two pillars of the barrage. Local people are more bothered about the barrage road than water. The beneficiaries of the water lifted from Godavari have seldom seen the barrages.

The KLIS water reaches key reservoirs far away from the project, otherwise, there would have been law and order issues at the barrages with farmers demanding the operations to be resumed, said officials.

Telugu students tread cautiously with their dollar dreams

Hyderabad: As the United States President Donald J Trump intensified the crackdown on illegal immigrants and launched deportations, with around 250 Indians reportedly deported back to the country, Telugu students are exercising caution with regards to their American dreams. Several students, who are planning higher education in the US universities for the Fall intake this year, are apprehensive that Trump's administration

might introduce stricter immigration regulations. Apart from tighter visa rules, students are apprehensive over changes in the optional practical training (OPT) programme norms for the international students on F-1 visas, thereby impacting their job prospects. The OPT programme aids international students on F-1 visa to work in the US for about 12 months in the fields directly related to course of study.

Eliminating elitism in mental health

The Ministry of Labour and Employment, in its year-end review report for 2024, stated that all States and Union Territories are expected to complete the process of harmonisation and pre-publication of draft rules for the new Labour Codes by March 31, 2025. This provides an efficient window for the government to consider the incorporation of provisions that create a liability-based framework to ensure the mental health of workers, especially those in the blue-collar category. In 2024, for the first time, mental health was acknowledged as an 'impactful driver' for individual and national development in the Economic Survey. The Survey also noted that, 10.6% of adults in India suffered from mental disorders, with the treatment gap ranging between 70% and 92% depending on the specific condition (National Mental Health Survey 2015-16). The World Health Organization, in its fact sheet on mental health at work, outlined several risks, including excessive workloads or rapid work pace, long unsocial and inflexible hours, unsafe or poor physical working conditions, job insecurity, inadequate pay, and conflicting home/work demands. These risks primarily impact blue-collar workers due to their demanding jobs, unsafe work environments, and a lack of adequate legislative and policy protections. The time has come for the government to address the challenge of increasing elitism in the field of mental health and the well-being of workers, highlighting the significant disparity between blue-collar and white-collar employees concerning legislative and policy frameworks.

First, in the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code (OSHC), 2020, the concept of occupational safety is limited to physical safety in the course of employment. This implicitly excludes mental well-being and safety norms of a preven-

tive nature. For instance, Section 6(1)(d) uses the phrase 'as far as reasonably practicable' while creating a mandate for the employer to provide a working environment that is safe and without any health risks. Defining the ambit of this phrase is left to the Central government, which will notify it from time to time. Moreover, its conjoint reading with Sections 23 and 24 of the OSHWC provides a narrow connotation of 'health,' confining it to physical well-being and excluding mental health.

Second, as per the definition of 'employment injury' under Section 2(28) of the Code on Social Security (CSC), 2020, read with the third schedule, the employee can claim compensation under Section 74 of the CSC only if personal injury is caused by an 'accident or an occupational disease arising out of and in the course of employment'. The third schedule nowhere enlists diseases arising out of mental strain attributed to the course of employment. Moreover, it tends to create a legislative mandate upon the victim to establish a direct link between the injury and the occupation before the adjudicating authority. In contrast, the Bombay High Court in *Laxmibai Atmaram v. Chairman and Trustees, Bombay Port Trust (1953)* expanded the scope of 'occupational injury,' observing that even if the employment is merely a contributory cause or an accelerating mechanism, the disease-employment combination shall be deemed to be established. Third, some major companies are making substantial efforts to enhance the well-being, work-life balance, and mental health of their white-collar employees. The HALE (Health Assistance and Lifestyle Enrichment) Program by Infosys, Wipro's 'Mitra' initiative, and the Employee Assistance Program by Tata Consultancy Services are some examples. In contrast, the Central government's praise-



worthy Tele Manas initiative bridges the gap between its callers and mental health professionals, but its functionality requires beneficiaries to voluntarily make the distress call to the helpline number. The lack of awareness about such initiatives among blue-collar workers, coupled with their inherent hesitation to take any such step, dilutes the objective of these initiatives.

To realise the goal of 'Satyamev Jayate to Shramev Jayate,' as the Prime Minister envisioned in 2014, mental health of blue-collar workers ought to be given due precedence. First, a rights and duty-based legislative framework that balances the employer's right to get the job done with the concomitant duty to provide a safe and healthy work environment ensuring both the physical and mental well-being of workers would be a progressive step.

Second, the list of 'occupational diseases' under the third schedule of the CSC

calls for a legislative attempt to provide holistic coverage of diseases arising from mental strain attributed to employment and working conditions, thereby leaving less room for judicial interpretation on a case-by-case basis. Third, the upcoming Labour Codes have the opportunity to create a tripartite relationship between employers, blue-collar workers, and mental health specialists.

Fourth, amidst multiple statements made recently by reputed CEOs regarding 70 to 90-hour workweeks, emphasising quantity over quality and well-being, the government must take steps towards forging a sustainable work environment for blue-collar workers. Fifth, creating awareness regarding governmental initiatives such as Tele Manas must be statutorily imposed on employers. Lastly, blue-collar workers also need to be acknowledged as stakeholders in the mental health discourse before this becomes a case of lost opportunity.

How will the govt. produce the required fuel ethanol? | Explained

The story so far: Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said that India will achieve its target of 20% ethanol blending of petrol in the next two months, at least a year ahead of what was originally planned. This would entail the production of nearly 1,100 crore litres of fuel ethanol in one year.

Where will this come from?

The 1,100 crore litres of fuel ethanol will come from sugar and high grade molasses, Food Corporation of India (FCI) rice, broken rice, and maize. India's ethanol distillery capacity has ramped up to 1,600 crore litres, driven by a range of government incentives and the promise of a stable, lucrative market. Sugar is expected to provide some 400 crore litres this ethanol year, according to Deepak Ballani, director general of Indian Sugar and Bio-energy Manufacturers Association. India had closing sugar stocks of around 80 lakh tonnes in October 2024. The projected sugar production for next year is around 315 lakh tonnes out of which 40 lakh tonnes will go to fuel ethanol. Mr. Ballani said that ethanol for non-fuel uses will come from low grade molasses called C Heavy that don't go into sugar production.

The government recently decided to

reduce the price of FCI rice to distilleries from ₹28 to ₹22.5 per kg. The government hand-out states that some 110 crore litres of ethanol will be produced from FCI rice this ethanol year. This means almost 400 crore litres of fuel ethanol should come from maize. For context, India was producing little or no ethanol from maize until 2020. Besides pure-play grain-based distilleries coming up, some sugar distilleries have modified to dual-feed so in the off-season they can use other feedstock (maize) to produce ethanol.

How is maize playing a role?

India's maize production is just about enough for traditional needs such as for the poultry sector, livestock feed, starch production and some 10% for human consumption. As the government had imposed curbs on allowing sugar and high quality molasses for ethanol production, maize imports started ramping up in April 2024. From April to June, approx. 100 crore worth of maize was imported while, for 2023-24, maize imports were approx. \$33 million. Ministry of Commerce figures show that a total of \$188 million worth of maize was imported from April to November 2024. The promise of a steady, lucrative ethanol market has meanwhile



goaded many farmers to take to maize cultivation across India. The major maize producing States are Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh. For the 2024-25 ethanol year, maize output would be some 42 million tonnes out of which nine million can go towards producing the 350 to 400 crore litres of ethanol, H. S. Jat, director

ICAR Indian Institute of Maize Research, Ludhiana, said. Citing good prospects for kharif this year, he said importing maize will not be necessary.

Since 2020-21, when ethanol production was almost all sugar-based, maize production had increased by nearly six million tonnes in three years, for potential ethanol use.

Airtel Payments Bank Becomes the First Payments Bank to Go Live with I4C's Real Time API Integration to Strengthen Customer Security

Hyderabad :In a landmark initiative to bolster customer safety, Airtel Payments Bank has successfully integrated its systems with the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP)-Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting and Management System (CFCFRMS) of Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C) through the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) Application Programming Interface (API). Airtel Payments Bank is among the first four banks—and the first payments bank in India—to deploy this integration, reinforcing its commitment to fight against financial frauds and safeguarding customer interests.

This advanced API integration automates the manual actions previously undertaken by bank in response to complaints lodged through the I4C, National Cybercrime Reporting Portal including the 1930 helpline. Real-time information sharing between Airtel

Payments Bank, I4C and Ministry of Home Affairs, ensures faster, more logical processing of cybercrime complaints. It provides I4C, Ministry of Home Affairs with various details, including complaint numbers, mobile numbers, account numbers, reported fraud amounts, transaction references, among other. The system also allows the Bank to take immediate action thereby preventing further misuse of account reported.

Ganesh Ananthanarayanan, Chief Operating Officer of Airtel Payments Bank, commented on the development: "At Airtel Payments Bank, customer safety is at the heart of everything we do. Our integration with I4C, Ministry of Home Affairs not only demonstrates our commitment to stay ahead in the fight against financial frauds but also ensures real-time resolution of fraudulent complaint reported on National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP). This integration further



strengthens our safety solutions suite crafted to protect our customers."

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued a comprehensive advisory to Banks/FIs based on the inputs from I4C, Ministry of Home Affairs. Department of Financial Services (DFS) has also directed all banks to collaborate with National Cybercrime Re-

porting Portal (NCRP) of I4C, Ministry of Home Affairs for implementing mitigation measures to stop fraudulent transactions within the digital ecosystem. Post API integration, Airtel Payments Bank along with other banks have shown significant improvement in the turnaround time resulting in holding of the crime proceeds within the digital financial ecosystem.

Big Bowl Hits 200 Cloud Kitchens with Hyderabad Launch, Targets 500 by 2028

Hyderabad :Big Bowl, the go-to destination for flavorful Indian and Chinese bowls, proudly announces the launch of its 200th cloud kitchen M Cube Mall, Attapur, Hyderabad. A part of Lenexis Foodworks, this milestone strengthens Big Bowl's leadership in the Indian and Chinese bowl space while highlighting its rapid expansion in the cloud kitchen industry.

Big Bowl, known for its wide range of customizable Indian and Chinese bowls caters to modern consumers seeking flavorful, convenient meal options. With a presence in 35 cities, the brand plans to double the network by expanding to 500 kitchens over the next three years, focusing heavily on expanding in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities to cater to the increasing demand for convenient, flavorful meal options. In FY25, Big Bowl surpassed the 100 crore ARR mark within four years of launch, a remarkable achievement that underscores its strong market presence. With its eyes set on continued success, the brand is projected to reach the 150 crore

ARR milestone in the first half of FY26. This growth aligns with Lenexis Foodworks' ambitious sales targets, aiming for a 650 crore sales run rate by March 2025, with further expansion plans targeting 1000 crore in sales by FY26. Reflecting on this significant milestone, Aayush Madhusudan Agrawal, Founder & Director of Lenexis Foodworks, shared, "Hitting the 200th cloud kitchen mark is a proud moment for us and a testament to our commitment to making high-quality, flavorful bowls accessible across India.

Our journey from a single kitchen to becoming a category leader in bowl-based QSR has been incredible, and this is just the beginning. With an aggressive expansion plan in place, we are determined to bring Big Bowl to even more cities, catering to the growing demand for convenient, flavorful, and customizable meals." Big Bowl plans to introduce additional flavors in 2025, inspired by different regions across India. It also continues to offer exciting promotions, and value deals while consistently engaging with influencers and creating relatable content.



Global ECMO Experts gather in Hyderabad for conference on advanced critical service

Hyderabad: More than 100 ECMO expert doctors from different parts of the world and India joined the two-day conference and training on advanced critical service and ECMO (Extracorporeal membrane oxygenation) here on Saturday.

Also, 300 trainee doctors from different

parts of the country joined and got the certificate in the training session conducted by the Apollo Hospitals, Jubilee Hills, in association with ECMO Society of India and Society of Emergency Medicine. ECMO is a specialised medical device, which is being used in criti-

cally sick patients, who suffer from severe heart and lung problem. Apollo Hospital, Jubilee Hills is a high volume ECMO centre, certified by ELSO (Extra corporeal life support Organisation), an international body for recognition of ECMO centres, a press re-

lease said. Dr. Sangita Reddy, Joint Managing Director of Apollo Hospitals Group, V Tejesvi Rao, CEO, Apollo Hospital Telangana Region, Dr K Subba Reddy, HOD Critical Care Medicine, Associate Director Medical Services, Apollo Hospitals, Jubilee Hills, participated.



A seminar on “How to Crack Civil Services on the First Attempt: UPSC Master Class” was organized by VINGS Media and G5 Media Group, in collaboration with 21st Century IAS Academy, at Loyola Academy, Alwal, Hyderabad, on Friday.

Mr. P. Krishna Pradeep, Chairman of 21st Century IAS Academy, interacted with students and elaborated on the legitimate authority that civil servants hold to serve society. He emphasized the importance of

commitment in achieving the goal of becoming a civil servant and driving societal change. As an example, he cited IAS officer Revu Mutyala Raju, who, with dedication and perseverance, built a bridge in his village, ensuring connectivity for a community that previously had no road transport.

Dr. Bhavani Shankar, Director and Chief Mentor of 21st Century IAS Academy, provided valuable insights into the UPSC exam process and the profound impact of civil ser-

vants on society. He reassured students that UPSC success is attainable for aspirants from diverse educational backgrounds, not just those from elite institutions like IITs and medical colleges. In his welcome speech, Principal Father Dr. N.B. Babu SJ encouraged students to take note of key insights from the seminar.

He also announced the launch of the Civils Aspirants Club at Loyola Academy to support students preparing for the Civil Ser-

vices Examination. During the event, books on Civil Services, authored by the team of KP's 21st Century IAS Academy, were unveiled by the Principal. The seminar was attended by Dean of Student Affairs Mr. Saraschandra, Dr. P. Sai Mamatha (Coordinator of Student Affairs), Smt. Bharathi (Assistant Professor, Mass Media), along with faculty members Dr. Bhavani, Dr. Shafique Ahmed, and representatives from VINGS Media and G5 Media Group, including Mr. Giri Prakaash and Mr. Ganesh!

The politics of ‘freebies’ and judicial oversight

All three major political parties contesting the high-octane Delhi Assembly elections have unveiled a barrage of freebies or subsidies to court the electorate. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which heads the incumbent government, pledged a ₹2,100 monthly allowance for all women, an additional ₹21,000 for pregnant women, and subsidised LPG cylinders at ₹500 for those from impoverished backgrounds. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) followed suit, offering ₹2,500 per month to women from low-income families, a one-time financial grant of ₹15,000 for aspirants of competitive exams, and ‘free electricity’ through its solar energy initiative, the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana. This marks a discernible shift in the BJP’s stance, given Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s earlier condemnation of the “revdi” culture — a term he coined to criticise the practice of handing out electoral freebies. In a 2022 post on X, he cautioned that such policies were “very dangerous for the country’s development”.

Meanwhile, the Congress also joined the fray, promising a 2,500 monthly stipend for women and free health insurance coverage of up to ₹25 lakh, among other benefits.

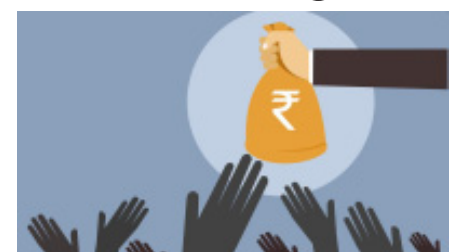
Unsurprisingly, these announcements have reignited the debate over whether such schemes are merely populist measures to sway voters or if they hold the potential for meaningful socio-economic transformation.

Electoral sops or welfare politics?

The core challenge in this debate is the absence of a clear consensus on what constitutes a freebie. Some argue that freebies amount to bribery and discourage voters from making informed choices. Others, however, claim that such a narrative strips voters of their agency and delegitimises welfare politics. “What some perceive as a freebie may be regarded as welfare by others. For instance, while one segment of society may view free transport as an unwarranted concession, for another, it constitutes a vital welfare measure. Ironically, those who criticise free transport as a subsidy often benefit from the availability of cheap labour. Affordable transport enables people to travel in search of work, making such labour possible,” Dr. K.K. Kailash, Professor at the Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad, told The National Food Security Act, enacted by the Congress-led United

Progressive Alliance (UPA) government in 2013, transformed key welfare schemes such as the Mid-day Meal, the Public Distribution System, and child development services into legal entitlements. According to data released by the Centre, the law’s beneficiaries include 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population — roughly 800 million people in total. A 2023 study by the global think-tank Centre for Financial Inclusion (CFI) found that carefully designed cash transfer programs, which channel funds directly to women on behalf of their households, not only empower women but also help mitigate the risks of intimate partner violence.

But where does one draw the line? According to Dr. Kailash, welfare provisions—unlike freebies—enhance human capabilities and freedoms, aligning with the “capability approach” to development propounded by Nobel laureate Amartya Sen. “For instance, access to nutritious, free food through mid-day meal schemes strengthens immunity, and enables individuals to lead dignified lives. In contrast, poor health not only causes personal suffering but also burdens public resources by increasing the demand for hos-



pitals and medical treatment. Investing in nutrition from an early age yields significant long-term benefits for both individuals and society,” he explained. Cash transfer schemes have recently found electoral success in Maharashtra, Jharkhand, and Haryana, cementing their role as a staple of electioneering. However, Dr. Kailash cautioned that while such schemes stimulate market activity by boosting consumer spending, they ultimately fall short of creating genuine economic opportunities. “These schemes do not translate into investments in human capital or essential public goods such as healthcare and education. Instead, they serve as quick fixes to compensate for the state’s inability to drive sustainable growth for the poor,” he said.

Telangana's Osmania General Hospital: An old hospital's rise, a community's loss

As the sun dipped below the horizon, bathing the Goshamahal police grounds in a golden glow, Sunday evening settled into its usual rhythm. Far from the honking of vehicles and the hurried footsteps of pedestrians, the sprawling ground pulsed with life. Children took confident swings at makeshift wickets with their cricket bats, their laughter ringing out as tennis balls soared across the field. Above them, kites bobbed and weaved in playful duels, their strings tangling in friendly rivalry. Amid this lively scene, police personnel moved about — some on duty, others taking a leisurely stroll through the adjacent Shiv Kumar Lal Stadium after a long day at work. It was here, just days ago, that Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy had stood, flanked by a battalion of ministers and State government officials, laying the foundation stone for the new Osmania General Hospital (OGH) — a decision meant to mark progress, yet one that had unsettled many who had long called this place home.

At the gateless entrance of the stadium, a lone police officer stands guard. Dressed in a crisp white T-shirt and matching trousers — his physical training uniform — he keeps a watchful eye on those entering, ensuring only authorised personnel pass through. He appears to be in his late 30s, his stance firm, yet his gaze carrying something more — a quiet nostalgia. "I grew up in the police quarters right next to this stadium," he reveals, his voice steady but tinged with sentiment. "This ground is where I played cricket as a child, where I trained when I joined the force, and now, it's where I serve." He exhales, his eyes tracing the familiar contours of the field. "Like many others, I don't agree with the hospital coming up here instead of its old location. But there's nothing we can do." As he finishes his sentence, the stadium floodlights flicker on, stretching long shadows across the ground.

With the land now formally transferred to the Health department, the coming years will see a modern government hospital rise here, one that is expected to cater to the people of not just Telangana but also those from the neighbouring States of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra.

Chaotic and congested The chaos outside the existing OGH begins at its very gates. Autorickshaws clog the entrance, parked in a haphazard sprawl that leaves little room for vehicles to manoeuvre, whether entering the hospital or simply passing through. Security guards, tasked with managing vehicular flow, struggle against the relentless tide of congestion. Inside the hospital, the scene is no better. Outside the Quli Qutub Shah Department of Cardiology block, a dense crowd swirls, with patients and visitors weaving in and out in an unending flow. The parking facility, located nearly 300 metres from the main gate, adds to the disorder, as vehicles honk and speed through the driveway. Even a designated walkway on the left fails to contain pedestrians, who spill onto the main road, further worsening the gridlock. Established in 1919, the OGH is a landmark of Hyderabad, but its grandeur and importance have long been overshadowed by decades of infrastructural decay. Commissioned by the last Nizam of Hyderabad, Mir Osman Ali Khan, and de-

signed by British architect Vincent Jerome Esch in Indo-Saracenic style, the hospital now bears the weight of neglect and lack of maintenance. In 2010, the erstwhile united Andhra Pradesh government acknowledged its deteriorating state and proposed an ambitious plan to restore the heritage building while constructing a 12-lakh-square-foot modern facility at an estimated cost of ₹200 crore. Some old structures were to be demolished, and an international consultant was to be brought in for modern hospital design. But the plan failed to take shape.

By 2015, the Telangana government planned to shift patients to alternative facilities at Modern Government Maternity Hospital in Petlaburj and District Hospital in King Koti. Then Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu inspected the 110-year-old OGH, declaring it dilapidated and unsustainable beyond four years. In 2019, the Healthcare Reformers Doctors Association filed a public interest litigation (PIL) demanding the construction of a modern multi-storey hospital complex, complete with a nursing college and hostel. A year later, after rainwater and sewage inundated the hospital, the Telangana government ordered its closure. By July 2023, the government submitted an affidavit to the Telangana High Court, formalising its decision to demolish OGH and replace it with a new structure. A counter-affidavit in September that year reinforced this stance, proposing an 1,812-bed modern facility. However, the issue became politically charged ahead of the 2023 Telangana Assembly elections, when the Congress party included the preservation of OGH in its manifesto. After Congress rode to power in the State, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy announced in the State Assembly last August that the new OGH building would be constructed at Goshamahal. Emotional attachment Opposition to the hospital's construction in Goshamahal is more than just mere disagreement — it is deeply tied to the lives and routines of those who have called this locality home, for generations. Residents from neighbouring areas such as Chandanwadi and Chaknawadi have expressed their concerns, fearing that the transformation of the police grounds will disrupt their way of life. "My family has lived here for over three generations. This ground is not just an open space for us; it is where we come for walks, where our children play, and where social gatherings bring the community together. It is part of who we are," says 32-year-old Ram Shukla, a resident of Chandanwadi. Beyond emotional ties, there is also an underlying economic concern. The main road outside the police grounds is lined with shops selling plywood, hardware, timber, electrical goods, and sanitary supplies. For many shop owners, construction of the hospital signals an unsettling change, one that could disrupt their business patterns and threaten livelihoods. "This isn't the right move by the government," a merchant argues. However, not everyone shares this view. A few shopkeepers brush off the debate, believing that the hospital's construction is simply a part of inevitable change. They see potential in the future, hoping it will bring new opportunities rather than challenges. A walk down the road from Goshamahal to Darussalam reveals a dis-



tinct pattern: it is a hub for construction and home improvement shops, a world far removed from anything related to healthcare. "Now, with the hospital set to come up here, everything will change," says Ravi, 38, a businessman who runs Dhanalakshmi Timber Depot, a family establishment founded by his grandfather in 1971. "Once the hospital opens and influx of patients begins, footfall for our businesses will drop. Eventually, we will have no choice but to shut down," he rues. B. Tharun, who owns a modular kitchen store just across the street, echoes Ravi's concerns. "We have protesting from the moment we heard the government was considering Goshamahal for the new OGH. Traffic here is already a nightmare. Every year, during the 45-day All India Industrial Exhibition (Numaish), the area is clogged with vehicles. Now, the government says the hospital will see around 3,000 outpatients daily. Just imagine the kind of congestion it will then create," he says, shaking his head in frustration. Beyond concerns about business, residents are deeply anxious about the area's fragile infrastructure. The road near Chaknawadi, already notorious for its history of caving in, suffered another collapse just three days before the Chief Minister laid the foundation stone for the new hospital. The hospital site is barely 500 metres from the spot. "If the roads are already giving way under regular traffic, what will happen when ambulances race through and thousands of patients and visitors flood the area daily," questions Ravi Singh, a longtime resident. "Will the foundations hold, or will they crumble, turning a healthcare lifeline into yet another hazard? The frequent road collapses have already become a major problem." Ravi also expresses concern over the proposed mortuary at the new hospital. "We have all seen the deteriorating condition of the mortuary at the current OGH. The same stench, the same infection risks... it will spread to the nearby residential areas," he adds. The mortuary at OGH currently operates with 40 freezers, but demand far exceeds capacity. "On average, 15 to 20 post-mortems are conducted daily, but the freezer boxes remain almost full, as unclaimed bodies must be stored for at least 72 hours," explains a doctor from OGH's forensic science department. With Hyderabad's growing population and rising caseload, the doctor stresses the urgent need for greater capacity at the new hospital.

All about the new OGH According to the Health department's master plan, the new OGH mortuary will be larger, equipped with 100 freezers, and spanning two levels — a basement and a ground floor — designed to handle a higher volume of cases more efficiently. The new hospital will span a built-up area of 32 lakh square feet, meeting the regulatory benchmark set by the National Medical Commission (NMC) and Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS). Designed to accommodate 2,000 beds, it will aim to bolster Hyderabad's healthcare infrastructure with 29 major and 12 minor operation theatres, each equipped with advanced surgical technology, including robotic surgery units and a dedicated transplant theatre. The blueprint also incorporates essential modern utilities such as a sewage treatment plant, a biomedical waste management system, a high-tech laundry, and an effluent treatment plant, ensuring sustainability and efficiency in medical operations. "The heritage structure serves little purpose for patients or doctors. This transition is something all doctors have long anticipated, a shift to a well-equipped, functional environment," says Chandrika Reddy, a post-graduate student at Osmania Medical College (OMC) and spokesperson for the Telangana Junior Doctors Association. She highlights another key benefit: hostel facilities within the new hospital premises. "At present, doctors working at OGH reside in OMC, which is nearly three kilometres away. This distance adds to the strain, especially for female doctors on night duty," she adds. According to the blueprint, the new hospital block will consist of a basement, a ground floor, and 12 upper floors, covering a total built-up area of 24.5 lakh square feet. Separate hostels for male and female students will follow the same vertical structure, with the girls' hostel spanning 2.97 lakh square feet and the boys' hostel occupying 1.27 lakh square feet. The faculty residence will also rise 12 floors above ground level, spread across 36,000 square feet. The institution will further include two academic blocks — north and south — dedicated to physiotherapy, nursing and midwifery, a nursing college, a dental college, and an auditorium. Each block will consist of a basement, a ground floor, and nine upper floors, with a built-up area of 88,000 square feet per block. The total cost of construction is estimated at ₹2,700 crore, with the hospital slated for completion in two years, the Health Minister has said.

Deportation flights from the U.S. to Colombia resume after a diplomatic spat

Colombian migrants returning home on Tuesday (January 28, 2025) on Colombian military flights described being shackled during earlier U.S. flights that were blocked by their country's leader in a dispute with President Donald Trump that nearly sparked a trade war. Deportation flights between the U.S. and Colombia resumed Tuesday after the diplomatic drama over the weekend that provided clues as to how the Trump administration would deal with countries blocking large-scale plans to return migrants who entered illegally. Colombia's President Gustavo Petro initially refused to accept two U.S. military planes with migrants, prompting Mr. Trump to threaten 25% tariffs on Colombian exports and other sanctions. Colombia then relented and said it would accept the migrants, but fly them on Colombian military flights that Mr. Petro said would guarantee them dignity. Two Colombian air force planes landed Tuesday in Bogota with more than 200 of the migrants, many of them women and children. Mr. Petro welcomed them with a post on X, saying they are now "free" and "in a country that loves them." Colombian Foreign Minister Luis Gilberto Murillo said none of the 200 Colombians who were returned on Tuesday had criminal records in the U.S. or Colombia. "Migrants are not criminals," Mr. Petro wrote. "They are human beings who want to work and get ahead in life." One of the migrants, José Montaña of Medellín, said they were put in chains on the earlier U.S. flights. "We were shackled from our feet, our ankles to our hips, like criminals," Montaña said. "There were women whose kids had to see their moms shackled like they were drug

traffickers." Some of the migrants told journalists they had been in the United States for less than two weeks, spending most of their time in detention centers. "We went for the American dream, and we ended up living the American nightmare" said Carlos Gómez, a migrant from the city of Barranquilla who left Colombia two weeks ago, flew to Mexico, and crossed the border illegally into California, with the help of smugglers. On Monday evening, Mr. Trump recounted the conflict with Mr. Petro and maintained that migrants should be restrained when flying back home, arguing it is for security reasons.

"We were being scolded because we had them in shackles in an airplane and he said 'this is no way to treat people,'" he said at a policy conference for House Republicans held at his Doral golf club in Florida. "You've got to understand, these are murderers, drug lords, gang members, just the toughest people you've ever met or seen." Colombian officials have challenged that claim and said the migrants deported did not have criminal records. The Trump administration has said that it would prioritize the expulsion of migrants with criminal records in the initial phases of his promised mass deportation. But it has expanded arrest priorities to anyone in the country illegally, not just people with criminal convictions, public safety or national security threats and migrants stopped at the border. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Tuesday that violent offenders "should be the priority of ICE," or the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. "But that doesn't



mean that the other illegal criminals who enter our nation's borders are off the table," Leavitt said. A deal between both countries was made on Sunday night to resume the removal flights, with the White House saying in a statement that Colombia had "agreed to all of President Trump's terms," including the arrival of deportees on military flights. Colombia sent two planes from its air force to El Paso, Texas and San Diego on Monday to pick up the migrants whose deportation had been delayed over the weekend, as well as dozens of others who had deportations pending. In total, 201 migrants were transported to Bogota on Tuesday, according to Colombia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The group included 21 minors and two pregnant women. Last year, Colombia

received more than 120 deportation flights, but those were charter flights operated by U.S. government contractors. Wolfram Díaz, a migrant from Bucaramanga, Colombia who had been in the U.S. for less than two weeks, said U.S. officials had them board a C-130 Hercules shackled. "It was on its way to Colombia, but I am not sure what happened. We were turned back," he said, adding that they were kept with handcuffs up until the moment they were transferred to the custody of Colombian officials. Gómez, the migrant who left Colombia two weeks ago, said that he turned himself in to U.S. Border Patrol agents and requested an asylum hearing. But he was held for seven days in detention centers before he was deported. He made the journey with his 17-year-old son.

How Praggnanandhaa went from a quiet year to a historic title

Bengaluru: In a year in which Gukesh became world champion and Arjun Erigaisi made an astounding climb up the world rankings, one Indian name that wasn't heard as much was Praggnanandhaa. He defeated Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana at Norway Chess in the first half of the year, but as the months passed, his compatriots outshone him with extraordinary performances. He defeated reigning world champion and fellow Indian Gukesh in a dramatic tiebreak to become only the second player from India, after Viswanathan Anand, to win the Tata Steel Masters title in Wijk Aan Zee. The tournament, steeped in tradition, dates back to 1938, with Mikhail Tal, Mikhail Botvinnik, Garry Kasparov, and Magnus Carlsen among its past winners. Praggnanandhaa will now join these greats on the hallowed Wijk Aan Zee Wall of Fame — a wall he would gaze at on every trip to the tournament.

"When I came here, I wanted to win the event, but the field was very strong," the 19-year-old said after close to eight hours of play on Sunday. He has Arjun to thank for taking down Gukesh, his co-leader, in Round 13. "I should buy Arjun something," Praggnanandhaa laughed. With this win, Praggnanandhaa has moved to world No 7

and taken second spot in the Fide Circuit leaderboard with 25 points. Former world champion Ding Liren leads the standings with 40.64 points. At the end of the year, whoever tops the circuit leaderboard will find a place in the eight-player 2026 Candidates that will determine who plays Gukesh at the next World Championship. Praggnanandhaa spent most of last year shuttling to tournaments and keeping up with a packed playing calendar. It's something he is likely to steer clear of, this year. "That was one of the problems last year," says his mentor RB Ramesh. "He was not getting enough time between tournaments to address any issues. There was no way to course correct. We decided that it was time to cut down on tournaments this year. We managed to spend the last couple of months doing some work. That may have helped in Wijk Aan Zee." There was also some spade work put in to bring about a switch in his mentality. "After his results last year, I felt that he needed to be more aggressive and ambitious mentally, not be content with not losing and to try to play for a win against everyone with both colours. It seemed like he had become probably a bit too professional in his games, where he was going purely by merits. When that happens, you lose some of your cre-



ativity and risk-taking ability. A switch could only happen if his mind was aligned with approach. We had a chat about it and it seems to be working. He is trying to win games now and you can see automatically the number of draws has dropped." The teen's ambition and hunger for wins was also evident in the manner in which he managed to recover quickly after losses in Wijk Aan Zee. After his Round 9 defeat to Anish Giri, Praggnanandhaa reeled off three successive

wins — against Vladimir Fedoseev, Caruana and Alexey Sarana. Heading into the final round, he was tied for the lead alongside Gukesh. At the end of a fortnight-long tournament, battling fatigue and nerves, the moment of truth arrived. Arjun demolished Gukesh and handed Praggnanandhaa a chance to win the tournament outright. All he needed was a draw against Germany's Vincent Keymer. Pressure can be a funny thing.

An island limps back to normalcy amid tensions, fears

"I am cultivating paddy on this land after a gap of four years. Uttam Sardar (the local Trinamool Congress strongman) illegally grabbed acres of village lands and introduced saline water in them to cultivate prawns. Villagers got back their land last year after violent protests broke out on the island," Das remembers, speaking in Bengali. Sandeshkhali hit the headlines in the first week of February last year when the riverine island in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district was rocked by violent protests, mostly led by village women, over allegations of sexual abuse and illegal land grabbing by some local TMC leaders and strongmen.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) made the land grab and abuse a major issue ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls with top party leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah, referring to the Sandeshkhali protests in almost every campaign they addressed in the state. The party even nominated one of the victims Rekha Patra as its candidate from the Basirhat Lok Sabha constituency in which Sandeshkhali falls. She lost; the TMC's Sk Nurul Islam won the seat. And Sandeshkhali faded from the national headlines through the second half of the year. Last year, after protests erupted in at least four villages — Sandeshkhali, Jeliakhali, and Bermajur I and II — in Sandeshkhali II block, TMC leader Shahjahan Sheikh and his aides Uttam Sardar and Shibaprasad Hazra were arrested (the first on February 28, and the second and the third on February 10 and February 17) on charges of land grab and sexual assault. The state's TMC government started returning the land to the actual owners on February 18. "Soon after the protests, the district administration set up camps in the villages from the third week of February to receive complaints from villagers related to illegal land grabbing. After proper verification the lands were returned to the rightful owners. In all around 270 families have got back their farmland. The total area would come to around 100 acres," said Arun Kumar Samanta, Block Development Officer of Sandeshkhali-II block. But as the farmlands were turned into fish farms and remained submerged under saline water for two to three years, scientists and agriculture-experts were sceptical whether the land returned could be used for agriculture immediately and without extensive remediation. "The longer land stays under saline water, the longer it will take to revive. The thumb rule is that if land is under water for a year, it will take two years to revive. It takes double the time," Chittaranjan Kole, former vice chancellor of Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya (an agricultural university), said in March 2024.

The agriculture department, however, tested the soil and found that the standing saline water had not done much damage to the farmlands and agriculture was still possible. "Farmers were supplied with salt tolerant paddy seeds and a series of training sessions were organised over the next few months to train them on how to grow paddy in saline soil and yet get a good yield. Farmers were advised to start the paddy cultiva-

tion a little late so that the monsoon rains could wash away some of the salt from the top soil. Organic carbon was added to the soil for better yield," said Chowdhury Monirul Haque, assistant director of agriculture, Sandeshkhali block-II. Several farmers started cultivating paddy after September 2024. The harvest was beyond their expectations, some of them claimed. "I was sceptical in the beginning over the yield. But with the help of the district agriculture officials many of us returned to farming again. The yield was little less than normal when we harvested in January this year, but we got at least 8-10 sacks of paddy from one bigha land. Normally the yield is 12-14 sacks of paddy in this region," said Nityabala Sardar, a farmer. A bigha is a traditional measure of land that amounts to 0.6 acre. Sardar had around one bigha land which was forcefully grabbed by Uttam Sardar. She too got back her land in February last year and cultivated paddy after a gap of four years. Some farmers have now planted their second crop. "Last time we grew paddy; the yield wasn't bad. This time, we are again growing paddy. With every monsoon the yield will grow as the salt will get washed away. Next year, I plan to grow mustard, potato and a few vegetables too," said Debabrata Kandar, 48, who, along with his sister inherited around eight bighas of land which was grabbed by Uttam Sardar.

The political flags of both the ruling-TMC and its arch rival the BJP can be seen in the bustling Dhamakhali market, the adjoining jetty ghat and the market area surrounding the Sandeshkhali jetty ghat across the Kalindi river. On December 30, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee went to Sandeshkhali for an event, her first visit to the island since protests erupted on February 7, 2024. The TMC has sought to pass off the events of last year as protests against corruption and exploitation by local leaders, with no involvement of its central leadership. "I am aware of the money-game that was played here. Later every allegation turned out to be false. Lies can't hold on for long. They ultimately gets exposed. Let bygones be bygones. I don't remember it. I have forgotten it," Banerjee said in December at the event. Within 24 hours of Banerjee's meeting on the island, Suvendu Adhikari, her one-time protégé, and now a BJP legislator and leader of the opposition in the state legislative assembly said that the BJP would set up a commission to probe into the Sandeshkhali atrocities and send Mamata Banerjee to jail when the party comes to power in the state. "Everything is peaceful now. There is no need to worry. The dust has settled down," said Sukumar Mahata, the TMC MLA of Sandeshkhali. But there is a definite political undercurrent that remains. The Basirhat Lok Sabha constituency, which includes Sandeshkhali assembly seat, has been a TMC stronghold since 2009. In Sandeshkhali II block, where the riots broke out, people from the scheduled castes and tribes and Muslims make up 44.9%, 23.4% and 22.27% of the total population, respectively. Ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, Sandeshkhali remained politically charged. Shahjahan and his aides Sardar and Hazra were arrested and the party suspended them. On April 10, the



Calcutta high court ordered a court-monitored CBI investigation related to incidents in Sandeshkhali. As the Lok Sabha polls approached the two rival parties released a series of videos with the TMC alleging the BJP orchestrated the unrest with fake complaints and the BJP uploading videos featuring women who alleged that they were threatened by the TMC. The BJP fielded Patra, one of the woman protesters, as its candidate from Basirhat. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had called her up and addressed her as Shakti Swarupa (a personification of the goddess Shakti, worshipped in West Bengal as Durga). The TMC relied on Islam, a former MP and a sitting MLA. The TMC won the seat by a margin of 3.33 lakh votes. Locals said that even though the elections are done, the politics continues. Patra, who earlier used to stay in Sandeshkhali with her family, has since moved to Kolkata where she now works. But she remains part of the BJP.

"I go to Sandeshkhali once or twice a week and am also giving time to the party as far as I can. Veiled threats are still continuing to those who joined the protests. Even a few days back my father-in-law was intercepted by some men in the village late in the night. Villagers are silent now but the anger is still there," she claimed. The assembly elections aren't too far away; they are scheduled for the first half of next year. Not surprisingly, the state government and the district administration are treading cautiously. Back in February 2024, when the protests first erupted, allegations also surfaced against the local police and their apathy to complaints lodged by the villagers against Shahjahan and his aides and the state is working to address

these. "Over the past six months we have started organising police camps in the villages on various islands. Villagers who stay in remote islands need not come to Sandeshkhali island to approach the police. We are reaching out to them so that they can lodge any complaints. The camps are set up once every fortnight or a month," said Balay Ghosh, officer-in-charge of Sandeshkhali police station. And the district administration is ensuring that government schemes are not plagued by corruption and nepotism.

"The state government has released the money for the Banglar Bari scheme (a state-funded housing scheme for the poor). We are ensuring that there isn't any corruption and no local political leader are able to demand any money from the villagers," said a senior district administration official who asked not to be named. The district administration is also helping the villagers to develop alternative sources of livelihood and has been distributing pigs, ducks, goats. The police had registered several cases against the villagers in connection with the 2024 rioting. "Those cases are still going on, but all those arrested are out on bail now," said a police officer. While Shahjahan and Hazra are still in jail, Sardar is out on bail, although he has stayed away from the village. The poultry farms of Hazra in Sandeshkhali, which were ransacked and set on fire by an angry mob stand testimony to the violent protests that rocked the island a year ago. And while the violence will hopefully not return, whichever way the cases against the trio go, many expect the politics surrounding Sandeshkhali to peak ahead of the 2026 elections.

NGT issues notice to Centre on use of invasive fish species for mosquito control

New Delhi: The National Green Tribunal has sought a response from the Centre on two highly-invasive and alien fish species being used as biological agents for controlling mosquitoes. The tribunal was hearing a plea about two fish species — *Gambusia affinis* (Mosquitofish) and *Poecilia reticulata* (Guppy) — being released in water bodies to control mosquitoes in various States. The States which stored and released Mosquitofish were Assam, Arunachal

Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh, while Guppy species had been released in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Punjab and Odisha, the plea said. It said the National Biodiversity Authority declared these two fish species as "invasive and alien" as they adversely impacted the local aquatic ecosystems by causing food scarcity for the indigenous fish species.

IISc's Pravriddhi aims to give a fillip to manufacturing, reduce import-reliance

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) contribute to around 30% of India's GDP generating more than 23 crore jobs, second only to agriculture. A large portion of SMEs operate in the capital goods sector. The Economic Survey 2024-25 points out that despite a robust growth trajectory in 2024, the capital goods sector has been increasingly reliant on imports. "Due to technology gaps, this sector imports the high-end machines required for manufacturing. There is an urgent need to address the technology, skill and infrastructure gaps," the report notes. Pravriddhi, a product accelerator programme by the Foundation for Science, Innovation, and Development (FSID) at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc,) aims to bridge this gap by encouraging market-driven innovation and manufacturing in the capital goods sector and replicating it at scale. Launched in November 2024, the accelerator aims to bring together enterprises and premier institutions for the same. "In the capital goods market in the country, you have 10 sub-sectors including heavy electrical machinery, textile, printing and so on. All put together, we are importing around ₹1.5 lakh crore worth of equipment into the country. If we start making these products in the country, that much money could be stopped from going outside." However, the SMEs in the country which primarily operate on cost arbitrage have had no incentive to work in the direction of technological innovation.

"If you look at the SME sector in the country, they are either into contract manufacturing or white label manufacturing. We look at how to move them up the value chain," says B. Gurumoorthy, Director- FSID and Professor at IISc. The seeds of Pravriddhi were sown when FSID started a project with the Ministry of Heavy Industries to work with a cohort of companies to build products at an accelerated pace. The first cohort, which is currently running, consists of eight enterprises working on eight different products with the help of mentors from IISc. According to Gurumoorthy, Pravriddhi was an attempt to see if this could be scaled further. "The goal remains the same," he notes, "which is manufacturing of indigenous designs that are market driven." While one aim of the programme is to create a dent in the current technology imports to the country, the other looks at new technologies which may be India-specific at present but could become a global requirement in the future. A NITI Aayog report in 2024 noted that Indian needs to strive to become a USD 30 trillion economy by 2047. Upgrading capabilities in manufacturing is crucial to this. Pandit points out that to realise the USD 30 trillion goal, manufacturing needs to hit USD 7.5 trillion or 25% of it. But currently it comes to only about USD 630 billion. "This means that in the next 22 years, the sector needs to see a 12x jump. That is not organically possible," he says underlining the role of accelerators like Pravriddhi in bridging the technology gap and academic-industry gap and boosting R&D in the sector. Structured programme Pravriddhi structures its programme with its first touchpoint as the market. "We have conducted a survey of the market to understand what are the products that we import currently, how do we import substitute and so on. Then we identified a curated list of themed cohorts. For

example, if we look at EVs, what are we importing under EVs?" Pandit explains. In the next step, the team understands what products are in demand and how long the demand could be. It also identifies the technology gaps and what is stopping the local players from building the technology. Third is to identify the industry partners or enterprise suitable for the work. We are not approaching startups," emphasises Pandit. "Since we are focused on the market and have a limited amount of time, we go with experienced companies that have been around for 10 years in the adjacent space. For example, if we want to make a motor for EV, we look for somebody who is a veteran in motors, so that we don't have to teach them how to make a motor. We just need to give them a delta of how to make a motor for EV. And they know how to sell it; We don't have to teach them how to sell it." The team is also setting up a vendor network to overcome the potential capability gap. "Let's say the motor company onboarded can make 10 lakh EV motors, but not more than that. Through the vendor network, we would bring in another vendor who can manufacture that many motors for him." The cohorts go through a 30-month cycle where the first 18-24 months would be spent on R&D and the remaining one year in go-to-market. According to Pandit, the current cohort has generated 23 IPs so far, the value of which surpasses the initial investment. As more and more IPs are generated, he feels that the technological challenges the country faces in the sector will be largely addressed.

FSID, which is currently running its first cohort, has submitted a proposal for its next cohort. While initially the idea is to host and guide the cohorts at the IISc campus, the team has been talking to other partners and research organisations who would be open to running similar accelerators on their premises.

Hyderabad: What do you get with the Snapdragon 8 elite and the new Nvidia RTX 50 series cards? It is a truth universally acknowledged that with the new year comes new hardware. Thus, it is only inevitable that 2025 sees the arrival of new mobile silicon from Snapdragon (8 Elite) and the much-awaited RTX 50 series GPU cards from NVIDIA. With such a big line up of hardware to choose from, there seems to be something for both mobile and PC gamers.

This week's column examines the flagship mobile processor from Snapdragon, the 8 Elite. I draw from my own 3-week journey with the OnePlus 13 and its novel experiments with silicon-carbon battery tech to look at how the phone games, renders sound, and holds up in terms of battery consumption. Let's dive right in. Most reviewers of mobile phones have in the last 45 days, gone into great detail to explain how the 8 Elite shows significant gains over its predecessor the 8 Gen 3. However, despite the



In January 2025, FSID signed an MoU with the Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI) to replicate the product accelerator platform developed under Pravriddhi programme and establish a Centre of Excellence focusing on research, development, technology innovation, and testing, validation, and engineering services in the mobility space. "That's how we intend to scale, because at best we can do 8 to 10 companies in a cohort. Even if you do two cohorts a year, the number of companies would be very limited. But if there are 10 such accelerators like us across the country then that number becomes quite large," Gurumoorthy notes. Needs more private support The team also feels more investment from the private sector would be crucial in giving fillip to technological innovations in manufacturing. So far, most of the investment has been from the government. "On

the investment side, there is risk because nobody has gone through the cycle to have the confidence that this kind of thing will pay off," admits Gurumoorthy. "Right now, we are leaning on the government. But if we can show the success of these programmes, the industry will be confident that this process will pay off."

Then we can slowly wean them away from government funding," he hopes. According to him, the programme is already seeing some interest from a few private funds. "We don't know where they will participate; they may only want to participate when the product is ready, then they may want to invest in facilities for manufacturing at scale... That is also good because the company benefits and therefore the country benefits. But we would like them to also replace the government as the risk funding partner," he adds.

2025 Gaming Hardware: Worth the upgrade?

benchmarks on AnTuTu and 3DMark's Solar Bay, everyday usage is always different considering the wide variety of tasks we expect our phones to do. I tested my phone with bursts of Infinity Nikki, Squad Busters, a bit of League of Legends: Wild Rift, and Monument Valley 3 while also heavily using WhatsApp for calls and my wireless earbuds for Bluetooth connectivity. OnePlus has tuned the chip brilliantly and not once did I have trouble multi-tasking; however, I think you will experience the same benefits on most phones with the chip – like the IQOO 13, the Galaxy S25 series, and the upcoming Xiaomi 15 lineup. The 8 Elite also runs most games without compromise on high resolutions (QHD) and framerate (120Hz). In a demanding world like Infinity Nikki, I found no customary dip in performance after the first 20-30 minutes. Secondly, I also found that the chip was consuming very little power. For example, 30 minutes of Squad Busters on my Pixel 7 Pro meant a dip in 12-15 percent

of charge whereas 30 minutes on the OP13 was less than 7 percent. Lastly, I also found that with the integration of the Snapdragon Sound suite of codecs in aptX, aptX HD, and aptX Low Latency, the chip offers very little lag or distortion on wireless earbuds or headphones. With the 8 Elite's many strengths, does it mean that this is such an amazing chip that you must get one immediately? Maybe not! For starters, it is much more expensive than the 8 Gen 3 and secondly, with most phone makers offering a more OS upgrades, there is no need to get one if your phone is guaranteed the next Android update.

Lastly, phone batteries also seem to be getting more robust and if yours has withstood the demands of the everyday charging cycle, please stay put. However, if you are up for an upgrade and game on your phones, do consider the winning combo of the 8 Elite and a silicon-carbon battery.