

sunday pioneer

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Published From: HYDERABAD DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL RAIPUR CHANDIGARH BHUBANESWAR RANCHI DEHRADUN VIJAYAWADA



75% Indian villages declared
ODF Plus,
says Jal Shakti Minister

5



India needs to grow
AT 8% FOR
transformational changes

6



Harish Rao:
TELANGANA'S
health and wealth

DIL SE

QUOTE OF THE DAY

The pioneer

Everything is leaking under the KCR government. KCR cancelled the exams and punished the students although the mistake was made by someone else. Who gave the authority to KCR to play with the lives of the unemployed through leaks? If KCR has any shame he should resign immediately. The HC order to conduct the Group-1 preliminary examination again is a severe blow to KCR.

- Revanth Reddy, TPCC chief

DON'T MISS...

Modi to sound poll bugle in...

BJP national executive member AP Jitender Reddy has said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi would sound the election bugle from Mahabubnagar. Disclosing this to the media here on Saturday, Jitender Reddy charged the BRS government in a hurry manner inaugurating the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme by commissioning one motor instead of installing 31. However, the lone motor developed mechanical faults the very next day...

-PAGE: 4

Enthusiasts for people-to-people...

A two-day conference to revive the ham radio movement with a special focus on the technical aspects of amateur radio and to boost people-to-people relations across regions opened in Santiniketan on Saturday. It brought together 170 delegates from different parts of India, Bangladesh and the US, who will take part in various sessions like amateur radio application procedures, high-frequency radio and digital radio. "Ham radio is a hobby that refuses to die because it has reinvented itself with new..."

-PAGE: 5

TRAI for boosting telecom infra in...

TRAI has issued recommendations for bolstering telecom infrastructure in North East, suggesting parleys with the state governments to harmonise their respective 'right of way' policies with related Central rules, as well as favouring provision of electricity to telecom sites on priority at utility tariffs. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) noted that while a number of initiatives have been taken by the government to improve telecom connectivity in the northeastern...

-PAGE: 6

How ducks, geese and swans see...

Each year, millions of birds fly into power lines, wind turbines and the other man-made structures that litter the open air space. These collisions frequently result in the death of birds and, if power systems go down, disrupt our lives and pose financial challenges for power companies. Numerous bird species, including macaws in Brazil, geese and swans in the UK, and blue cranes in South Africa have been found to be susceptible to collisions with power lines. But any flying bird can fall victim to such a collision. In some places, these collisions happen so often that they can jeopardise local populations of endangered species. But birds are highly evolved flying machines. They can fly in tightly packed flocks that weave and turn to...

-SPORTS

OBTUSE ANGLE



Group-I Prelims cancelled again

High Court directs TSPSC to reconduct exams

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Public Service Commission (TSPSC) Group-I preliminary examination has been cancelled once again. The High Court has directed the TSPSC on Saturday to cancel the Group-I prelims examination and conduct the examination once again.

The High Court has stated that the main reason for the cancellation of Group-I examination for not taking bio-metric attendance.

The High Court has made it clear that the TSPSC has to follow the rules given in the Group-I notification. The Court opined that the TSPSC did not conduct the examination as per the guidelines given in notification in the Group-I prelims examination conducted on June



11th. The Court directed the TSPSC to conduct the Group-I examination once again following all rules. The Court asked the TSPSC to follow the guidelines including bio-metric attendance given in notification. The Court commented that the TSPSC failed in collecting the data

of the candidates properly. The Court slammed that the TSPSC behaved in a negligent manner even while knowing the fact that the Group-I examination is very important to the candidates.

2

Govt's incompetence : Kishan

Hyderabad: Union Tourism Minister BJP State President G. Kishan Reddy said that it is extremely unfortunate that a complete lack of governance and a total indifference to the plight of the unemployed by the BRS Government led to the cancellation of the Group-1 preliminary examination a second time. Around four lakh



candidates had registered for the Group-1 preliminary initially and their hopes have been dashed once again, he said.

2

Hard blow to govt: Revanth

Hyderabad: TPCC President Revanth Reddy said that the High Court order to hold the Group-1 (Preliminary) examination again is a hard blow to the KCR government. This is the result of the destruction of institutions under KCR's rule, he said. Revanth sent an open letter to Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Rao regarding proceedings



after the cancellation of the Group-1 (Preliminary) examination.

2

Kovind panel to invite views on synchronised polls



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A high-level committee on simultaneous elections headed by former president Ram Nath Kovind held its first meeting on Saturday and decided to invite political parties and the Law Commission to seek their views on holding synchronised polls in the country, a statement said.

Home Minister Amit Shah, Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal, former Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad, former Finance Commission chairman N K Singh, former Lok Sabha secretary general Subhash C Kashyap and former chief vigilance commissioner Sanjay Kothari attended the meeting.

The committee, the statement said, decided to invite recognised national parties, parties having governments in states, those having their representatives in Parliament, other recognised state parties "for seeking suggestions/view points on the issue of simultaneous elections in the country". In addition, the committee will also invite the Law Commission for its suggestions and view points on the issue of simultaneous elections, a law ministry statement said. Noted lawyer Harish Salve joined the meeting virtually.

Congress leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury was not present in the meeting, the statement noted.

IF CONG COMES TO POWER

Will amend women's quota Bill, says Kharge

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday said his party would amend the women's reservation bill if it comes to power at the Centre in 2024.

There are no major legal complications in implementing the bill right now but the Narendra Modi government putting it off for 10 years, he said.

While supporting the bill in Parliament, the Congress demanded that it be implemented with immediate effect and a quota for women from Other Backward



Classes (OBC) be included in it.

"When our government comes in 2024, the first thing we will do is make amendments to the bill," Kharge said, addressing a party rally in Jaipur in poll-bound Rajasthan.

2

Kishan facing rough weather in Amberpet

MARTHI SUBRAHMANYAM ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana BJP President G. Kishan Reddy is facing rough weather in his Amberpet constituency as the former BJP city unit president Venkata Reddy and his wife BJP Bagh Amberpet corporator Padma dealt a shock to the BJP by joining the BRS.

The BJP leaders in Secunderabad are also angry with the unilateral functioning style of Kishan.

The contention of BJP seniors is that Kishan failed to get nominated posts for seniors, is preoccupied with his own growth and not paying attention to other leaders.

Since some time, BJP leaders in Amberpet and in his Lok Sabha constituency have been seething with discontent over his conduct. Kishan is accused of ignoring seniors working with the BJP since its formation and encouraging leaders from his own community. There is widespread criticism that Kishan is ignoring the party's rank and file and is blocking leaders whom he does not like. Kishan had promised the Gangaputra community, which had worked for his success last time that he would get a party ticket for them. But he did not keep the promise. In Amberpet, the Gangaputras have the largest number of voters. Now a leader of the

Gangaputras has decided to enter the fray in Amberpet as an Independent. BJP leaders also expressed displeasure over Kishan spending most of his time in New Delhi and remaining inaccessible to them.

According to party leaders, Kishan is always surrounded by the rich and ordinary party workers are out of sight.

BJP sources say that Venkata bid adieu complaining against Kishan's style of functioning. Sources said that Kishan made Venkata wait for him for hours without giving him an appointment. Kishan gave nothing to Venkata who had sought a nominated post or a post in the state executive.

How TS held back husbands, won 79 national awards since 2015

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana claims to be among the first states to provide 50 per cent reservation for women in local bodies and a whopping 53 per cent of the sarpanches in the state are women. Out of the 12,769 sarpanches 6,808 are females and women have a significant presence in both the urban and local bodies.

The state has 59,000 women as ward members in municipalities and more than 4,000 women representatives in Mandals and Zilla Parishads.

The state claimed to have made significant progress since the early 1990s when one-third reservation was given to women in the local bodies.

Over the years, the representation of women continues to improve in



Mandal Parishad and Zilla Parishad territorial constituencies as many of them are Mandal presidents and chairpersons of Zilla Parishads.

Leaders of the ruling Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) claim that real women's empowerment has

been ensured in the state in the last 20 years.

Earlier, the general perception was that while women were being elected or nominated to the posts as per the quota, the real power was in the hands of male members of their fam-

BRS in a fix over countering Cong charges

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



Srinivas Yadav, Erabelli Dayakar Rao and Manchireddy Kishan

'No democracy or transparency in BRS'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BRS is a puppet in the hands of a few power-hungry individuals, said Malkajigiri MLA Mynampally Hanumanth Rao in his letter to Chief Minister KCR.

Addressing KCR as 'Sir,' Hanumanth said in his letter, "I am deeply disappointed and disillusioned with the recent developments in the party. There is no democracy or transparency in its functioning. The party leadership has ignored the voices of grassroots workers and leaders and has taken unilateral decisions without any consultation. The name change of

Reddy.

"The Telangana Congress intends to save people from corrupt BRS leaders through the social media and so is running the campaign #ChargesheetonBRS. All these charge sheets are based on news clippings and videos and nothing has been created out of the blue.

In fact, during Revanth Reddy's Padayatra some of these charge sheets were released," Congress sources said.

The charge sheets comes with names for leaders like "Kantri KTR," "Dagakor Dayakar," "Cunning Kamalakar," "Kabza Muthireddy," "Dandhala Talasani," "Maha Chedda Manchireddy" etc.

2



the party from the TRS to the BRS against the wishes of the party's rank and file is a glaring example of this.

2

Over the years, the representation of women continues to improve in Mandal Parishad and Zilla Parishad territorial constituencies as many of them are Mandal presidents and chairpersons of Zilla Parishads.

women representatives were not free to discharge their constitutional duties and became dummies in the hands of the male family members or village leaders. A large number of elected members of the local bodies, especially women, were not actively participating in the meetings of the local bodies.

However, BRS leaders say things have changed over the last one decade with women asserting themselves.

They claim that after the formation of Telangana efforts were made for the real empowerment of women.

Last year, orders were issued under Panchayat Raj Section 37(5) Act-2018 to ensure that the husbands and relatives of the women public representatives do not interfere in the administrative activities.



‘More will join Cong soon’

K VENKATESHWARLU
■ HYDERABAD

TPCC President Revanth Reddy said that there would be more inductions into the Congress from other parties. He said that some important leaders are going to join the Congress very soon and they will work hard for the victory of the Congress.

Speaking to the media after inducting former Municipal chairman Sampath and businessman Srinivas Reddy at the AICC office in New Delhi on Saturday in the presence of Telangana Congress in-charge Manikrao Thakre, Revanth said that the Congress will certainly come to power.

Revanth said that everyone saw how the Sonia Gandhi attend Congress’ Vijayabheri public meeting in Hyderabad although the BRS government refused to give permission to use the ground and created problems in giving hotels.

Revanth said that 86 of the



115 candidates who got BRS tickets are from other political parties.

The TPCC president said that leaders can live respectfully even if they do not have any post. However, there is no freedom for the people of Telangana now, he said.

He said that all sections of people would be able to live freely if there is a Congress government. People want to live in peace and want social justice. The public’s immediate need is that the Congress must come to power, Revanth added.

Thakre says no hurdles for leaders joining Cong

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Congress in-charge Manikrao Thakre made it clear that there are no hurdles for leaders who join the Congress from other parties.

He said that the people of Telangana want to ensure the victory of the Congress as they think that there will be no safety for them under BRS rule. The people of Telangana know that former AICC president Sonia Gandhi gave Telangana state, he said.

Speaking to the media after inducting leaders from Nakrekal into the Congress on Saturday in New Delhi, Thakre said that they will release the first list soon.

Cong to announce candidates in phases

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress high command is going to announce the list of candidates in a phased manner as leaders from other political parties are queuing up to join the Congress. According to sources, there are many leaders from other political parties who are ready to join the Congress. Keeping this in view, the party is going to announce the list in a phased manner.

The Telangana Congress as well as the Congress high command is forced to settle matters with party leaders regarding allotment of tickets. Leaders from other political parties are joining the Congress only after getting assurance of tickets. This is making the Congress

Mynampally to contest only from Malkajigiri

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Malkajigiri MLA Mynampally Hanumantha Rao made it clear that he will contest only from Malkajigiri. Some are spreading lies intentionally, he said.

He said that they were floating rumours on social media that Mynampally would contest from Quthbullapur or Medchal.

On Saturday, Mynampally’s supporters came to his residence in huge numbers. On this occasion, Mynampally spoke to the media and said that posts are not important for him and that only activists are important to him.

He said that he is ready to sacrifice his life for the sake of his supporters if the need arises. He said that the government has been filing false cases against his supporters who had left the BRS for his sake.

Cong leaders abstained from voting on women’s quota Bill: BRS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BRS said that Congress MPs didn’t attend the voting on the Women’s Reservation Bill. The Congress put out a tweet and then deleted it. BRS leaders said that Revanth Reddy, Komatireddy Venkatreddy and Uttam Kumar Reddy didn’t attend the voting on the Women’s Reservation Bill.

BRS leader Sravan Dasoju said, “It is a clear breach of trust that these three MPs from Telangana abdicated their legislative responsibility to participate in the Lok Sabha proceedings during the passing of the historical Women’s Reservation Bill 2023.

We sent these leaders to Parliament with the hope that they will frame policies, but they are busy settling their MLA ticket fights, without



any sense of commitment and responsibility towards women.”

He said that these MPs do not attend Parliament proceedings but have the audacity to claim that they would become the Chief Minister of Telangana.

“These three MPs who have lost the moral right to seek the votes of women should not be allowed to step into Telangana till they apologise to our women for their irresponsibility, breach of trust and betrayal,” he said.

The Congress issued a statement on the absence of its Telangana leaders during the voting on the Women’s Reservation Bill in the Lok Sabha and later retracted it.

On the INC Telangana handle they posted, “We may not have been there at the time, but our full support was given at the CWC meeting in Hyderabad.

Our leaders could not attend as they were working to protect the interests of the state. It is a shame that some are politicising it.”

Sama Ram Mohan Reddy, the official spokesperson of the TPCC challenged the BRS to check the attendance register instead of resorting to a fake campaign against Congress leaders.

The attendance register has not yet been uploaded on the Lok Sabha website.

MOTHKUPALLY TO KCR

Why silent on Naidu’s arrest?

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former Minister Motkupalu Narasimhulu strongly condemned the arrest of former Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu.

“KCR should respond to Chandrababu’s arrest. KCR worked in Chandrababu’s government. I was in the NTR government. If KCR responds by keeping politics aside, it will be good for democracy. I am in the BRS. I am personally responding to Chandrababu’s arrest. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy helped Chandrababu by putting him in jail. Chandrababu will win the AP election. Former CM Rajasekhara Reddy did not do evil things like Jagan,”



Mothkupalu said.

He said that he is going to launch a protest against Chandrababu’s arrest. A one-day protest will be held near NTR Ghat on Sunday, he added.

Speaking to the media after paying his respects near NTR Ghat, Motkupalu lashed out at Jagan. He warned Jagan to remember that his kingdom

would not last forever.

“Chandrababu was arrested against constitutional norms without the permission of the Governor. Arresting Chandrababu without his name in the FIR is evil. With a budget of seven or eight crores can Chandrababu hope for Rs 371 crore? Chandrababu will not engage in vengeful acts. He is not a criminal like Jagan. Jagan is arrogant as he is drunk with power. I hoped Jagan would win elections at this NTR ghat. At my word, Dalits united for Jagan and he won. Jagan has a history of throwing his mother out of the house. Jagan did injustice to Sharmila although she went on a Padayatra for him. Jagan is a dictator ruling a kingdom without a capital.

Will amend...

Continued from Page 1

The Constitution (128th Amendment) Bill, which seeks to reserve a third of seats in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies for women, was passed by Parliament earlier this week. It was the first bill to be taken up and passed in the new Parliament building.

In his address, Kharge alleged that the then president Ram Nath Kovind was not invited for the foundation laying of the new Parliament building because he is “untouchable.”

“If the foundation laying was done by an untouchable, then naturally it would have to be washed with Gangajal (water from the Ganges),” he said, referring to the former president’s caste.

Kharge said President

Droupadi Murmu was not invited for the inauguration of the new Parliament building while many others, including actors, were invited.

“This is an insult to the president,” he said.

“...Lok Sabha is summoned by the president and not by the prime minister. But there is no place for (the president) and then they say that they respect women a lot,” he said.

The Congress leader also questioned the Narendra Modi government’s intention behind bringing the women’s reservation bill, saying the BJP does not want to give reservation to women even though it does not say so.

Kharge said Sarojini Naidu was the first woman president of the Congress and asked, “In 100 years, has any woman become president of BJP or RSS?”

Continued from Page 1

The attempts to expand into neighbouring states have taken away the party’s focus from the development of Telangana.”

Mynampally is likely to join the Congress in a couple of days.

“The disconnect between the party and the people and its own cadre is even more evident in the choice of candidates who are facing a severe backlash from their constituents and even party cadres,” he said.

“On a personal level, I have serious differences with some senior BRS leaders who have been spreading lies against me in the media and social media. Therefore, I have decided to resign from the BRS and reject the Assembly

ticket given to me,” Mynampally said.

He said that he cannot continue to be a “part of a party that has lost its direction and identity and has become a puppet in the hands of some power-hungry individuals.”

“I cannot betray the trust and faith of my constituents who have elected me with a huge majority. I cannot compromise on the principles, values and commitment that I have upheld throughout my political career.

I request you to kindly accept my resignation, relieve me from all responsibilities and the posts that I hold in the party, and also remove my name from the list of your party candidates for the Assembly elections,” Mynampally said.

The Congress intends to release this for all the 105 candidates of the BRS. “With evidence and newspaper clippings we want to show it to the public. KCR is a kind leader. These were circulated while we did,” party sources said. For instance, the charge sheet against KTR said that his followers engaged in the illegal transport of sand, Bathukamma sarees order given only to those who gave commission. BRS leaders and ward members got one 2BHK house and no 30-bedded hospital in every mandal of Sircilla. Meanwhile, BRS social media convener Krishank Manne started a campaign #RevanthBabaChalisChor’ akin to Ali Baba and 40 thieves where he posted allegations of corruption against Ponnala Lakshmaiah and Madhu Yashki Goud.

Group-I Prelims...

Continued from Page 1

The Court expressed its intolerance on a counter submitted by the TSPSC. The Court slammed that the TSPSC showed wrong figures about the candidates who attended the preliminary examination. The TSPSC webnote given on June 28th stated that 2,33,506 candidates attended the examination, however, the TSPSC mentioned in its Counter submitted to the state that 2,33,248 candidates attended the examination. Three candidates, who appeared in the

Group-I preliminary examination, approached the High Court in June alleging that the TSPSC gave OMR Sheet without hall ticket number and photo and did not take biometric attendance. The applicants appealed to the Court to direct the TSPSC to conduct the examination once again.

It may be recalled that the TSPSC conducted examinations in 994 centers and 3,80,081 candidates applied for the examination, however, 2,33,248 candidates appeared for the examination with 61.37 percent attendance.

Govt’s incompetence...

Continued from Page 1

In a statement issued on Saturday, Kishan said that Telangana was formed promising Neellu (water), Nidhulu (funds) and Niyamakalu (jobs) and the failure of the BRS government on all these three fronts has led to the complete destruction of the hope that existed at the time of the state’s formation. The abject failure of the BRS government is especially evident in the case of jobs (Niyamakalu), he added.

Kishan said one would have

expected the Telangana State Public Service Commission (TSPSC) would be more careful in conducting the Group-I examination after the initial paper leak in October 2022. However, the TSPSC is in total denial as the initial paper leak continued due to its incompetence and as it ended the collection of biometric details during the re-examination scheduled for June 2023 despite its recruitment notification clearly stating that bio details would be collected as a precautionary measure to prevent impersonation and other

malpractices.

The Union Minister said that the High Court therefore had no option but to cancel the examination when several petitioners sought cancellation of the exam as there were many lacunae in conducting the exam like hall tickets not having photographs of the candidate and as candidates were not subjected to biometric screening which gives scope for impersonation.

A government that cannot secure the future of youth has no right to remain in power, Kishan said.

Continued from Page 1

In his letter, Revanth criticised KCR saying that his unjust rule will be punished by students and the unemployed. From the beginning of the Telangana movement, students and youth from Osmania University and Kakatiya University stood by it and kept the need for a Telangana State alive. Youth and students played a vital role in the Telangana movement from the 1952 Mulki and Non-Mulki movement, from the first phase of the movement in 1969 to the third phase in 2014, he said.

He said that he expected that KCR would correct the mistakes based on past experience and hold the exam efficiently this

time but KCR exposed his shallowness in conducting the exam and his ill intentions.

It is the government’s minimum responsibility to set up a biometric system and to provide OMR sheets with hall ticket numbers. But this “honourable” regime did not record biometrics and OMR sheets were given without hall ticket numbers, he said. He said the HC order to re-conduct the Group-I preliminary examination is a severe blow to KCR. This HC verdict has proved that the KCR government has failed to conduct the Group-I exam again. This situation would not have arisen if strong action had been taken when the TSPSC question paper leak came to light. At that time

KCR cancelled exams and punished students even though the mistake was made by someone else. Telangana’s unemployed have lost confidence in the TSPSC, Revanth said.

In this context, the Congress hopes to provide assurance to Telangana’s unemployed. The youth of Telangana need not despair. A Congress government will come in three months and everything will be set right, he said. Revanth said that only if the KCR government is dissolved can the filling of vacant posts be done transparently. If there has to be fair recruitment in Telangana, the only way is to remove the KCR government and bring the Congress to power, he added.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha

Tithi: Navami: Sep 23 12:18 PM to Sep 24 10:23 AM

Dashami: Sep 24 10:23 AM to Sep 25 07:56 AM

Nakshatram: Sep 23 02:56 PM to Sep 24 01:41 PM

Purva Ashadha: Sep 24 01:41 PM to Sep 25 11:55 AM

Uttara Ashadha: Sep 25 11:55 AM to Sep 26 07:07 PM

Rahukalam: 4:37 PM to 6:07 PM

Yamagandam: 12:08 PM to 1:38 PM

Varjyam: 09:06 PM to 10:35 PM

Gulika: 3:07 PM to 4:37 PM

Amritakalam: 09:08 AM to 10:39 AM

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:44 AM to 12:32 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Cloudy

Temp: 29°

Humidity: 78%

Sunrise: 6:05 AM

Sunset: 6:11 PM

Updated: September 23, 2023 5:00 PM

TS elections

Continued from Page 1

If these things have not been arranged, we will provide them. Presiding officers and polling officers will be finalised,” he said.

“We have been getting reports every week from 20 enforcement agencies under the state and the Centre. The Commission will have a meeting with these agencies on inducements like liquor, cash and drugs,” he said. ECI members and officers are coming on October 3, 4 and 5. They will hold meetings with the State Election Commission, the Chief Secretary, Collectors, police and political parties, the CEO added.

Congress demands immediate scrapping of TSPSC Board

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress demanded that the BRS government should clean up the TSPSC Board and reconstituting it.

Speaking to the media at the Gandhi Bhavan on Saturday along with Congress leader Harshavardhan Reddy and Riyaz, NSUI State President Balmoor Venkat Narsimha Rao said that the government has been behaving negligently. The Group-I preliminary examination was cancelled due to the leakage of question papers. Now for the second time, the examination has been cancelled as the TSPSC did not follow the guidelines

mentioned in the notification like introducing the biometric system.

The government had conducted the examination with arrogance a second time although the HC had directed the TSPSC to cleanse it. The TSPSC Board created chaos in the OMR sheet by not recording biometrics, he said.

Harshavardhan demanded that the government should order an inquiry into the addition of 258 extra OMR sheets compared to the total number of candidates appearing for the examination. He also demanded that the government should scrap the present TSPSC Board as one of the members leaked the DSC question paper in

1994. He said that the government had set up the TSPSC Board against the rules.

Riyaz said that the BRS government failed to conduct even one Group-I examination in its nine and a half years. It is unfortunate that the persons who conducted the Group-I preliminary examination leaked the question paper. He demanded that the government should abolish the TSPSC Board immediately.

He said that even the High Court had directed that the Board should be cleansed within three months and demanded that the government should appoint a new board and conduct the exam again.

Opposition slinging mud at PRLIS: Niranjan

Continued from Page 1

He said that it is noteworthy that leaders who are now spewing venom have ignored the basic fact that the then Chief Minister Kiran Kumar Reddy started only one pump even in the Kalvakurti lift irrigation scheme.

All other Kalvakurti lift irrigation pumps were completed under the leadership of KCR after the formation of Telangana.

Palamuru district, which lost out in the last 60 years, is standing tall under the leadership of KCR, he said.

Kavitha supports quota for BCs in legislatures



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana BRS MLC K Kavitha on Saturday extended support to the backward classes associations which proposed to meet here on September 26 pressing for demands such as reservation for BCs in legislative bodies and conducting a caste census.

She extended support to BC meeting to be held at Jal Vihar. Backward classes association leader and YSRC MP R Krishnaiah met Kavitha and discussed issues concerning BCs, a release from Kavitha’s

office said. Speaking on the occasion, she said Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao was giving importance to the

welfare of backward classes and also implementing welfare schemes for the community like no where else in the country.

Krishnaiah thanked Kavitha for her support to the cause, the release said. He praised Kavitha for her fight for passage of Women’s Reservation bill in Parliament and for seeking quota for backward class women under the quota.

Two buildings in Mindspace razed in 6-8seconds for redevelopment

It leveraged the cutting edge ‘Implosion Technology’ in its strategic demolition of two ageing buildings located at Madhapur

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Mindspace Business Parks REIT leveraged the cutting edge ‘Implosion Technology’ in its strategic demolition of two ageing buildings located at Mindspace Madhapur. A first in Hyderabad, the structures with a legacy of around 18 years were successfully dismantled on the morning of September 23. This feat of engineering saw the buildings being safely and efficiently brought down in just 6-8 seconds, a stark contrast to the traditional demolition process that typically spans 3-4 months, a culmination of meticulous planning over several months by the team. This makes way for a futuristic sustainable asset spread across approximately 1.6 million square feet.

This is part of the entity's larger strategy to undertake infrastructure and workspace upgrades with the intent of staying contemporary, impactful, and environmentally responsible. This paves way to a new age building that shall offer expansion and consoli-

dation spaces within the Business Park. The new asset is expected to be completed by Q3FY27.

The process of implosion entails the precise placement of explosive materials and the orchestrated timing of their detonation. This technique is employed to ensure that a structure collapses in, on itself, within a matter of seconds, while minimising any potential physical damage to its immediate surroundings. To ensure the successful execution of this ambitious project, Mindspace REIT engaged the expertise of skilled professionals from Edifice Engineering who were awarded the contract of implosion. Edifice Engineering further partnered with Jet Demolition a South African based Engineering and Technology Partner who facilitated the project's flawless Execution. Aligned with the entity's larger purpose to build sustainable ecosystems, the controlled approach significantly reduced any environmental impact or disruptions to nearby Clients and com-



munities.

Ramesh Nair, CEO, K Raheja Corp Investment Managers Private Limited, Manager to Mindspace Business Parks REIT, said ‘Our main goal is to create top-notch office spaces that measure up to global standards and that our customers will love. We always make sure to update and upgrade using the latest tech. This not only saves us time and money but also lets us get our spaces out there quicker. We focus on things like good air systems, touch-free features, sunlight, flexible layouts, eco-friendly aspects, and

outdoor spaces to give everyone the best value possible.”

The new structure is being meticulously crafted to attain LEED Platinum Rating and Wellness Certification Standards, highlighting the entity's commitment to sustainability and workplace well-being, replete with an array of state-of-the-art amenities.

In contrast to conventional demolition techniques involving mechanical processes like high reach jaw crusher machines, Mindspace REIT has enabled the rapid deconstruction of the structures, while ensuring the removal of debris within a

streamlined 60-day timeframe, representing a substantial enhancement compared to the 5-6 months typically required in the end-to-end process for demolitions of similar magnitude. Beyond its time-efficiency advantages, this advanced technology contributes to noise reduction, reduces equipment dependency, and fosters a more amicable relationship with the surrounding community. Mindspace REIT has also ensured interventions to effectively manage dust and pollution. From the use of smog guns and water jets during the removal of dust clouds and debris, to employing geo-textile fabric to wrap around the buildings and adjacent structures, the entity has ensured the best outcomes.

Raising bar for eco-conscious edifices, this initiative is yet another significant milestone in Mindspace REITs unwavering dedication to integrating state-of-the-art solutions within the real estate sector, a first of its kind initiative by MREIT in entire Telangana State

Tollywood actor Navadeep appears before TSNAB

He is facing charges of consuming drugs in the past

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Tollywood actor Navadeep who has been facing charges of consuming drugs appeared before the Telangana Anti Narcotics Bureau (TSNAB) on Saturday

He went to the Central Crime Station here on being summoned by the TSNAB.

The actor's name surfaced after the TSNAB arrested an alleged gang, including foreign nationals, a week ago.

The actor attended the hearing at Central Crime Station at Basheerbagh. He was asked 20 questions regarding his drug purchase sources.

Navdeep was declared accused number 29 by the



police in the Madhapur narcotics case. The investigation, the officials said, revealed that Navdeep had regular contact with the drug dealers arrested on September 14. The actor

had moved the High Court seeking protection against the arrest, following which the High Court directed TSNAB to serve a notice to him.

On September 19, raids were conducted at the actor's house in his absence and the officials claimed that they had found ‘solid evidence’ against Navdeep which showed that he used to buy narcotic substances from the people caught in the drug bust.

Following the interrogation by the TSNAB officials, Navdeep appeared before the media and confessed to taking drugs in the past and further revealed that he had gone to a rehabilitation centre to get rid of drug abuse.

Quack running ‘clinic’ arrested

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Commissioner's Task Force, along with the Tukaramgate police, on Saturday arrested a man for posing as a doctor and cheating people.

The alleged quack was identified as Tuhin Kumar Mondal (30) who was operating Geeta Clinic at Tukaramgate and is a native of West Bengal.

Mondal studied up to class 10.

In 2012 he went to Chittoor district in Andhra Pradesh and worked as assistant to Dr Biswas.

In 2016 he came to Hyderabad and started a clinic namely ‘Geetha Clinic’ he posed as Dr T K Mandal, specialist for piles, fistula, and fissure.

The police seized visiting cards, tablets and instruments.

Mondal was booked under section 420 IPC.

TS govt plans World Tourism Day fete

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government is going to conduct World Tourism Day celebrations, from September 25 to 27 September. Celebrations will start at the Shilpakala Vedika, the Minister for Excise, Sports, Tourism and Culture, V. Srinivas Goud, said at a press meeting held at the Tourism Plaza on Saturday.

He said that on these days they are showcasing handicrafts, cultural programmes, arranging food courts and a live concert by singer Hemachandra. Hyderabad and Mahabubnagar will celebrate tourism day for three days and other districts will celebrate for a day in their respective collectorates.

“On the occasion of Tourism Day the government will present Tourism Awards to 37 categories including travel agents, tour operators, restaurants and



for excellence in writing etc.,” he said.

“Telangana tourism had not developed in United Andhra Pradesh. But under the leadership of K. Chandrasekhar Rao tourism has been developing very fast in TS. The Sri Lankan Prime Minister will also visit Telangana's tourist spots,” he said.

“Buddhist sites are thousands of years old. Travellers usually go to historic sites. So we will be developing all Buddhist sites in the state. We are also going to create a tourist circuit connecting all Buddhist sites,” Srinivas Goud said.

Police raid spa, arrest 8 persons at Domalaguda

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Domalguda police on Friday arrested eight persons following a raid on a spa. Four women were rescued during the operation.

The arrested persons include three organisers and five customers. The organisers were identified as Bandi Anil Kumar (36) spa owner Kishan Singh Hazari (36).

The five customers were identified as Azmat Ali Ansari, Krishna Kumar Baheti , Ajay Singh, L Ramanathan, Priyesh Chand. The three organisers established Yantra Spa at Himayath Nagar ; they hired four female massage therapists, who were forced to engage in cross massaging .

The accused violated the guidelines laid by the government and conducted activities such as cross massaging; therapists were employed without any valid physiotherapist certificates, one of the therapist Singhabhat Thapthim came on a business e visa and worked as a therapist in violation of e-visa issued by Indian embassy ;customer records were not maintained in the Spa; There were no CCTV cameras at the center; massage was given behind closed doors .

The Spa management has failed to produce any therapist certificates during enquiry. The accused were booked under section 188 of the IPC and section 21 of the Domalguda police.

Hyderabad CP calls for peace ahead of Milad -un -Nabi rally

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Ahead of Milad -un -Nabi rally on October 1, Hyderabad Commissioner of Police CV Anand on Saturday urged the religious leaders to ensure that the procession is organised peacefully.

Addressing the media Anand said, “ Today there was a meeting held at the South Zone DCP's office with the representatives of Markazi Milad Julus Committee and other members of the Muslim community.

The meeting was held with respect to Milad-un-Nabi and Ganesh immersion which were scheduled to take place on the same day after 35 years. A few days ago the Julus committee decided to reschedule the Milad procession to October 1, and today a discussion was held regarding the preparations for



Hyderabad Commissioner CV Anand addressing a meeting with Markazi Milad Julus Committee and officials in Hyderabad on Saturday

the rally. The police department welcomes the decision of the committee. This decision reflects the harmonious culture of Hyderabad and Telangana.”

He further said, “It is an example which needs to be taken forward. The police personnel are discharging their duties professionally with regards to the Ganesh pandals and processions being carried

out presently. The police, along with GHMC officials, are ensuring smooth conduct of the processions.

Once the Ganesh processions end on September 28, the preparations for Milad processions would begin. All members of the Julus committee are requested to maintain cooperation with the police.”

‘Ensure hassle-free travel for passengers during festive season’

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) Managing Director VC Sajjanar on Saturday asked officials to ensure hassle-free travel for passengers during festivals in the next five months.

Addressing a virtual meeting from Bus Bhavan, he said, “In the last two years, significant changes were brought in the organisation and the public transport system was brought closer to the people with innovative programmes.” He said that both the staff and the passengers welcomed the changes effected by the management.”

He further said, “The staff have accepted the challenges of Hundred Days Challenge, Shraavan Masam Challenge, Rakhi Festival Challenge,



Dussehra Challenge, Sankranti Challenge, ADPC Challenge... and achieved results beyond the target. He said that the success of the organisation was due to working with commitment in the field.”

He further said, “The aim is to reduce the loss of Rs 1,600 crore in two years. He said that the company is going from a questionable future situation to growing into a wonderful power. He said that RTC's brand image has grown sig-

nificantly in the public today. “While providing quality services to passengers on one hand on the other hand we have focused on the welfare of 45,000 thousand staff. Through the Grand Health Challenge, medical examinations were conducted for all the employees of the company in 45 days as a result of which 500 lives were saved,” the MD explained.

“TSRTC stands for security. Our buses transport an average of 40 lakh people to their destinations safe and sound every day. Some accidents happen because of small mistakes made by some people. Never ignore the wrongdoers in road accidents. Take disciplinary action as per rules,” he stressed.

Sajjanar then advised the staff to be polite with passengers and to be patient in performing their duties.

Hyderabad- Bangalore Vande Bharat service to begin tomorrow

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will flag off the train virtually from Delhi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The South Central Railway (SCR) on Saturday announced that the Vande Bharat Express service between Hyderabad and Bangalore will begin on September 25.

The train from Kacheguda to Yesvantpur which is the third Vande Bharat train from Telangana will be virtually flagged off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday.

The train will connect the India's major IT capitals of Hyderabad and Bengaluru with the pride of Indian Railways - Vande Bharat Express. This is the first Vande Bharat train connecting Telangana and Andhra Pradesh with Karnataka.

The train will start from Kacheguda railway station in Hyderabad city and connect



with Yesvantpur railway station in Bangalore. En route, the train will stop at Mahabubnagar, Kurnool town, Anantapur and Dharmavaram, providing rail passengers the option to travel to either cities in both directions. The 610 km distance between Kacheguda and Yesvantpur will be covered within a short span of 8 hours 30 minutes. This is nearly 2

hours 50 minutes less than the existing fastest train in the section.

Accordingly, the train provides the fastest connectivity between the capital cities of Telangana and Karnataka. Filled with the latest state-of-the-art technological features, it provides the most convenient, comfortable and safe travel option for the passengers

NMDC wins Champion of Champions Award at PRCI Excellence Awards 2023

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The NMDC bagged the Champion of Champions Award, sweeping the 17th PRCI Global Communication Conclave 2023, to bring home seventeen the Corporate Communication Excellence Awards. The awards were presented at the Global Communication Conclave organised by Public Relations Council of India (PRCI) in New Delhi.

The NMDC won the Crystal Award for CSR campaign and the platinum award for digital newsletter, followed by the diamond award for annual report, corporate brochure and website of the year, gold award for wall calendar and unique HR initiatives, silver awards in the categories of house journal - print (regional), healthcare communication films, best use of CSR project for childcare and most resilient company of



the year, bronze awards in visionary leadership campaign of the year, best use of social

media, best corporate event, customer-friendly company of the Year and internal communication campaign.

NMDC was also recognised under Arts, Culture and Sports campaign category for the NMDC Hyderabad Marathon.

P Jaya Prakash, General Manager (Corporate Communication), NMDC and Shri Somnath Acharya, DGM, Regional Office, New Delhi received the awards on behalf of NMDC.

Leaky walls with fungal growth can create serious lung problems

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Doctors call upon people to be careful with leaky walls this rainy season as the fungal growth can cause serious health problems.

Dr Sai Praveen Haranath, senior consultant Pulmonologist and critical care specialist, Apollo Hospitals said, “As we have seen in this season of respiratory infections, many vaccines are available to prevent influenza, pneumonia and COVID19. Dust exposure, poor air quality, leaky walls with fungal growth as well

as factory exposure to occupational chemicals can create serious lung problems”.

He said that knowledge that is not translated to action is mere information. “This World Lung Day let us aim to change our behavior for the benefit of all- try and speak to one friend or family member who uses tobacco or has a lung problem to see if you can help them breathe better. After all, we are on this journey together. Leave no one behind”, he added.

The World Lung Day on

September 25 is a reminder to leave no one behind when creating access to prevention and treatment of lung disease. When you can't breathe nothing else is important. You will hear about the difficulty with doing even normal activities in people having a diagnosis of asthma or COPD. People with simple to treat conditions such as allergies or bronchitis may also not know the true cause of their ailment.

Almost 500 million people suffer from chronic respiratory diseases globally.

RPF celebrates 39th Raising Day celebrations

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Railway Protection Force (RPF) celebrated 39th Raising Day on Saturday by organising a parade at the central level at RPF Training Centre, Moulali in Hyderabad.

Raosaheb Patil Danve, Union Minister of State for Railways was the chief guest and received the grand salute at the parade. Manoj Yadava, Director General, RPF, New Delhi, Arun Kumar Jain, General Manager, South Central Railway, Anjani Kumar, Director General of Police, Arama Singh Thakur, IG-cum-principal Chief security Commissioner, South Central Railway and senior officers from Central Armed Police Forces, State Police, various Government Departments, Railways and other eminent dignitaries also participated in the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, Raosaheb Patil Danve appreciated that RPF always had remained ready in times of crisis and provided service to the Nation. He also stated that RPF has 9% women in its strength which is the largest among paramilitary forces. He also mentioned that major redevelopment work of 1309 Railway stations under Amrit Bharat Yojana is in progress. He highlighted that, Bullet Train or Vande Bharat train or electrification of all broad gauge or Raksha Kavach, many important works are being done in the Railway Department today. The Director General of RPF outlined the various new initiatives taken by the force to provide a safe and secure train travel to the passengers.

BJP leaders booked for attacking police station

Tension prevails as saffron party workers, led by former MP Ramesh Rathod allegedly even attempted to assault an Inspector of police

PNS ■ NIRMAL

Tension built up at Khanapur in Nirmal district as a huge number of BJP activists, led by former Adilabad MP Ramesh Rathod, laid siege to the police station on Friday night. The saffron party activists staged the protest following the arrest of Ravi, husband of former Mandal Praja Parishad president Gaddam Lavanya. The police took him into custody as he allegedly crashed his car deliberately into the car in which BRS nominee Bhukya Johnson Naik was travelling at Rajuara under Khanapur mandal. Johnson went to the village to offer prayers at the Ganesh pandal.

The activists threw stones and broke the windowpanes in the police station. At one point,



Broken windowpane lying at Khanapur police station in Nirmal district after BJP activists attacked the police station on Friday night

the activist even attempted to assault Khanapur Inspector of Police. The police made baton-charge to disperse the violent mob.

The police registered a case against Ramesh Rathod and

four others.

“The party activists broke windowpanes of the police station in protest of the arrest of Ravi. They then attempted to assault the Khanapur Inspector and picked up an

argument with the police. Lathi-charge was made to control the agitators. They detained those who vandalised the police station.” The police said.

The trouble started when Johnson visited the Rajuara village. Ravi allegedly crashed his car deliberately into the vehicle in which the BRS nominee was travelling. The police took Ravi into custody to ensure that a clash did not erupt between the BRS and BJP activists.

The BJP leaders and activists on Saturday also staged protests in the district, alleging that the police acted as if they were the ruling party activists. It is to be seen when the police would arrest the BJP leaders and activists against whom cases were booked.

Woman killed, two others injured in road accident

PNS ■ WARANGAL

A woman was killed and two others suffered serious injuries when a when a two-wheeler grazed past a TSRTC bus at Khila under Warangal mandal on Saturday.

The accident happened when the two-wheeler riders were overtaking the bus. As the two-wheeler side-swiped the bus, the riders were thrown off the vehicle.

A villager from Bojervu village under Chennaraopet mandal in district, identified as Banothu Bujji, died on the spot. Two others were injured.

Local people, who gathered at the spot, assaulted the TSRTC driver. The injured were shifted to MGM Hospital.

Modi to sound poll bugle in Mahabubnagar on Sep 30

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

BJP national executive member AP Jitender Reddy has said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi would sound the election bugle from Mahabubnagar.

Disclosing this to the media here on Saturday, Jitender Reddy charged the BRS government in a hurry manner inaugurating the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme by commissioning one motor instead of installing 31. However, the lone motor developed mechanical faults the very next day of commissioning it, he said lamenting.

The BRS regime duped the people of the district once again, he alleged.

The people of the district feel that Modi visiting here on Sep 30 as a great fortune as Modi achieved series of successes of late in conducting G-20 meeting, launching Chandrayan-3 mission, reserving 33% quota for women in legislative bodies.

A grand welcome would



BJP national executive member AP Jitender Reddy speaking to the media in Mahabubnagar on Saturday

be arranged for Modi as he is coming here for the first time after both the Houses passing the women's bill.

State General secretary of BJP Premender G said that Modi would tour the town on Sep 30 and appealed to the party activists to mobilise people at the field level to a large extent.

Former BC Commission member Talloju Achary said that the people of Telangana are not giving credence to Congress even if promised to implement Karnataka model in Telangana.

The Modi-led BJP government at the Centre restored

several national highways passing through the town and improved transport facilities for people.

India set an example for other countries to emulate by successfully conducting the Chandrayaan-3 experiment. The people of Telangana want BJP under the leadership of Modi come to power in Telangana, he said.

Former MLA Dr Ravindranath Reddy, state executive body members Padmaja Reddy, Narsimlu, Balaraju, Sudarsan Reddy, M Kondaiah, Jalandhar Reddy and district BJP leaders and others were present.

Village primary school HM gets best teacher award

PNS ■ MANCHERIAL

Headmistress of a primary school Archana Nooguri from a village in Telangana State has been awarded the Best Teacher Award for her efforts at developing low-cost teaching-learning material and improving enrolment in the school. She has been working in a primary school at Rebbenapally village in the district.

President Droupadi Murmu presented the award to her at a function in Delhi on September 7.

The award is in recognition of her contribution in increasing enrolment in the school from a mere 34 to 275. She even persuaded parents to admit their daughters in the primary



President Droupadi Murmu presenting the Best Teacher Award to village primary school headmistress Archana Nooguri in Delhi

school. As many as 103 girls were admitted to the school.

The headmistress even has been spending 25 per cent of her salary in hiring instructors

to teach karate, dance and painting to pupils. She has also collected 1,000 books and set up a library with the help of donors.

Crop loan waiver benefits 80,857 Sangareddy farmers: DC

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

Zilla Parishad Chairperson Manjusri Jaipal Reddy has exhorted the officials and people's representatives to work in coordination to ensure that the government schemes reach the eligible persons.

She was chairing the general body meeting of the Zilla Parishad here on Saturday.

Addressing the meeting, she asked the government officials to give correct answers to the questions posed by the members.

She asked the officials to step up the implementation of various works of the panchayat raj and R and B Department and complete them. She sought the cooperation of the officials in resolving the people's problems.

Collector Dr a Sarat has said that the loan waiver ben-



Sangareddy Zilla Parishad Chairperson Manjusri Jaipal Reddy speaking in Zilla Parishad general body meeting in Sangareddy on Saturday

efited 80,857 farmers in the district. The district administration got Rs 358 crore crop loans to over 60,000. He maintained that the bankers are extending fresh loans to the farmers whose crop loans have been waived.

In fact, 70 per cent target for advancing crop loans has been fulfilled. Authorities are taking measures to ensure that neces-

sary fertilisers are made available to farmers, monitoring the situation closely, he said.

He put the total number of institutional deliveries taking place in government hospitals at 85% of the total deliveries in the district.

He directed the DM&HO to conduct special medical camps in the district to check the spread of seasonal diseases.

Patient made to lie on floor in hospital

PNS ■ JAGTIAL

An 18-year-old patient, Manoj, has been forced to lie on the floor of the District Government Hospital here due to lack of beds. The patient hails from Thakkalapally village in the district.

The doctor expressed helplessness as there are only a few beds in the hospital. The patient cannot be given a bed unless one of the patients is discharged.

The youth was admitted to hospital as he has been suffering from a fever and it has not abated. The hospital authorities made Majjo to lie on the floor.

The video showing the patient being given medical treatment went viral on social media.



Officials asked to achieve oil plam cultivation target

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Collector Prashant Jeevan Patil has directed the officials of the Oil Fed, Agriculture and Horticulture Department to achieve the targets set for increasing the area under oil palm cultivation.

He was addressing government officials concerned in a meeting held at Integrated District Offices' Complex on Saturday reviewing the progress in cultivation of oil palm cluster-wise.

District Horticulture Officer Sunita told the Collector that the oil palm saplings have been planted in 2068 acres and demand drafts have collected



Siddipet Collector Prashant Jeevan Patil holding a review meeting in Siddipet on Saturday

for issuing of drip-irrigation equipment in respect of 2850 acres.

Prashant Jeevan said asked the officials to ensure that the pace of cultivation of oil palm crop is increased. He asked the Agriculture Extension Officers to call on the farmers at their homes and motivate them to

raise the oil palm. He asked them to give wide publicity to cultivation of the crop in villages.

Further, he wanted them to complete all phases of the cultivation of the crop like choosing the farmers, collection of DDs, marking, drip irrigation equipment fitting

and planting saplings, as early as possible.

He expressed displeasure over the slow rate of progress in Bejjanki mandal and wanted the authorities to explain him the progress of cultivation of the crop in all clusters of the mandal in two days.

He warned the officials of stern action if they display dereliction to duty. He asked the Agriculture Officers to monitor the daily progress in clusters where the progress is lagging behind.

He asked the officials to motivate the farmers to incline towards growing oil palm explaining the adverse impact of hail stones on paddy crop

and explaining them the benefits of oil palm cultivation.

He asked the officials to encourage not only small and marginal farmers but also the big farmers to grow oil palm.

Cultivation of green fodder crops in oil palm gardens as an inter-crop would improve the nitrogen fixation and solve the problems of weeds, he said.

He wanted the agriculture, horticulture and oil federation corporation officials to work with coordination to achieve 100 per cent results.

Officer on special duty to state oil federation Chandramohan Reddy and others were present.

Minister offers puja at Ganesh pandals in Mahabubnagar

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

Minister for Excise, Sports and Tourism Dr V Srinivas Goud on Saturday took part in Ganesh puja held at pandals near Kamala Gardens, Yerra Satyam Cross roads and Clock-Tower and maintained that he offered prayers, seeking blessings n the people in the State to lead a peaceful life with prosperity.

The celebration of the festival is most glorious in the town, he said adding that he was instrumental in construction of the Ganesh Bhavan, the first of its kind in the state, at

Telangana Cross Roads at a cost of Rs 50 lakh so that there would be no problems in the celebration of the festival.

The people celebrate the festival cutting across their religious affiliations in a bon homie atmosphere, he said adding that arrangements would be made on a large scale for immersion of Ganesh idols.

MUDA chairman Ganji Venkanna, BRISKV district president Krishna Mohan, municipal floor leader Shabbir, councillors Kishore, Ram Lakshman, leaders Ramakrishna and others were present.

Vemula embarks on foundation-stone laying spree in Velpur mandal

PNS ■ BALKONDA

Minister for Roads and Buildings Vemula Prashant Redd on Saturday took part in a series of development works in Velpur mandal of Nizamabad district.

The Minister went on a foundation-stone laying spree in Anxapur and Padagal villages for various development works with Rs 17 crore.

The residents of Amxapur and Padagal, including women, welcomed the minister with aarti and amidst beating of drums.

He offered special pujas at Santa Mallanna temple in Amxapur and fulfilled his vows

to the deity. He laid the foundation stone for the temple shed at a cost of Rs 25 lakh, for the Giri Pradakshina road to be developed at a cost of Rs 2.20 crore, for development of double road from Amxapur to Velpur at a cost of Rs 8.10 crore, for the Amxapur-Vaddera Colony via Santamallanna road at a cost of Rs 40 lakh, health sub-centre works at a cost of Rs 20 lakh, Pochamma temple construction works at a cost of Rs 15 lakh, hanuman temple works at a cost of Rs 30 lakh.

In Padagal village, he laid the stone for BT road renewal works worth Rs 1.74 crore, construction of a minor road



Minister for Roads and Buildings Vemula Prashant Reddy speaking at Balkonda on Saturday

bridge on Padagal BT road at a cost of Rs 1.40 crore, construction of a culvert works at a cost of Rs 40 lakh.

Addressing the people on

the occasion, he said that while he was young he used to travel along the kutchra roads in Amxapur and Padagal on a bicycle. However, upon he

became MLA, the kutchra road became black-top road. Now, i.e. when he became a minister, the road is getting transformed into double road. He went nostalgic on how he used to attend the village goddess festival in Amxapur by staying put for three days in his aunt's house.

In Amxapur village alone, development works worth Rs 39 crore were implemented. Pensions worth Rs 11 crore are being disbursed among 750 persons.

Under Gruhalakshmi programme, the beneficiaries will be given Rs 3 lakh to construct pucca house. The village tanks are full with water due to the

Old war horses to lock horns once again in Assembly polls

SNCN ACHARYULU
■ HYDERABAD

The main fight in the Telangana Assembly elections will be between old horses in most constituencies. It is expected that the main battle will be between the BRS and the Congress. In some seats, the fight will be triangular if BJP candidates are strong.

The BRS has announced candidates for all seats except five. After Malkajigiri BRS MLA M. Hanumanth Rao quit the

party the BRS has to select a new candidate.

The Congress has also taken up the exercise to select candidates. Sources said that in more than half the Assembly seats the Congress has decided candidates. In most seats, the old candidates of the BRS and the Congress will lock horns once again.

The BRS has given tickets to almost all sitting MLAs except around 10 MLAs. The Congress has also reportedly selected most of the candidates

who contested the 2018 Assembly elections. The Congress selected new candidates in constituencies which were represented by MLAs who had later defected to the BRS.

Political observers are watching whether BRS MLAs can retain their upper hand or will Congress candidates avenge their defeat in the 2018 Assembly elections.

Both the BRS and the Congress are confident about their victory. While the BRS is

trying for a hat-trick victory the Congress is trying to revive its lost glory in Telangana.

The Telangana High Court disqualified two BRS MLAs who won in the 2018 Assembly elections and have declared their opponents as winners. But the BRS selected the same candidates once again.

Some BRS MLAs are facing bad weather in their constituencies. The Congress is confident of winning such seats. After the Congress announces its candidates the

situation in all constituencies will be known.

There are a large number of hopefuls fighting for tickets in the Congress like in the BRS. After the announcement of candidates by the Congress, it will be known whether the losers will continue in the party or contest as rebels or jump to other parties.

The fights in constituencies where MLAs who defected from the Congress are contesting are creating interest. In the 2018 elections, they contested

as Congress candidates but now they are contesting as BRS candidates. The mood of the public will decide whether the Congress will be able to retain these seats.

For the Congress it may not be easy to win in constituencies represented by BRS ministers. Around five to six BRS ministers are facing opposition from the public and from their own party workers. The Congress is planning to use this to win those constituencies.

Lightning claims two lives in Asifabad district

PNS ■ KUMARAM BHEEM ASIFABAD

Two persons were killed after being struck by lightning in two separate incidents in the district on Saturday.

At Heerapu village under Asifabad mandal, a 20-year-old Boire Meenakshi died on the

spot when lightning struck while she was working on her farm.

Her parents also suffered injuries.

In another incident, Athram Devarao (25) died on the spot while working on his farm at Chirrakunta village under Asifabad mandal.

Credit goes to women

Modi on passage of Women's Reservation Bill in Parliament

PNS ■ VARANASI (UP)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday gave credit to the women of the country for the passage of the women's reservation bill in Parliament and said the power of women's leadership has been proved in every period in history.

Modi said this while addressing an all-women public meeting in his parliamentary constituency Varanasi, where the women showered flower petals on him for the Parliament's nod to the women's reservation bill.

Talking about the recent approval to the Constitution (128th Amendment) Bill, referred to as the "Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam", by Parliament, the prime minister said, "Women's leadership may be a modern system for the rest of the world, but we are the people who worship Mother Parvati and Ganga before Mahadev."

He was addressing the "Nari Shakti Vandan Samaroh" organised at the ground of Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, Uttar Pradesh Chief



Minister Yogi Adityanath accompanied Modi at the function.

"This Kashi of ours is also the birthplace of a brave woman like Rani Lakshmbai. From brave women like Rani Lakshmi Bai during the freedom struggle to Mission Chandrayaan in modern India -- we have proved the power of women's leadership in every period.

"Take the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam for example. This law was pending for three decades. But today, it is your strength that even those political parties had to support it in both Houses of Parliament who never got tired of opposing it ear-

lier," Modi said.

Giving credit to the women of the country for this, he said, "Because you, the mothers and sisters, have become aware and united, all the political parties of India are afraid and are trembling and that is why this bill was passed -- this is your strength."

Striking a chord with the voters of Varanasi, Modi said "your MP from Kashi got the privilege" of getting the women's reservation bill passed in Parliament.

"Kashi is the holy city of Mother Kushmanda, Mother Shringar Gauri, Mother Annapurna and Mother Ganga. The glory of their power is attached to every part of this place. Vindhyavasini Devi is also not far from Banaras.

"The city of Kashi has also been a witness to the virtuous deeds and management of goddess Ahilyabai Holkar and hence, after the historic Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam was passed in Parliament, I came to Kashi first to seek blessings from all of you. It is my good fortune that you are blessing us in such large numbers," he said.

World is getting linked with India through cricket

Varanasi (UP): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday laid the foundation stone of an international cricket stadium in Varanasi and said that through the game, the world is 'getting linked' with India. Highlighting that the design of the stadium dedicated to Lord Mahadev has instilled a feeling of pride among the citizens of Kashi, he said the facility would witness great cricket matches while young athletes would get an opportunity to train at the international level. Modi said recent sporting successes of India were due to a changed approach as now sports have been linked with fitness, employment and career of youths. Compared to nine years ago, this year's sports budget has been increased threefold, he said. "Through cricket, the world is getting linked with India" and many new countries are playing cricket leading to a greater

number of matches, he said, adding this stadium will cater to the rising demand for such facilities in the coming years. To be built near the Ring Road in Rajatalab area here at a cost of about Rs 450 crores and spread across an area of more than 30 acres, the stadium is likely to be ready by December 2025. The Uttar Pradesh government said it has spent Rs 121 crore to acquire the land for the stadium while the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) will spend Rs 330 crore on its construction. The spectators' gallery of the stadium would resemble the steps of the ghats of Varanasi. This will be Uttar Pradesh's third international cricket stadium after Kanpur and Lucknow. Addressing the gathering, Modi said he is visiting Kashi exactly one month after India reached the Shiv Shakti point on the moon where Chandrayaan landed.

NIA confiscates SFJ terrorist Pannu's properties

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tightening its noose around Canada-based "designated individual terrorist" Gurpatwant Singh Pannu, the NIA confiscated a house and land of the self-styled general counsel of the outlawed Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) outfit in Punjab's Amritsar and the Union Territory of Chandigarh on Saturday, an official said.

The action, which comes as a big boost to the country's crackdown on the terror and secessionist network being operated from various countries, including Canada, followed confiscation orders passed by the Special NIA Court, SAS Nagar, Mohali (Punjab), a spokesperson of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) said.

The official said the properties confiscated include a 46-kanal (5.7 acres) agricultural land at Khankot village in Amritsar and a one-fourth share of a house in Chandigarh's sector 15/C area.

These properties were earlier attached following orders passed by the government in



two different cases, the spokesperson said, adding that they have now been confiscated on the court's orders under the relevant section of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) in a case registered on April 5, 2020. This is the first time that properties of an absconding accused of the NIA have been confiscated under section 33(5) of the UAPA.

The case was originally registered on October 19, 2018 under various sections of the Indian Penal Code at the Sultanwind police station in Amritsar city and later, transferred to the NIA. A total of 10 accused, including Pannu,

have so far been chargesheeted in the case.

Pannu has been on the NIA's radar since 2019, when the anti-terror federal agency registered its first case against the terrorist, who has been playing a major role in promoting and commissioning terror acts and activities, and spreading fear and terror in Punjab and elsewhere in the country through his threats and intimidation tactics.

Non-bailable warrants of arrest were issued against Pannu by the Special NIA Court on February 3, 2021 and he was declared a "Proclaimed Offender" (PO) on November 29 last year.

INDIA CORNER

Aamir Khan donates Rs 25 lakh towards Himachal Pradesh disaster relief fund



Superstar Aamir Khan has donated Rs 25 lakh towards the Apada Rahat Kosh to provide succor to the rain-affected families in Himachal Pradesh, the state government said in a statement on Saturday. Expressing his gratitude to the Hindi film actor, Chief Minister Sukhvir Singh Sukhu said that the assistance will "undoubtedly support the relief and rehabilitation efforts aimed at helping the affected families to recover from the aftermath of the disaster". The chief minister said the fund will be judiciously utilised and they will ensure that it reaches those in dire need. Earlier, Sukhu had donated all his savings worth Rs 51 lakh towards the Apada Rahat Kosh to extend a helping hand to the disaster affected people of the state. The governments of Haryana, Bihar, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh had also provided help of over Rs 65 crores to the state to meet out the relief and rehabilitation measures.

DUSU polls: ABVP wins 3 central panel posts, NSUI one



The RSS-affiliated ABVP on Saturday won three out of the four central panel posts of the Delhi University Students Union (DUSU) and the Congress' student wing NSUI bagged one, according to officials. Tushar Dedha of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) won the post of DUSU president, defeating NSUI's Hitesh Gulia. The Congress student wing's Abhi Dahiya bagged the post of vice-president. ABVP's Aparajita and Sachin Baisla won the posts of secretary and joint secretary, respectively. The counting of votes for the DUSU's central panel posts of president, vice-president, secretary and joint secretary concluded on Saturday evening. The election was held on Friday. The DUSU elections have always seen a direct fight between the ABVP and the National Students' Union of India (NSUI). The ABVP won three of the four seats in the 2019 elections as well. The DUSU elections were last held in 2019. The polls could not be held in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19 while possible disruptions to the academic calendar prevented their conduct in 2022. Twenty-four candidates were in the fray for the four posts this year. Chander Shekhar -- the chief election officer for the polls -- said the university recorded a voter turnout of 42 per cent. Around one lakh students were eligible to vote in the election. While the voting percentage was higher than in 2019 when a turnout of 39.90 per cent was recorded, it failed to surpass the nearly 11-year-high figure of 2018.

Angry locals blame cops for teen's death, create ruckus at hospital



Police personnel were rushed to tackle chaos at a hospital in Maharashtra's Palghar district in the early hours of Saturday after an injured teen, who apparently tripped trying to escape cops, was declared dead, an official said on Saturday. While the police claimed that Vinod Bhoir (18) most likely suffered a heart attack while fleeing and died, the boy's relatives said he was beaten up. According to a senior police official who spoke to the media at the hospital in Virar, Bhoir and his friends were near a Ganpati pandal at Agashi-Kolhapur village when a patrol vehicle from Amala Sagari police station reached the spot around 2.45 am. Seeing the cops, Bhoir and his friends panicked and started running but he tripped and fell down and suffered injuries, said the official. Bhoir was rushed to a hospital, where doctors declared him dead. Angry local residents blamed the police for his death and kicked up a ruckus at the hospital, prompting authorities to call the cops. Fearing that the situation could go beyond control, more personnel were called in. Later, two relatives of the teen told the media that Bhoir was beaten up by the police. He was playing on his mobile, said one of them, claiming that three of the policemen from the patrolling team were drunk. The relatives said the police were not even ready to take an injured Bhoir to the hospital and did so only after the villagers insisted. Bhoir was to be shifted to another facility but the police fled from there, said the relatives. They said the villagers then took the teen to the second hospital but by that time he had died.

Suspected terrorist arrested by NIA amid ethnic unrest in Manipur

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The NIA has arrested a suspected terrorist for his alleged links with Myanmar-based rebel groups and conspiring to wage war against India by exploiting the current ethnic unrest in Manipur, an official said.

Moirangthem Anand Singh was arrested from Manipur and brought to New Delhi for questioning, a spokesperson of the National Investigation Agency (NIA) said.

Singh was one of the five persons arrested by Manipur Police for possessing weapons looted from police armoury. The arrest had led to agitation by the majority community, who were claiming them to be village defence activists.

A local court had granted bail to all the five on Friday. However, Singh was immediately placed under arrest and whisked away to an undisclosed location before being brought to the national capital.

The official said Singh was

arrested in a case related to a "transnational conspiracy" by Myanmar-based leadership of terror groups to wage war against the government of India by exploiting the current ethnic unrest in Manipur.

The case was registered suo moto by the NIA on July 19 in New Delhi and investigations revealed that in furtherance of the conspiracy, the proscribed terror groups are recruiting over ground workers, cadres and sympathisers to augment their strength to carry out attacks on security forces and opposing ethnic groups by exploiting current unrest in the state. They are collecting arms, ammunition and explosives by unlawful means, including plunder and pillage of government facilities and resources, the spokesperson said. After Singh was brought to Delhi on Saturday, he was produced before a jurisdictional court which remanded him in police custody for a period of five days, the spokesperson said.

Role of lawyers evolved to address myriad challenges: CJI



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud on Saturday said the role of lawyers has evolved to address myriad global legal challenges in an era characterised by ever-increasing globalisation.

He said rapid technological advancement has created "complex legal issues", with lawyers leading the way in navigating this landscape. While the judiciary definitely bears the responsibility of administering justice and upholding the rule of law, lawyers play an equally vital role, he stressed.

"In an era characterised by ever-increasing globalisation, the role of lawyers has evolved to address myriad global legal challenges," the CJI said while speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the Bar Council of India's (BCI) 'International Lawyers Conference 2023' here.

He said lawyers ensure that clients and governments adapt to technological changes while upholding legal rights and regulations, covering areas like cybersecurity, data privacy and intellectual property. "Lawyers also bear significant commercial responsibility, driving economic growth by helping clients and governments enhance business efficiency and cross-border operations.

Rahul Gandhi: Why is PM afraid of caste census?

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday advocated for a caste census and asked why Prime Minister Narendra Modi was "afraid" of it as well as demanded the immediate implementation of reservation for women in Lok Sabha and state assemblies.

A bill to reserve one-third of seats in the legislative bodies for women received the parliamentary nod on Thursday as the Rajya Sabha voted unanimously in favour of it.

The 128th Constitution amendment bill, referred to as the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, will now require the approval of a majority of



state assemblies. It will be implemented after a delimitation exercise to redraw parliamentary and assembly constituencies based on a census which the government has said will be commissioned next year.

The BJP wants the reservation for women to be implemented in "10 years, but we

want it today and OBCs (other backward classes) included in it", Gandhi told a conference of Congress workers here in poll-bound Rajasthan.

The bill was passed in a special session of Parliament that began on September 18 and ended on Thursday.

The session, the Congress leader claimed, was called to change the name of India to Bharat, but instead the women's reservation bill was introduced.

Earlier this month, invitations for a G20 dinner were sent out by President Droupadi Murmu describing her position as 'President of Bharat' instead of the customary 'President of India', triggering a massive

furore with the opposition alleging that the Modi government was planning to drop India and stay with just Bharat as the country's name.

Gandhi said the women's reservation bill can be implemented in Parliament and assemblies today itself, but the central government wants to postpone it for 10 years on the pretext of delimitation and a new census. The Congress wants women's reservation to be implemented today itself, he said.

Demanding a caste census, the former Congress president said, "If we talk about giving participation to OBCs, then it cannot be done without a caste census. So, the prime

75% Indian villages declared ODF Plus, says Jal Shakti minister

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

About 4.4 lakh or 75 per cent of India's villages have achieved the open defecation free-plus status, Jal Shakti minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said on Saturday.

An 'ODF Plus' village is one which has sustained its Open Defecation Free (ODF) status along with implementing either solid or liquid waste management systems.

Addressing media persons, Shekhawat said over 4.43 lakh villages so far have declared themselves ODF Plus, which is a significant step towards achieving the goals of the second phase of the Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin by 2024-25.

He added that all villages in 14 states and Union Territories (UT) have achieved ODF Plus Status, of which four have been declared 'ODF Plus Model'.

The top performing states and UTs which have 100 per cent ODF Plus villages are Andaman and Nicobar



Islands, Dadra Nagar Haveli, Goa, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Ladakh, Puducherry, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Tripura.

Of these, Andaman and Nicobar, Dadra Nagar Haveli and Daman Diu, Jammu and Kashmir and Sikkim have achieved the 'ODF Plus Model' status.

Out of the 4,43,964 ODF Plus villages so far, 2,92,497 villages are 'ODF Plus Aspiring' with arrangements for solid waste or liquid waste management systems, 55,549

are 'ODF Plus Rising' with arrangements for both solid and liquid waste management and 96,018 are 'ODF Plus model'.

Overall, 2,31,080 villages so far have arrangements for solid waste management, while 3,76,353 have arrangements for handling liquid waste, he said.

"The achievement of 75% ODF Plus villages is a significant milestone for India, as the country has moved from ODF to ODF Plus in Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin Phase II," Shekhawat said.

Up to EC to decide on J&K Assembly polls: Union Minister



PNS ■ SRINAGAR

The BJP is always ready for elections and it is up to the Election Commission (EC) to decide when the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly polls will be held, Union minister Jitendra Singh said here on Saturday.

The Lok Sabha MP from Udhampur also said the situation in Jammu and Kashmir has improved a lot over the last few years.

"It is up to the EC to decide when the election will be conducted. As far as the BJP is concerned, it is always ready for every election -- whether it is the panchayat, Assembly or Parliament," Singh told reporters on the sidelines of a function here.

The Union minister of state in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) also said "there have been no incidents of stone-pelting (in Jammu and Kashmir) for so many years now. Encounters do not take place while walking on the roads. The status of tourism is such that houseboats and hotels are full of tourists".

Singh said Jammu and Kashmir has an important role to play in India's growth story as it emerges as a powerful country in the next 25 years, as envisaged by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"The prime minister says India will emerge as a powerful nation in the world in the next 25 years and in that journey of development, Jammu and Kashmir has an important role to play," he said.

BID TO REVIVE HAM RADIO MOVEMENT

Enthusiasts for people-to-people connect

PNS ■ SANTINIKETAN

A two-day conference to revive the ham radio movement with a special focus on the technical aspects of amateur radio and to boost people-to-people relations across regions opened in Santiniketan on Saturday.

It brought together 170 delegates from different parts of India, Bangladesh and the US, who will take part in various sessions like amateur radio application procedures, high-frequency radio and digital radio.

"Ham radio is a hobby that refuses to die because it has reinvented itself with new technology. It is also the second line of communication during natural disasters like floods, cyclones and earthquakes," said Neelkantha Chatterjee, founder-convenor of Oscar



India, a Kolkata-based body that organised the conference.

"But since the ham radio movement cuts across regions, there is a great potential to use it for boosting people-to-people relations between countries," Chatterjee told PTI.

Officials said the government has taken several steps to promote the ham radio move-

ment. "Getting ham radio licenses has become easy, the certification process has got simpler under the present government," said Sachin Kumar, assistant wireless adviser in the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), which is supporting the Oscar Amateur Radio Convention.

Organisers said the conference is aimed at boosting the ham radio movement in North and Eastern India and the neighbouring countries of Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan.

Ham radio involves the use of the amateur radio frequency spectrum by amateurs for purposes of non-commercial exchange of messages, wireless experimentation, self-training, private recreation, radiosport, contesting, and emergency communications.

"This means that the aspiring hams (ham radio operators) prepare for a relatively simple exam conducted by the Wireless Planning and Coordination (WPC) wing of the Ministry of Telecommunication and acquire a licence which gives them a unique call sign," said Chatterjee.

This call sign reveals the nationality, licence class and a two or three alphabet combination which is unique to the user. Thus, if a call sign reads VU2YYE, it means that the amateur radio operator is from India, since the prefix VU is assigned to India (like all Indian aeroplanes start with VT). The numerical 2 indicates that the ham holds a General licence. Finally, the letters YYE are unique to the licence holder.

Having acquired the callsign, the new ham thereafter proceeds to either build or buy the equipment and get on air' meaning that he or she starts transmitting on the ham radio frequency which is globally common with minor variations and contacting other hams worldwide and speaking to them.

"I just don't really believe in mistakes and worst choices. Everything I have done and not done has made me who I am"
— Elisabeth Moss



ENVIRONMENTAL AWAKENING GADGIL'S REVEALING MEMOIRS

Professor Gadgil's *A Walk Up the Hill* sheds light on the crisis in the Western Ghats, unveiling widespread illegal activities, and conflicts between the Church and political entities, writes **KUMAR CHELLAPPAN**

The memoir, "*A Walk Up the Hill*," authored by Professor Madhav Gadgil, a distinguished environmental scientist who headed the government-appointed Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP), is poised to make a significant impact in India. The WGEEP was established by the Central Government through an order dated March 4, 2010.

The panel's mandate included assessing the current ecological status of the Western Ghats region, demarcating areas within the Western Ghats region in need of designation as ecologically sensitive, and recommending the notification of such areas as Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZs) under the Environment (Protection) Act of 1986. Additionally, the panel was tasked with making recommendations for the conservation, protection, and rejuvenation of the Western Ghats region, following a comprehensive consultation process involving the people and governments of all concerned states.

The report by the Gadgil committee was presented to then Union Minister for Environment and Forest Jairam Ramesh on August 30, 2011. This, in itself, was a rare event, as a committee usually submits its final report years after it was constituted, availing as many extensions as possible so that the head of the panel and members could continue receiving funds indefinitely.

Though Prof Gadgil was told that the WGEEP report would be made public on September 21, it was not to be. The Government had a change of heart, and the panel members were instructed not to discuss the contents with the public or the media. The Delhi High Court had to intervene to make the report public, and the Ministry for Environment and Forest uploaded it on its website.

The reasons behind the ministry's initial opposition to releasing the report were numerous. What the Gadgil committee members witnessed during their studies across the Western Ghats was shocking. A cabal of private industrialists, contractors, and elected representatives of the people were involved in

plundering the ecologically fragile Western Ghats, despite the resistance of both the local population and the local self-governments. Although the Constitution of India demands that no industrialisation or commercial exploitation of ecologically and environmentally sensitive regions should be undertaken without obtaining green clearance from the local population and the Gram Sabhas, these laws were blatantly violated by politicians, religious leaders, and contractors whose sole ambition was to make more money without making any investment.

"The Western Ghats, the mountain chain running parallel to the west coast of the Indian peninsula, covers an area of 1,60,000 sq km over a stretch of 1,600 km spanning across the States of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. All over the world, such mountains, endowed as they are with high levels of environmental heterogeneity, are treasure troves of natural diversity. In the Western Ghats, the annual rainfall ranges from as much as 8000 mm in the southwestern corner of upper Nilgiris to a mere 500 mm in the Moyar gorge just 30 km to its east... The Western Ghats are no ordinary biome. They constitute the water tower of peninsular India, providing water to 245 million people and draining a large part of the country's land surface," writes Gadgil.

The studies conducted by Gadgil and other ecologists have confirmed the fact that Western Ghats have become an ecological hotspot. Only 7 per cent of the Ghat's primary vegetation has survived and it has 51 critically endangered species. Climate change will cause further stress. Observations and inferences made by Gadgil and others have proved to be true as the entire area that comes under the shadow of the Ghats experience unexpected torrential downpour, landslides and even dry spell lasting months.

The verdant forests and greenery of the region have given way to barren lands. Unabated felling of trees and uncontrolled mining and quarrying have taken its toll as the forest and mining mafia have taken control of the entire stretch. Readers may be remembering forest brigand



THE SHOCKING DISCLOSURES MADE BY THE ECOLOGIST ARE WHAT HE CAME ACROSS IN THE WESTERN GHATS. THE FORESTS, RIVERS, MOUNTAINS AND VALLEYS ARE ON DEATHBED AND ARE ON LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEMS. THE WESTERN GHATS HAVE BEEN EXPLOITED TO THE HILT BY THE MINING AND TIMBER MAFIA. THE REGION COULD NOT WITHSTAND ANY MORE INVASIONS ON ITS ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

Veerappan kidnapping Kannada matinee idol Rajkumar to the Sathyamangalam forests in Tamil Nadu. The reason for the kidnapping was the turf war between various mafia groups engaged in looting the forest wealth, including exotic trees and mining of costly granites from the reserve forests in the Ghats, though Gadgil has steered clear from this part.

The shocking disclosures made by the ecologist are what he came across in the Western Ghats. The forests, rivers, mountains and valleys are on deathbed and are on life support systems. The Western Ghats have been exploited to the hilt by the mining and timber mafia. The region could not withstand any more invasions on its environment and ecology. The WGEEP committee, after a series of brainstorming sessions, suggested to the government that enough was enough and it was time to put a full stop to mining activities and tree felling. Some of the crucial recommendations made by Gadgil and his colleagues include no special economic zones, no new hill stations, rescheduling reservoir operations to improve downstream flows, participatory sand auditing and strict regulation of sand mining, rehabilitation of mined areas with special focus on reviving water resources, promoting organic agricultural practices and precision agricultural practices, strictly controlling use of dynamite and other explosives to kill fish, no mining in areas demarcated as Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZ1), where mining exists it should be phased out in five years, by 2016 illegal mining to be stopped immediately, etc. The report was submitted to then minister Jairam Ramesh.

The UPA governments began its hide and seek game with the Gadgil committee report and it refused to divulge the details of the same. The Delhi High Court intervention made the ministry upload the report on its

portal. But the report caused an earthquake in Kerala. The church reacted as if it had seen red despite the fact that it remained a closely guarded secret. Then Bishop of Idukki Mathew Aanikuzhikkattil issued a laity message with instruction to read the same on weekly congregations. He said in the message that the attempt has a diabolic nature and has been conceived to evict the population from the forests. The bishop also alleged that the report if implemented would make hundreds of thousands of people staying in the region homeless and destitute. The campaign was of the same style as we saw in the aftermath of the Citizen Amendment Bill getting legislated in Parliament. A campaign was unleashed across southern India alleging that the Bill was an attempt to get rid of a particular community from India.

Jolted by the stance of the church, the then Kerala Government passed a resolution in the Assembly condemning the Gadgil committee report. Though Gadgil was a fellow traveller, his comrades in the State had no qualms in lambasting the report. The resentment by the church led the Centre to appoint a committee headed by space scientist Kasturirangan to study the viability and feasibility of the Gadgil report. Kasturirangan did what he was asked to do and the story ended there. The Western Ghats continue its downward slide without any interruption. The man-animal conflict has become a regular event in the region as elephants, leopards and tigers come out of the forests in search of drinking water and a square meal which would sustain their lives. Who cares?

Even as Gadgil recounts his Western Ghats odyssey, another equally important study from Chennai-based CPR Environment Research Centre led by Dr Nanditha Krishna has more shocking

disclosures to make. Sacred groves across India, home to local flora and fauna and mini biosphere reserves have shrunk and most of them have disappeared altogether from the face of the earth. "Sacred groves represent an ancient Indian conservation tradition protected by local people out of reverence, respect and fear. These untouched patches of forest contain some endangered rare and threatened medicinal plant species. The rural folk conserve and preserve species diversity that are the last remnants of native vegetation," explained Dr Nanditha Krishna, the first winner of Indira Gandhi Paryavaran Puraskaar for her relentless campaign against destruction of sacred groves which are known as Swami Shola, Koil Kadu in Tamil Nadu, Pavithra Vanam in Andhra Pradesh, Kavu in Kerala, Mawflong in Assam and Meghalaya, Manganoo in Western Ghats, Dev Vana in MP and Karnataka.

This is a unique conservation style which makes use of religion and tradition to preserve ecology as a natural heritage. Wherever there are sacred groves, they are adored as spiritual retreat. Before concluding, let me draw readers attention to what SK Pottekat, the legendary travelogue writer, wrote in 1955 about his experience in Finland. "Pine trees are the main source of income for European countries. When one cuts down a pine tree, he has to convince the authorities that six pine saplings have been planted." Did we have such laws in India at any time?

(The writer is special correspondent, The Pioneer)



'LOW-INCOME NATIONS ILL-EQUIPPED FOR CVD FIGHT'

Even as cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) such as stroke, diabetes and hypertension are claiming millions of people prematurely every year, most healthcare facilities in many Low-and Middle-income Countries (LMICs) are unprepared to treat such patients, says a study. It comes as a wakeup call for India which is already facing burgeoning CVDs epidemic, reports ARCHANA JYOTI

Globally, nearly 18 million premature deaths in 2019 were due to CVD, of which 75 per cent were in LMICs, where they are leading causes of death and Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) in adults. Diabetes and hypertension are key risk factors for CVD and amongst the top three risk factors for deaths and disability, globally.

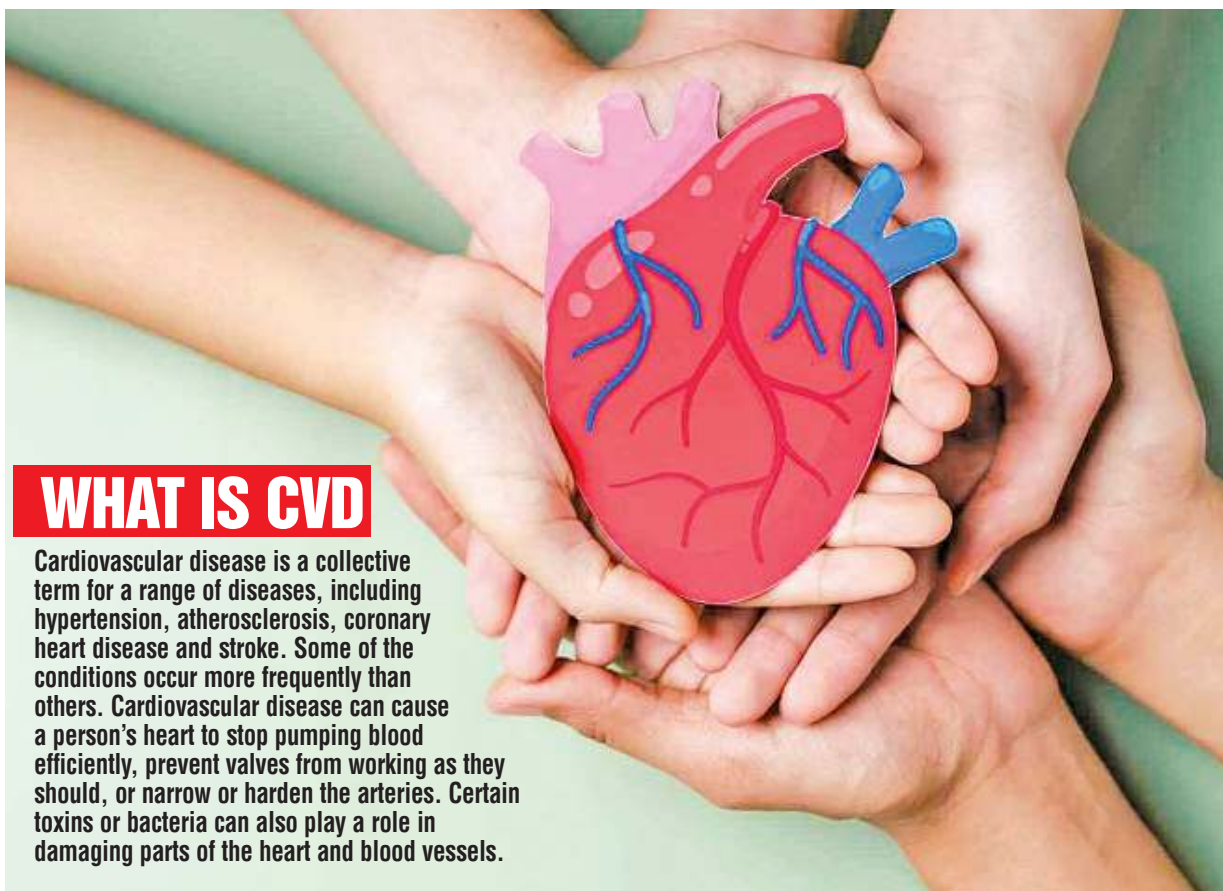
Publishing their findings recently in PLOS Global Public Health, an international team of researchers led by the University of Birmingham, looked at readiness to provide care for HIV or CVD in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Haiti, Malawi, Nepal, Senegal, and Tanzania.

They discovered that most facilities are unprepared to deliver services to treat or manage cardiovascular disease risk factors (CVDRF) such as diabetes and hypertension.

However, the increased investment in facilities to treat HIV – received as part of the drive to meet UN Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets – may form part of a solution to tackle CVDRFs, which have been relatively neglected in terms of receiving global funding and attention. The study authors found that if facilities are able to provide HIV care, they are much more able to supply care for CVDRFs.

They found that despite UN targets to reduce CVDRF, facilities were significantly less ready to provide CVDRF care than HIV care, even though despite years of investment in HIV, facilities were often not ready to fully provide care for HIV.

Lead author Professor Justine Davies, from the University of Birmingham, commented: "We've had global targets to reduce burden of CVDRFs since 2011, but tackling the problem requires healthcare services to have all the ingredients to care for patients



WHAT IS CVD

Cardiovascular disease is a collective term for a range of diseases, including hypertension, atherosclerosis, coronary heart disease and stroke. Some of the conditions occur more frequently than others. Cardiovascular disease can cause a person's heart to stop pumping blood efficiently, prevent valves from working as they should, or narrow or harden the arteries. Certain toxins or bacteria can also play a role in damaging parts of the heart and blood vessels.

– including staff, facilities, medicines, or equipment.

"Given the long-term financial investment and advocacy for HIV, we looked to see what readiness to provide care could be achieved with good long-term investment. We then compared readiness for CVD care with that of HIV care. We found that, despite years of investment in HIV, facilities were often not ready to fully provide care. But we found that the situation for CVD was far worse."

Neil Cockburn, another lead author on the paper from the University of Birmingham, commented: "There needs to be a large scale up of investment to ensure facilities are ready to provide healthcare for people with

CVDRF if global targets are to be met.

"Our findings provide policy makers, funders, and researchers evidence of where there are gaps in service provision which need to be filled to enable achievement of current global health goals."

The researchers found that in individual countries, readiness across all healthcare facilities to handle CVDRF was generally lower than for HIV. There were consistently weaknesses in information, staffing and medicines. Lack of readiness of facilities to provide CVDRF care in rural and primary care facilities threatens SDG 3.8 to provide high quality universal healthcare for all.

According to health experts,

high blood pressure, air pollution, tobacco use, and elevated LDL cholesterol are among the leading contributors to CVD deaths.

Yet another study published in PLOS One, has called for a multifaceted approach to prevention that includes fiscal, inter-sectoral, public health and health-service level interventions at all—primordial, primary, secondary as well as tertiary—levels.

"Several interventions have already been tested in various low-to-middle income countries and have shown to improve the CVD burden in a cost-effective manner. For example, the Disease Control Priorities report of the World Bank enlists an essential package of interven-

tions that can prove beneficial," say the authors.

"Some of the interventions enlisted include taxation on tobacco and sugar-sweetened beverages, regulations on processed and salt-rich food, ban on trans-fatty acids, improvements in built environment and introduction of school health programs to encourage physical activity, task-sharing or task shifting in cardiac care, improving screening activities and better use of combination therapy."

In India too, the situation is grim. The Asian Pacific Society of Cardiology (APSC) recently published a report revealing that heart failure alone leads to 1.8 million hospitalisations each year in India.

Experts have been calling to tighten the noose around the companies marketing highly processed food which are mostly responsible for a spike in CVD with kids also being impacted.

For instance, a report, titled 'THE JUNK PUSH: Rising Ultra-processed Food Consumption in India – Policy, Politics and Reality', has recommended stronger policies to protect children from the harmful impact of food marketing.

Most of the products analysed as part of the study are widely consumed brands mainly targeted at children. These included packaged products high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) or ultra-processed foods (UPF), such as chips, cookies, sweets, soft beverages, instant noodles, sugary cereals, frozen meals, ice cream, bakery items, and chocolates.

According to the document, their advertisements were found to be in violation of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, with some of them even violating the Food Standard and Safety Act, 2006, as they hid crucial information related to nutrients of concern.

"None of the legal frameworks or guidelines in India has the potential to stop most of the misleading advertisements of prepackaged junk or HFSS foods, or to ban misleading claims or warn people about the risks to health," said Dr Arun Gupta from Delhi-based nutrition think tank Nutrition Advocacy in Public Interest (NAPI) which has prepared the report.

He said that cardiovascular disease risk factors starting in childhood have important implications for health, quality of life, health care costs and societal costs across the whole life course. Facing challenges with resources, it is time to work on prevention rather than waiting to be cured, Dr Gupta said matter-of-factly.

HEALTH BRIEFS

CADILA PHARMA PHASE I CLINICAL TRIAL FOR CHICKEN POX SHOT: SEC RECOMMENDS NOD FOR TRIAL

The Subject Expert Committee (SEC) on vaccines, which reviews proposals and advises the Drugs Controller General (India) in matters for biologicals and post approval change proposals, has recommended granting nod to Gujarat-based Cadila Pharmaceuticals to conduct phase I clinical trial for its chicken pox vaccine.

The decision was taken in a recent meeting last month of the SEC after the company submitted a revised phase I clinical trial protocol for grant of permission to conduct the trial for Varicella-Zoster Virus (VZV) vaccine.

The pharma firm had earlier submitted its proposal for grant of permission to conduct Phase I clinical trial of its Varicella-Zoster virus (VZV) vaccine along with preclinical data and it was considered in a SEC meeting held on May 16.

The SEC, during then, after detailed deliberation

recommended that the company should submit single dose toxicity data as per the provisions of the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019.

Further, it recommended, the firm should revise the phase I clinical trial protocol with some changes such as the volume of blood to be withdrawn for analysis should be reduced.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) Varicella (chicken-pox) is an acute, highly contagious disease caused by varicella-zoster virus (VZV), a member of the herpesvirus family.

"Only one serotype of VZV is known, and humans are the only reservoir. Following infection, the virus remains latent in neural ganglia and in about 10-20% of cases it is reactivated to cause herpes zoster, or shingles, generally in persons over 50 years of age or immunocompromised individuals," it said.

THIS ROBOT CAN NAVIGATE LIVING LUNG TISSUE TO DETECT TUMOR

Scientists from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and Vanderbilt University in the US have developed a robot that can autonomously traverse human lungs, enabling physicians to reach tumours that are extremely small and hide deep within tissues.

The robot with an autonomous steerable needle can go from "Point A" to "Point B" while avoiding important structures, such as tiny airways and blood vessels, in a living laboratory model.

"This technology allows us to reach targets we can't otherwise reach with a standard or even robotic bron-

choscope," said Jason Akulian, from the UNC Department of Medicine. "It gives you that extra few centimeters or a few millimeters even, which would help immensely with pursuing small targets in the lungs," he added.

The robot, detailed in the journal Science Robotics, is made of several separate components. A mechanical control provides controlled thrust of the needle to go forward and backward and the needle design allows for steering along curved paths. The needle is made from a nickel-titanium alloy and has been laser etched to increase its flexibility.

QCI CALLS FOR HEALTHCARE QUALITY INTERVENTIONS IN RURAL AREAS

The Quality Council of India (QCI) has highlighted the importance of initiating healthcare quality interventions in rural areas and tier 2 and tier 3 cities with the launch of Digital Health Accreditation Standards for Hospitals among others.

In order to achieve the goal of patient safety, the National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers (NABH) has recently released new standards including 1st Edition of Digital Health Accreditation Standards for Hospitals, Entry Level Certification Standards for Dental Clinics, Care Home Accreditation Standards and 3rd Edition of Accreditation Standards for Dental Service Providers among others to ensure patient safety at the grassroots level.

The NABH is a constituent board of QCI, set up to establish and operate accreditation programmes for healthcare organisations.

Jaxay Shah, chairperson, QCI, said, "We believe that quality change begins at the very foundation of our healthcare system, not limited to only metropolitan cities but also in the rural and tier 2 and tier 3 cities of India."

Dr RP Singh, secretary general, QCI said, "Recognizing the profound significance of quality and well-being of patients, a robust quality ecosystem in healthcare is not only crucial for elevating our healthcare industry but also for positioning it firmly on the global map."

Dr. Atul Mohan Kochhar, CEO, NABH emphasized on the intricate link between technology and patient safety.

NEUBERG DIAGNOSTIC STRENGTHENS ITS POSITION IN SECTOR

Neuberg Diagnostics Private Limited, a prominent player in the diagnostics sector with a global presence, has announced the successful merger of Neuberg Supratech Reference Laboratory, Ahmedabad, and Neuberg Anand Reference Laboratory, Bangalore, into Neuberg Diagnostics Private Limited. This merger has been facilitated through an NCLT court-based process, further solidifying Neuberg

Diagnostics' position as a frontrunner in the diagnostic industry.

Dr GSK Velu, chairman and managing director of Neuberg Diagnostics said, "The merger marks a significant step forward in our journey to provide unparalleled healthcare solutions. By integrating these renowned laboratories, we reinforce our commitment to delivering excellence in diagnostics and patient care."

TECHEAGLE, AIIM JODHPUR BID TO REACHOUT TO TRIBALS

TechEagle, India's leading drone delivery company, announces partnership with AIIMS Jodhpur to deliver healthcare essentials for the tribal population. Its state-of-the-art, hybrid e-VTOL Drone, Vertiplane X3 took off for its maiden flight from Sirohi carrying medicines to Waloriya, a location inhabited by the tribal population. AIIMS, Jodhpur is recognised as a "Centre of Excellence

(COE) for Tribal Health" by the Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

Vikram Singh Meena, founder & CEO of TechEagle said, "Time is the most crucial dimension when we talk about emergency healthcare as every second is important in such a scenario and by deploying innovative solutions such as drones a lot of time could be saved and in turn lives."

DECODED: How toxic proteins accumulate in Alzheimer's, Parkinson's?

When Tau protein -- part of the brain's infrastructure -- gets knotted up into tangles, it turns toxic to injure brain tissue, causing tauopathies, a group of neurodegenerative brain diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and other brain diseases, researchers have found. The HEALTH PIONEER shares the findings published in the journal Molecular Psychiatry

Under normal circumstances, tau protein is part of the brain's infrastructure, important for stabilizing neurons into their proper shapes. But sometimes tau gets knotted up into tangles and turns toxic, injuring brain tissue and causing tauopathies, a group of brain diseases characterized by problems with learning, memory and movement. Alzheimer's disease is the most common tauopathy, but the group also includes Parkinson's disease, chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) and several rare genetic conditions.

In search of ways to prevent these destructive tau tangles, researchers at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis have identified a key step in their development. Intervening at this step potentially could forestall the destructive cascade of events that results in brain damage, the researchers said. The findings are published in the journal Molecular Psychiatry.

"Tauopathies are devastating diseases that have limited treatment options right now, and they all have this feature of tau aggregation," said senior author Celeste Karch, PhD, a

professor of psychiatry. "We've been thinking for a long time about whether there are factors that impact that common process of tau aggregation and if so, whether we could target those factors as a novel approach to treatment. These findings move us one step closer to finding a way to intervene and stop the process of tau aggregation that leads to dementia."

First author Reshma Bhagat, PhD, a postdoctoral researcher, came up with the idea of looking for such factors among a group of RNA molecules known as long noncoding RNAs (lncRNAs) that are not translated into proteins. Historically, RNA has not been considered an active element in biological processes, and most disease research has not focused on them. Only in the past decade have scientists recognized that these RNA molecules can play critical roles in disease processes. Bhagat became interested in lncRNAs because they are involved in regulating diverse cellular processes and have been implicated in cancers.

To investigate the role of lncRNAs in tauopathies, the researchers started with skin



cells from three people with a genetic tauopathy, each of whom carried a different mutation in the tau gene. Using molecular techniques, the researchers converted the skin cells into brain neurons that carry each of the three mutations. For comparison, they used a molecular technique known as CRISPR to correct the mutations in some of the skin cells before converting them into neurons. In this way, they were able to obtain human brain cells with and without tau mutations, which didn't require using human brain tissue.

Using these cells, the researchers identified 15 lncRNAs that were significantly increased or decreased in brain cells with tau mutations compared to their genetically matched controls. One lncRNA in particular stood out: SNHG8, which was low not only in the three human brain cells with tau mutations but also in mice with a tau mutation and in brain samples from people who had died of any of three different tauopathies: Alzheimer's disease, frontotemporal lobar degeneration with tau pathology, or progressive supranuclear palsy. In other

words, SNHG8 levels were down in tauopathies regardless of mutation, species or disease — all signs that point to its role in a common pathological process.

Further investigation revealed that neurons with low SNHG8 levels also had high levels of stress granules, RNA-protein complexes that form to help cells survive stressful situations such as excessive heat or low oxygen and disintegrate once the threat passes. Stress granules are rich in tau, and therein lies the danger. If too many stress granules form or if they con-

tain mutated tau particularly prone to tangling — as is the case in genetic tauopathies — stress granules can kickstart the aggregation process by concentrating tau.

"If we could somehow target this stress-induced protein-aggregation pathway, maybe we can inhibit the development of tau pathology," Bhagat said.

Bhagat went back to the human neurons with tau mutations, the ones she had developed out of skin cells from tauopathy patients. These cells exhibited persistently low levels of SNHG8 and high levels of stress granules. By replacing the missing SNHG8, she was able to bring down the levels of stress granules in such cells.

"That's really the killer experiment," Karch said. "That shows that lncRNAs are impacting stress granule formation and that this pathway can be targeted to treat, potentially, a variety of tauopathies."

Bhagat, Karch and colleagues are working on identifying compounds that can shore up SNHG8 levels and looking at the effects of such compounds in animal models of tau aggregation and tauopathy.

Khalistan terror: Globalised 21st century challenge

The rise of Sikh ethno-nationalism in the 1980s posed a threat to India's territorial integrity. Since then, it has transcended the borders of India. The way the 21st-century Khalistan movement is shaped and propagated to its followers is markedly different from the violent upsurge of the 1980s. It is much more globalised now. While hardcore advocates like Amritpal Singh have followed in the footsteps of the Bhindranwale cult, the worldwide network of Khalistani sympathisers has provided the movement with an easier source of sustenance than in the past.

The history of Khalistan lies in the roots of Sikhism. The revered Sikh religion was founded by Guru Nanak in Punjab in the 15th century. It boasts more than 25 million followers worldwide, with Sikhs constituting a minority group in India, making up less than 2 per cent of the country's total population of 1.4 billion today. However, they are a majority in their home State of Punjab.

The word "Khalistan" signifies the establishment of an ethno-religious sovereign state for the Sikhs, referred to as the land of the Khalsa. This is defined as the "land of the pure." Additionally, Khalsa encompasses both a community of believers who consider Sikhism their faith and a group of initiated Sikhs. Devout orthodox Sikhs are ritually admitted to this community upon reaching puberty. The very concept of Khalsa was established by the tenth Sikh Guru, Gobind Singh, in the year 1699.

However, the demand for the establishment of Khalistan is a relatively recent development, originating during the period of British colonialism in India. It primarily emerged in the Punjab region. Some proponents of Khalistan assert that their envisioned state encompasses the current Punjab State, while others advocate for the inclusion of the Punjab region in Pakistan, along with a demand to incorporate other significant neighbouring states such as Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and the Chandigarh region.

Furthermore, Shimla and Lahore are considered the two potential capitals of Khalistan. The original call for the formation of Khalistan was, in fact, a response to the Pakistan Resolution of 1940. This resolution, also known as the Lahore Resolution, was authored and prepared by Muhammad Zafarullah Khan and ratified by the All India



Muslim League on March 23, 1940. The term "Khalistan" was first coined by Dr VS Bhatti to signify an independent Sikh State in March 1940.

The primary objective behind the Khalistan demand was to secure better representation for Sikhs in political institutions and to establish a homeland for the community. After the partition of India in 1947, the Sikhs were deeply affected as Punjab was divided into two parts — one remained with India and the other with Pakistan. This further fueled the demand for a Sikh homeland.

The Canadian connection to the Khalistan movement is longstanding. The current controversy surrounding Khalistan has strained the relationship between India and Canada, particularly after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stated in Canada's Parliament that there were credible allegations linking Indian Government agents to the June murder of the Sikh separatist leader, Hardeep Singh Nijjar. The Indian Government promptly denied any involvement in Nijjar's killing. It is evident that Trudeau is attempting to avoid openly addressing the issue of

the growing Khalistan movement in Canada.

India has repeatedly accused Canada of continuously supporting the Khalistan movement, which is banned in India. However, this movement enjoys widespread popularity among a substantial section of Sikhs worldwide.

What Trudeau is doing today amounts to nothing more than resorting to vote bank politics in Canada. According to Indian estimates, nearly 8,000-9,000 Khalistani radicals exert influence over approximately 15 gurdwaras, using them as centres for fundraising and garnering support for political parties in Canada. Their primary sphere of influence lies in political mobilisation in Brampton, Ontario, as well as Vancouver and Surrey in British Columbia. Instead, Trudeau should have recognised the gravity of the situation and cooperated with the Indian Government in expelling all Khalistani activists from his country.

The day will come when they may pose a potential security threat to Trudeau's fellow citizens. There is an abundance of evidence pointing to

the growth of Sikh militancy in Canada. In June 2020, Indian intelligence agencies issued a warning that criminal gangs based in Canada, comprising Indian expatriates from Punjab, including Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), are directly providing funding to the Khalistanis. The infamous Dhaliwal and Grewal gangs, operating in the British Columbia Province and involved in a drug-trafficking network, have connections to Gurbatwant Singh Pannu of the SFJ. Additionally, another notorious syndicate called the Brother's Keepers of Vancouver has been linked to these gangs.

Furthermore, the SFJ is establishing close links with the Pakistani establishment and agencies in order to reignite the Khalistan movement. It is reported that the SFJ is diligently working to organise a referendum for self-determination on the issue of Khalistan. Canadian authorities must take note that SFJ activists in Punjab and the Tarai region of Uttar Pradesh are consistently receiving substantial funds from gangs based in that country.

Pannun has issued a threat to Indo-Canadian Hindus, urging them to leave Canada and

return to India. In a public video message, he stated, "Indo-Canadian Hindus, you have renounced your allegiance to Canada and the Canadian Constitution. Your destination is India. Leave Canada and go to India."

This has sparked another diplomatic dispute between India and Canada. This will result in significant economic losses for both nations. Moreover, the expulsion of diplomatic staff from both sides, along with visa restrictions, will only lead to a severe strain in their bilateral relations.

"While there is currently no active insurgency in Punjab, there has been ongoing support for the Khalistan movement in the State. Consequently, successive Central governments issued repeated warnings about Khalistanis attempting a resurgence and seeking to influence the youth of Punjab."

Moreover, Punjab's political instability, fueled by infighting within the Congress and the rise of the Aam Aadmi Party to power, has created an environment where neighbouring Pakistan, its state agencies, and Sikh extremist factions based in Canada have been relentless in their efforts

to destabilise Punjab in recent times.

The warning issued by Ganga Singh Dhillon was stark: "We are not seeking just a piece of land. We are looking for a territory where Sikhs can safeguard their women and children. Where a Sikh can determine his own destiny — where our religious shrines are not subject to being overrun by army tanks. You can call it an independent Punjab, a sovereign state, or Khalistan. What we are requesting is a homeland for the Sikh nation" ("Give us Khalistan and leave us in peace", *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, July 21, 1985).

However, Harjot strongly contends that the emotional attachment with Punjab among Sikhs is relatively recent and does not trace back to the early days of the Sikh community as some Khalistan ideologues might assert today. It is the convergence of history and geography, discourse and space, territoriality and metacommentaries that has transformed Punjab into Khalistan. Both Punjab and Khalistan are human-made constructs, and there is nothing inherently natural about them (Harjot S Oberoi, 'From Punjab to

Khalistan: Territoriality and Metacommentary, Pacific Affairs, Spring 1987)

Answers to these underlying currents are not very difficult to find in a globalised world. We are all part of a flat world where identities and cultural insignia are often overshadowed by economic desires, in contrast to what we experienced in a pre-globalised era. Migration has become a way of life. As more and more Sikhs migrated abroad, particularly to the US, the UK, and Canada for a better life, these extremist elements started relying on this extensive diaspora for their sustenance.

Back in India, all these groups are banned, and authorities are closely monitoring their activities and local connections. Consequently, they have found Canada to be a favourable ground for promoting and motivating many youths to support their agenda. For a long time, Khalistanis have been organising against India in Canada, and successive administrations in Ottawa are well aware of this.

Trudeau should not have aligned himself with one of the banned terror groups in India. He is well aware that he is on the wrong side. These Khalistanis have no allegiances; they simply want to keep their agenda alive so that their supporters and sympathisers remain intact for the long run.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended a helping hand to Trudeau, and he should have responded by taking decisive action to eradicate these criminal gangs from Canadian soil altogether.

We all must understand that terrorists recognise no religion or boundaries. They are enemies of civil society and universally recognised liberties of modern society. They stand against peace and humanity. As two democracies, India and Canada must join forces in the fight against Khalistanis. It is now time to prevent them from spreading their agenda and destabilising peace in both countries. The resurgence of the Khalistani movement is a warning signal for both Punjab and all of India. This must be addressed with a superior security and intelligence strategy and network. Undoubtedly, Delhi today possesses much stronger anti-terror infrastructure and more robust leadership than it did in the 1980s to deal with Bhindranwale-like symptoms.

(The writer is currently president of the Global Research Foundation)

The rise of Sikh ethno-nationalism in the 1980s threatened India's integrity. Today's Khalistan movement is more globalised, with a worldwide network of sympathisers. Khalistan movement has ties to Canada, straining India-Canada relations. Khalistanis aim to influence Sikh youth in Punjab. Addressing this threat requires a robust security and intelligence approach. It is imperative for India and Canada to collaborate against terrorism, transcending boundaries and religions.



MAKHAN SAINI

PERSPECTIVE

Health insurance is vital, especially during unpredictable times like the Covid-19 pandemic. It helps cover medical expenses and provides financial security. India has made progress in healthcare accessibility through schemes like RSBY and AB-PMJAY, aiming to leave no one behind



DIPANSHU NIJANDANI

India's healthcare in uncertain times

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, individuals experienced the unfortunate loss of their loved ones, and a significant portion of them also had the dual burden of losing both loved ones and financial resources while their hospitalisation for treatment. There exists a well-known adage that posits food, clothing, and shelter as the fundamental necessities of human existence.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge an additional element that is often overlooked by the majority of individuals: the acquisition of health insurance. The natural world displays a significant degree of unpredictability and predictability, which is mirrored in the fragility of human existence. Any form of misfortune has the potential to lead to varying degrees of harm, ranging from minor injuries to severe consequences, including loss of life. Sickness or disease does not give advance notice before affecting the human body.

While it is indeed accurate that money cannot purchase life itself, it can provide assistance in navigating challenging circumstances for both indi-

viduals and their families. In contemporary society, possessing a robust health insurance coverage is imperative due to the prevailing uncertainties. It is a cornerstone of personal financial planning, encompassing an individual's comprehensive financial inflows and outflows.

A significant portion of the population lacks awareness regarding medical inflation, of medical inflation, which is the highest form of inflation. Specifically, it compounds at an annual rate of 15 per cent. This implies that a medical treatment currently priced at ₹10,00,000 will escalate to ₹40,00,000 over a period of ten years. Therefore, one may comprehend the significance of possessing a comprehensive health insurance policy.

Undoubtedly, India's healthcare infrastructure has shown significant progress in recent years. In order to provide universal access to healthcare services for all citizens inside the nation, the government has implemented various measures. The Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) and Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-



PMJAY) are India's two main public health insurance schemes. RSBY was established in 2008 to offer those living in poverty access to health insurance. The scheme has now been combined with the 2018-born AB-PMJAY. This programme was created to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its overarching promise to "leave no one behind".

Aiming to cover 100 million households, or around 500 million individuals, nationwide with health insurance, is AB-PMJAY. As of April 2023, data from the National Health Authority shows that over 50 million hospitalisations under AB-PMJAY had been authorised, with a total cost exceeding ₹80,000 crore. Additionally, the programme has enrolled over 23,000 hos-

pitals nationwide, which offer beneficiaries a wide range of medical services.

As of March 2022, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) reported 62 non-life insurance companies in operation, with 29 offering health insurance products. In addition, the country possessed a total of six autonomous health insurance carriers.

According to data from the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), the health insurance market in India has experienced significant growth over a period of time. As of March 2022, health insurance companies had accumulated a total of INR 64,230 crores in premiums, reflecting a year-on-year growth of 15.2 per cent. During the corresponding time period, a total of 7.69 crore policies were successfully sold, indicating a growth rate of 12.6 per cent compared to the previous year.

In today's era, it is crucial for individuals to protect their families by obtaining comprehensive health insurance coverage to guard against unforeseen medical emergencies.

There are some crucial factors to take into consideration before purchasing a health insurance policy:

- 1) The sum insured ideally should be 15 to 20 times of your annual income.
- 2) Purchase super top up policy along with base insurance policy to increase sum insured cover, once your base policy cover will exhaust then super top up will come into existence.
- 3) If you are a family person then go for family floater plans.
- 4) Claim settlement ratio should be above 95 per cent.
- 5) High number of network hospitals with cashless treatment facilities.
- 6) Pre and post hospitalisation expenses should be covered.
- 7) Less waiting period for named ailment and pre-existing diseases.
- 8) No claim bonus or cumulative bonus in case of claims also should be there.
- 9) No room rent capping should be there in the policy.
- 10) Policy should have day care; in-patient care treatment, ICU cover and ambulance cover up to sum insured with-

out any capping.

11) Automatic unlimited recharge or restoration benefits should be there for unrelated or the same illness without any waiting period.

12) Covid-19, Ayush treatments, domiciliary hospitalisation and organ donor cover should be there up to sum insured.

13) Ideally claim settlement should be done within 30 days of last document submission to the hospital or insured by the insurance company.

14) No Co-payment clause should be there.

Given the substantial cost of healthcare in India, the inclusion of health insurance is an essential element in individual financial strategising. Health insurance provides individuals and families with a sense of security by safeguarding them from the economic strain caused by medical emergencies. This is made possible by the availability of many insurance plans and the benefits offered by insurance providers.

(The writer is a Research Fellow, Atal School of Management, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi)

As world’s problems grow challenging, head of the United Nations gets bleaker

At the annual meeting of world leaders last year, the UN chief sounded a global alarm about the survival of humanity and the planet. This year, the alarm rang louder and more ominously, and the message was even more pressing: Wake up and take action right now. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' assessment, delivered in his no-nonsense style, aimed to shock.

We are becoming "unhinged," he said. We are inching closer to "a great fracture." Conflicts, coups and chaos are surging. The climate crisis is growing. Divides are deepening between military and economic powers, the richer North and poorer South, East and West. "A new Rubicon" has been crossed in artificial intelligence.

Guterres has spoken often on all these issues. But this year, which he called "a time of chaotic transition," his address to leaders was tougher and even more urgent. And looking at his previous state-of-the-world speeches, it seems clear he has been headed in this direction for quite some time.

In his first address to world leaders in 2017 after taking the helm of the 193-member United Nations, Guterres cited "nuclear peril" as the leading global threat.

Two years later, he was warning of the world splitting in two, with the United States and China creating rival internets, currency, trade, financial rules "and their own zero-sum geopolitical and military strategies." He urged vigorous action "to avert the great fracture."

Then came the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. The global response Guterres called for never happened; richer countries got vaccines and poorer ones were left waiting. At last year's leaders' gathering, his message was almost as dire as this week's: "Our world is in peril and paralysed," Guterres said. "We are gridlocked in colossal global dysfunction." This year, his message to the presidents and prime ministers, monarchs and ministers gathered in the vast General Assembly hall was unambiguous and stark.

"We seem incapable," Guterres said, "of coming together to respond."



“We cannot inch towards agreement while the world races towards a precipice, Guterres said. We must bring a new urgency to our efforts, and a shared sense of common purpose.

The pact represents your pledge to use all the tools at your disposal at the global level to solve problems before those problems overwhelm us. The secretary-general said he knows reaching agreement will be difficult. ‘But,’ he said, it is possible.

THE WORLD’S FUTURE, AND THE UN’S

At the heart of Guterres' many speeches this week is the very future of the United Nations, an institution formed immediately after World War II to bring nations together and save future generations from war. But in a 21st-century world that is far more interconnected and also more bitterly divided, can it remain relevant?

For Guterres, the answer is clear: It must. The Cold War featured two superpowers the capitalist United States and the communist Soviet Union. When it ended, there was a brief period of US-dominated unipolarity after the breakup of the Soviet

Union and its dissolution into a dominant Russia and smaller former republics. Now it is moving to a more chaotic "multipolar world" and creating, Guterres says, new opportunities for different countries to lead. But Guterres' key argument is rooted in history. He says it teaches that a world with many power centres and small groups of nations can't solve the challenges that affect all countries. That's why strong global institutions are needed, he told leaders on Thursday, and "the United Nations is the only forum where this can happen." The big question, upon which Guterres is now laser-focused, is whether an institution born in 1945 a

time when the tools to address chaos and fragmentation were more rudimentary can be retooled and updated to tackle today's challenges.

"I have no illusions," he said. "Reforms are a question of power. I know there are many competing interests and agendas. But the alternative to reform is not the status quo. The alternative to reform is further fragmentation. It's reform or rupture." That is the conundrum sitting in the UN chief's lap: Can 193 nations with competing agendas undertake major reforms?

To meet the challenge, Guterres has called on world leaders to attend a "Summit of the Future" at next September's UN global gathering, and in the coming year to negotiate a "Pact for the Future."

At a meeting Thursday to prepare, he told ministers that the pact "represents your pledge to use all the tools at your disposal at the global level to solve problems before those problems overwhelm us." The secretary-general said he knows reaching agreement will be difficult. "But," he said, "it is possible."

A SENSE THAT THINGS ARE FUNDAMENTALLY BROKEN'

Time, Guterres says, is against the United Nations and countries that support the return of united global action. Perhaps that is why his words grow more dire each year.

He points to new conflicts like Ukraine, more intense geopolitical tensions, signs of "climate breakdown," a cost-of-living crisis and the debt distress and default that is bedeviling more countries than ever.

"We cannot inch towards agreement while the world races towards a precipice," Guterres said. "We must bring a new urgency to our efforts, and a shared sense of common purpose." That's easier said than done, as this week's high-level meetings and the priorities and problems they raise make clear.

Can all the UN's far-flung nations unite behind a common purpose? Whether that happens in the next 12 months remains to be seen. Certainly there is support. Consider Bahamas Foreign Minister Frederick Audley Mitchell, addressing the global gathering Friday night.



“Specifically investigates the connection between the acoustic characteristics of coughs and the varying levels of pneumonia severity in COVID-19 patients.”

Cough sounds analysed for assessing Covid severity

A cough analysis could soon reveal disease severity in COVID-19 patients, researchers said.

Differences in cough sounds depending on the severity of the respiratory condition were observed, the research team led by the Institute for Bioengineering of Catalonia (IBEC), Barcelona, Spain, said.



lected between April 2020 and May 2021 at Hospital del Mar in Barcelona.

These differences may reflect the progressive respiratory system changes in patients with COVID-19, they said.

Jane's signal processing group at IBEC developed the methodology and algorithms for the acoustic analysis of cough signals collected via smartphones.

Further, cough analysis can serve a dual purpose - early Covid detection and remote monitoring of disease progression, the authors said, adding that further research involving more patients was needed to validate these study findings.

During emergencies and in regions with limited medical infrastructure, the method could prove useful in the prompt identification and isolation of Covid patients, enabling implementation of control measures and medical care, said senior co-author of the study and researcher at the Hospital del Mar, Joaquim Gea.

Despite being Covid-oriented, the study paved the way for applying this model in the context of other respiratory conditions, the researchers said, adding that the method presented a potential predictive, simple, and accessible tool to assess the risk of suffering severe pneumonia.

Biologists in race to help largest and rarest tortoise species

While the average lifespan of North America's largest and most rare tortoise species is unknown, biologists have said it could span upward of a century.

So saving the endangered species is a long game one that got another nudge forward on Friday as US wildlife officials finalised an agreement with Ted Turner's Endangered Species Fund that clears the way for the release of more Bolson tortoises on the media mogul's ranch in central New Mexico.

The "safe harbour agreement" will facilitate the release of captive tortoises on the Armendaris Ranch to establish a free-ranging population. US Fish and Wildlife Service Director Martha Williams said the agreement, which offers private landowners protections from regulations, can serve as a model as officials look for more innovative ways to work within the Endangered Species Act.

Dozens of people gathered for the release on Friday of 20 more adult tortoises on the property, which is already home to 23 of them as well as dozens of juvenile ones. With the sun high in the sky and temperatures nearing 90



degrees (32 degrees Celsius), the release was held off until the evening to ensure their well-being.

The tortoises usually spend about 85 per cent of the time in their earthen burrows, which in some cases can be about 21 yards (20 metres) long.

Shawn Sartorius, a field supervisor with the Fish and Wildlife Service, said the results of the breeding and restoration efforts for the slow-reproducing and long-lived animals will not be known in his lifetime.

"What we're doing here is establishing a population here that can be handed off to the next generation," Sartorius said.

It's a step toward one day releasing the tortoise more broadly in the Southwest as conservationists push the federal government to consider crafting a recovery plan for the species.

Workers uncover eight mummies and pre-Inca objects in Peru

Some archaeologists describe Peru's capital as an onion with many layers of history, others consider it a box of surprises. That's what some gas line workers got when their digging uncovered eight pre-Inca funeral bales.

"We are recovering those leaves of the lost history of Lima that is just hidden under the tracks and streets," Jesus Bahamonde, an archaeologist at Calidda, the company that distributes natural gas in the city of 10 million people, said Friday.

He said the company's excavation work to expand its system of gas lines over the last 19 years has produced more than 1,900 archaeological finds of various kinds, including mummies, pottery and textiles. Those have mostly been associated with burial sites on flat ground.

The city also has more than 400 larger archaeological sites that have turned



up scattered through the urban landscape. Known as "huacas" in the Indigenous Quechua language, those adobe constructions are on top of hills considered sacred places.

The number of relics isn't surprising. The area that is now Lima has been occupied for more than 10,000 years by pre-Inca cultures, then the Inca Empire itself and then the colonial culture brought by the Spanish conquerors in 1535.

Lima until it was incorporated into the Inca Empire in the late 15th century, scholars say.

Archaeologist Roberto Quispe, who worked in the trench, said the funeral bundles probably hold two adults and six minors.

Sometimes, the archaeological finds prove to be from more recent times. In 2018, Quispe and other archaeologists working in the La Flor neighbourhood found wooden coffins holding three Chinese immigrants buried in the 19th century.

Archaeologists found the bodies next to opium-smoking pipes, handmade cigarettes, shoes, Chinese playing cards, a Peruvian silver coin minted in 1898 and a certificate of completion of an employment contract written in Spanish and dated 1875 at a hacienda south of Lima. The eight burial bundles were found near some braised chicken restaurants and a road that leads to Peru's only nuclear power station.

Devoid of 'brain', jellyfish seen to learn from past experiences, new study finds

The ability to learn from past experiences could be independent of possessing a "central brain" like the one that humans, mice and flies possess, according to latest findings of a study in jellyfish.

Instead, the jellies saw obstacles and employed associated learning, that involves making mental connections between sensory stimulations and behaviours, to guide themselves through murky waters and around underwater tree roots to snare prey, the scientists from Germany and Denmark demonstrated in Caribbean box jellyfish (*Tripedalia cystophora*).

These "seemingly simple" jellies, no bigger than a fingernail and living in mangrove swamps, have a complex visual system with 24 eyes embedded in their bell-like body, they said.

Shedding light on the evolutionary roots of learning and memory, the study findings challenge previous notions that advanced learning, including learning from prior experiences, requires a centralised brain, they said in their study published in the journal *Current Biology*.



"Learning is the pinnacle performance for nervous systems," said first author Jan Bielecki of Kiel University, Germany.

"Looking at these relatively simple nervous systems in jellyfish, we have a much higher chance of understanding all the details and how it comes together to perform behaviours," said senior author Anders Garm of the University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

The researchers observed the jellyfish for 7.5 minutes in a tank dressed with gray and white stripes to mimic a mangrove environment.

They saw that while initially the jelly bumped into these seemingly far stripes frequently, by the end of the experiment, it had on average distanced itself from the wall more by about a half and quadrupled the number of successful pivots to avoid collision.

How ducks, geese and swans see the world - and why this puts them at risk

Each year, millions of birds fly into power lines, wind turbines and the other man-made structures that litter the open air space. These collisions frequently result in the death of birds and, if power systems go down, disrupt our lives and pose financial challenges for power companies.

Numerous bird species, including macaws in Brazil, geese and swans in the UK, and blue cranes in South Africa have been found to be susceptible to collisions with power lines. But any flying bird can fall victim to such a collision. In some places, these collisions happen so often that they can jeopardise local populations of endangered species.

But birds are highly evolved flying machines. They can fly in tightly packed flocks that weave and turn to our delight and wonder. So why do they fly into things?

According to our latest research, the answer lies in how they see the world. We found that looking directly ahead is simply not that important to many

species of duck, geese and swans.

HOW BIRDS SEE THE WORLD

Exploring the reasons behind why birds are victims of collisions has led to new ideas that challenge our fundamental perception of what birds are. In the past, scientists have described birds as "a wing guided by an eye".

This implies that flight has been central to moulding bird vision throughout their evolution. But now it is safe to conclude that a bird is instead best characterised as "a bill guided by an eye".

Rather than flight, the main driver of the evolution of bird vision has been the key tasks associated with foraging, in particular detecting food items and getting the bill to the right place at the right time in order to seize them.

Alongside the detection of predators, this is the task that bird vision has to get right day in, day out. Birds differ in how much the view from each eye overlaps (called the binocular field of view).

The more the eyes look straight



ahead, the more the view from each eye will overlap much as human eyes do thus broadening the binocular field.

For a bird such as a duck, with its eyes positioned high up on either side of the head, the view from each eye will be

very different (with smaller binocular field). We measured binocular field size across a broad range of 39 species of duck, geese and swans. We found that the key driver of diversity in vision between species is their diet and how they forage for food. Birds that primarily use their vision to locate foods such as seeds, or selectively graze on plants, tend to have broader binocular fields.

However, the binocular fields of species like mallards and pink-eared ducks are much narrower.

These birds rely less on their eyes for foraging and more on touch cues from their bills. The vision of birds like these instead provides them with a comprehensive view of the region above and behind their heads. Birds certainly need to have some visual coverage in front of them. But with eyes placed high on the side of the head, resulting in a very narrow binocular field, they are restricted to retrieving rather scant detail from the distant scene ahead.

What matters to them more is placing

their bill accurately at a close distance and seeing who is coming at them from the side or from behind.

This finding is not confined to ducks, geese and swans. It probably generalises to all birds, except perhaps some owls (which have more front-facing eyes and rely upon sound to locate prey). The great majority of birds are therefore vulnerable to collisions.

However, it is larger birds like geese, swans and bustards that face real problems. Their restricted forward vision is compounded by flying fast and being unable to change direction quickly.

These birds also often fly in flocks, and at dusk and dawn when the light level is lower.

WARNING BIRDS OF HAZARDS AHEAD

Understanding the vision of birds from the perspective of foraging and predator detection improves our understanding of what causes collisions. But, more importantly, it allows us to do something about it.