

INCOIS Hyderabad selected for Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar 2025

Hyderabad: The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) has been selected for the Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar-2025, in the Institutional Category, for its excellent work in disaster management. Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar was instituted by the Government of India, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to recognise and honour the invaluable contribution and selfless service rendered by individuals and organisations in India in the field of disaster management.

The award is announced every year on January 23, the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. The award carries a cash prize of Rs 51 lakh and a certificate in case of an institution and Rs 5 lakh and a certificate in case of an individual. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, under Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the country has significantly improved the disaster management practices, preparedness, mitigation and response mechanisms resulting in significant reduction in casualties during natural calamities. For the award of 2025, nominations were solicited from July 1, 2024. Some 297 nominations were received from institutions and individuals. Contribution of INCOIS Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) was established in 1999, Hyderabad, Telangana. It is integral to India's disaster management strategy, specialising in early alerts for ocean-related hazards. It established the Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC) which provides tsunami alerts within 10 minutes, serving India and 28 Indian ocean countries. It has been recognised by UNESCO as a top



Tsunami Service Provider. Supported by a network of seismic stations, tide gauges and other ocean sensors, it also provides high-wave, cyclone, and storm surge forecasts, helping to safeguard coastal areas and maritime operations. The INCOIS assisted during the 2013 Phailin and 2014 Hudhud cy-

clone with advisories which led to timely evacuations and reduced risks to coastal populations. The organisation has developed the Search and Rescue Aided Tool (SARAT) to assist the Indian Coast Guard, Navy and Coastal Security Police, in locating individuals or objects lost at sea. It has also estab-

lished the SynOPS visualisation platform which integrates real-time data to strengthen response coordination during extreme events. The INCOIS received the Geospatial World Excellence in Maritime Services Award in 2024 and the Disaster Risk Reduction Excellence Award in 2021.

Two years on, Shalivahana power plant workers still await arrears

Adilabad: Around 300 workers belonging to Shalivahana Green Energy Limited (SGEL), which was closed in 2022, have been seeking payment of arrears of statutory benefits and compensation from the management for 2 years. The SGEL was established on sprawling 5 acres of land at Rangapet in Mancherial town in 2002. It used to generate 6w of power per hour by burning agriculture-waste. It was directly providing employment to 300 workers, while 200 families were able to get livelihood indirectly with the help of it. It was India's largest agriculture-waste based power producer with 88 MW operational capacity.

However, the power plant was shut down as it could not get permissions relating to power purchasing agreement with the government and the management was not interested to continue the plant in December, 2022. Consequently, the lives of 300 workers were thrown out of gear. The workers have been staging protests demanding

the management to clear the arrears and reopen the plant. "The management was disinterested in restarting the plant. However, it did not pay gratuity, bonus, other statutory benefits pending since 2022 and compensation of Rs 5 lakh for abruptly closing the plant. The management is reluctant to pay the arrears," Kuntala Shankar, the plant's trade union president said. The hapless workers regretted that they were struggling to meet ends of the day due to the sudden shutdown of the plant for the last 3 years. They wanted the elected representatives and officials to exert pressure on the management to clear their arrears at the earliest. They said that they were opposing the closure and selling of lands belonging to the part citing payment of the arrears. The workers alleged that the management was planning to convert the land of the plant into house sites by developing a layout by colluding with local public representatives and causing injustice to the workforce. They accused it of entering into



agreement with some realtors to sell the land in 2023, but did not reveal it considering the protests. They feared that the land would

become a residential colony soon, shattering their hopes. The management was unavailable for a comment.

Preserving a spearhead's menace: why keeping Jasprit Bumrah healthy is Indian cricket's chief priority

Unlike his precise deliveries, Jasprit Bumrah's press conferences can be elaborate affairs. The Indian spearhead with an air of a headmaster speaks at a leisurely pace while giving voice to wide-ranging perspectives. After concluding a statement, he often offers a half-smile before moving on to the next query. But on Wednesday (January 15, 2025), he posted a pithy line on X, formerly Twitter. And it read: "I know fake news is easy to spread but this made me laugh." There was a smiley emoticon and a few more words, but the message was driven home, just like his yorkers zooming past wilting legs and flailing bats. National significance. The import of his utterance was akin to a radio announcement about a cyclone crossing the coast without causing damage to life and property, at worst maybe knocking down a few coconut trees. There was an overwhelming sense of relief. Bumrah was reacting to a story doing the rounds about how he has been advised bed rest due to a bulge in his back.

Just like Sachin Tendulkar's tennis-elbow in the past, Bumrah's back is quite the rage in news circles. Currently, the world's finest pace bowler is nursing a back injury suffered during the recent Sydney Test. While worst-possible scenarios are being trumped up, his social media post tried to quell these needless fires. Obviously, more transparency from the BCCI would be appreciated as no official proclamation has been made. We just have Bumrah's reaction for now. In hindsight, the injury seemed inevitable. Bearing the weight of the Indian attack, the pacer has been the pivot on which India's fortunes rested during the recent tour Down Under. Statistically, Bumrah bowled fewer overs (151.2) than Pat Cummins (167). But the Australian captain had the support of Mitchell Starc, Scott Boland and partly Josh Hazlewood. Despite Mohammed Siraj's 20 scalps, for Bumrah it was often a lonely road. He had to strike at will, choke the runs and always dispense hope. It was a burden too heavy to bear, physically and psychologically. Add to it a batting line-up that did not offer a cushion of runs, and the picture gets even more ghastly.

Australia prevailed 3-1 to reclaim the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in the five-Test series but it was a result much closer than the final number suggests. Leading this resistance was Bumrah, also skipper in the first and last Tests at Perth and Sydney, respectively. His 32 wickets at 13.06 were from the top-drawer of fast-bowling excellence. The host batters had no clue to the thunderbolts he unleashed while analysts delved into the speedster's hyper-extension. Travis Head and Sam Konstas may have tried to unsettle Bumrah with their unconventional shots but the Indian pacer often had the last word. It came to such a pass that Usman Khawaja admitted to being 'Bumrah'd'. Making an impact is a tribute to Bumrah's impact that the Aussies grudgingly admitted to gaining an advantage while mounting a fourth-innings chase at Sydney as the speedster could not bowl owing to back spasms. Maybe India would have prevailed if he had bowled and the series tied at 2-2. For now, they all remain in the realm of conjecture. In terms of a fast-bowler leaving a singular impact on a long series, cast your eyes all the way back to the 1982-1983 season when India toured Pakistan. Imran Khan was at his destructive

best and bagged 40 wickets to derail Sunil Gavaskar's men. This was a great cricketer imposing his will. These days, Bumrah does that too.

Ever since he was pitchforked into the national side after catching the eye in the Indian Premier League, Bumrah has been India's go-to bowler. Never conventional, Bumrah walks a bit, lengthens his stride, breaks into a gallop almost as an afterthought on sighting the bowling crease, leans backwards and then springs forward to deliver. This is like a high-strung catapult being used to good effect. The strain on the shoulders, spine, knees and ankles are bound to be enormous. This is an action that can force the release of a biomechanical cautionary note. Yet, it works for Bumrah. Thankfully, just like how Sri Lanka nurtured the unorthodox Lasith Malinga, India did the same with the man from Gujarat. In the risk weighed against rewards index, the gifts that Bumrah offers need to be cherished. With 205 Test wickets at a mind-boggling average of 19.40, the best for anyone with 200-plus scalps, Bumrah is both a freak and a fiery exponent of lathering speed onto a red cherry. Since Mohammad Nissar and Amar Singh, India has had some good fast bowlers but they were often lost among wristy batters and twirly spinners. Kapil Dev, Javagal Srinath, Zaheer Khan, Ishant Sharma, Bumrah and Mohammed Shami have all added to the mystique around Indian pacers. However, for any spearhead to survive, he needs a support-cast. Kapil had a few but they were sporadic. It was the same with Srinath. The rare instances when Indians hunted as a pack include Srinath, Zaheer and Ashish Nehra bowling in tandem during the 2003 ODI World Cup in South Africa. A trend further amplified by Bumrah, Shami and Ishant during a phase in 2018-19 when they combined for 139 Test wickets. Otherwise, it has been a case of revolving doors. Shami has been plagued with injuries. Siraj is evolving into an ally but it is taking time. Bumrah is 31 and he is vulnerable to a body that resists exploitation. India needs to have a plan to lengthen his career. Though the last word is yet to be known on when Bumrah will be available for selection, ideally, he should be rested from bilateral ODIs and T20Is unless they lead up to a World Cup. In Tests at home where spin tends to have the upper hand, based on the nature of India's lead in the series, the selectors can rest Bumrah at times. A fit Bumrah is essential. But more important is a fast and hostile Bumrah. The last thing India needs is the injured pacer peddling military-medium stuff. Two decades ago, Rahul Dravid spoke about Aussie speedsters: "You play and play, say 20 balls, 30 balls, but you never feel 'in' and then you get this ball on and around off-stump and you edge." Changing the culture Bumrah's technique is similar. It is a relentless inquisition and if he is in the mood, a deceptive bouncer is banged in too. In a land that worshipped its batters, Bumrah has shredded that script. He has tapped into a collective primal desire to shatter stumps. Many kids are aspiring to be him. During India's latest tour, the Australian media praised Virat Kohli in their previews. He was this star expected to fill stadiums and lure eyeballs to television. When the series ended, Bumrah was the rockstar, towering over the rest. Australia may have won but it was the Indian pacer who reigned individually. Ian



Bishop is seen as this lovely commentator with the right words, astute knowledge and empathy. But in his prime, the West Indian was a terrific fast bowler before a fragile back

laid him low and forced him to seek the comfort of a microphone. This is a cautionary tale and India cannot afford Bumrah to go the Bishop way.

"I thought children's books may become irrelevant..."

David Walliams, best-selling author of children's books like *Gangsta Granny*, *The World's Worst Children* and *Ratburger*, is in India on his first book tour. The 53-year-old wrote his first children's book in 2008 (*The Boy in the Dress*), which earned him praise from critics and brought him to the attention of young readers, and their parents, who couldn't seem to get enough. Since then, Walliams has been prolific. His latest book, *Super Sleuth* is his 43rd. He has also written a comic book (*Astro Chimp*, 2024), short story collections (*The World's Worst* series, started in 2016 is a hugely popular set), and turned his children's books into television films. In all, he's been translated to 55 languages, and has sold over 50 million copies worldwide according to a 2022 announcement by his publisher, Harper Collins. He's also sold over half a million copies in India -- where the children's literature market is the fastest-growing compared to other genres.

"I want to take over the world, I'm going to be the Elon Musk of children's novels," Walliams laughs. "That'll make an arresting headline," he said. Yet Walliams's fame isn't restricted to young readers. In the early 2000s, together with writer-actor Matt Lucas, Walliams wrote and starred in sketch comedy gold, *Little Britain*, which ran first as a radio series and then on the British Broadcasting Corporation channel between 2003 and 2006. Over eighteen 28-minute episodes, the writer-actor duo created several characters and spared no one, high or low, in their cultural and social satire of British society. In 2008, they made a version for the American audience and later came out with a memoir called *Inside Little Britain*. More than a decade later, Walliams and Lucas came under criticism for their use of racial and sexist stereotypes in their sketches, which led to a public apology. "[I do have] a little bit more anxiety as a white middle-aged man from a middle class upbringing. If someone doesn't like something, I really listen. I don't want to get defensive. It's really my job to listen and

try and make things better," he said, reflecting on how he treats criticism now. Walliams, who was in Bengaluru on Wednesday, met school children and signed books at the Sapna Book House in Koramangala. He will make his way to Chennai, Pune, Mumbai and New Delhi, and will end his tour with an appearance in the Jaipur Literature Festival slated to be held between January 30 and February 3. Edited excerpts from an interview:

You attended your first few events in India today, and on Tuesday. What has the reception been like? It has been really good. I've only been here three days, but so far, I have had a great response. So, I'm really pleased. They keep saying come. But you wonder if there's any audience. I mean, does anyone care? I'm surprised to hear you say that though. You've sold over 50 million books worldwide, so people do care.

I mean, obviously there's some countries which I understand, like Australia, New Zealand, some European countries, and Canada, that they know me. I'm not often given the breakdown. So when they said, 'Oh, you've sold half a million copies in India,' I was like, 'Really? No one told me that'. I thought 15 years ago when I started writing that children's books might become more and more irrelevant. But, actually, they're still going strong. [J.K.] Rowling [author of Harry Potter series] changed it all. I've never heard of kids queuing up outside a bookshop at midnight. She created quite a revolution making [the book release] a kind of a major cultural event. No one else has been able to do that. But she helped all of us. Do you feel a sense of responsibility given that yours is quite likely the first proper book a lot of children all around the world might read?

Sure, yes of course I do. I do feel a sense of responsibility that children might pick up my book before they read another book. I just basically try and make my books as entertaining as possible so that they'll read another.

Research sheds light on fire risk for Canterbury

Hyderabad :University of Canterbury student research is providing new insights into the impact of hedgerows and shelterbelts on rural fire risk. In partnership with Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ), Te Whare Wananga o Waitaha | University of Canterbury (UC) students George Hamilton and Renee Martin were part of a team that examined the effects of factors such as fuel load, vegetation type, and proximity, on fire risk. "Our research focused on identifying and mapping hedgerows and shelterbelts in rural Canterbury, analysing their characteristics, and understanding how these features influence fire behaviour," Hamilton says. The research held personal significance for him. "My childhood neighbour's house burnt down due to a hedgerow fire that spread for about 2 kilometres. That experience stayed with me and motivated my interest in this topic." Supervised by Associate Professor Marwan Katurji from UC's School of Earth and Environment, the Science students began by mapping West Melton hedgerows and shelterbelts to understand their geospatial relationship with infrastructure.

"This student project is contributing to understanding the risk of wildfire in the household environment, using fuel distribution and potential fire behaviour to inform safe living. The students' methodology was in-

formed by geospatial data analysis and community and stakeholder engagement to assess and communicate the risk better," Associate Professor Katurji says. "This pilot research aligns well with FENZ's ongoing national wildfire threat analysis programme. Identifying new fuel types in our rural-urban landscape will help in fire behaviour prediction and firefighting resource allocation." Hamilton says Canterbury has a significant number of hedgerows and shelterbelts near rural infrastructure but, despite this, there is limited research on their role in fire risk. Part of the research project was to create mitigation strategies based on their findings, Martin explains. "We discovered that native plantings, creating breaks in shelterbelts and planting hedgerows and shelterbelts further from buildings are key to reducing fire risk," she says. In addition to this the team created a risk index to help identify high-risk areas. "By understanding the patterns and characteristics of hedgerows, communities can reduce fire impact before it starts and respond quicker when fires start," Hamilton says. As part of a compulsory third-year course, Research for Resilient Environments and Communities, for Bachelor of Science students majoring in Geography and Environmental Science, the project challenged students to tackle real-world issues, something Martin says she found particularly



rewarding. One of my key takeaways was learning to collaborate with a community partner, which required adaptability and delegation," she says. "The project highlighted the value of working with partners like FENZ. It allowed us to apply classroom and lab knowledge to real-world situations while also upskilling our data analysis skills." FENZ Wildfire Scientist Grant Pearce says "student projects like this are a great way to initiate new research. The students provide new

ideas and approaches that we may not be aware of, and which can lead to better outcomes. FENZ will look to use this partnership approach again next year." The team sees significant potential for scaling up the research nationally and internationally. "We looked at our research limitations and found that with more skills, time, and technology we could enable more precise differentiation of hedgerows from other vegetation and structures," Hamilton says.

Signify illuminates the spiritual journey of millions of devotees at Maha Kumbh 2025, Prayagraj



Hyderabad :The Maha Kumbh 2025, a spiritual gathering of unparalleled scale, has drawn over 9 crore devotees to Prayagraj till date and anticipates over 45 crore people attending the mega-religious event this year. Signify (Euronext: LIGHT), the world leader in lighting, enhanced the spiritual experience of the devotees at the Maha Kumbh 2025 with innovative and sustainable lighting solutions. The project encompassed the illumination of the sacred Viman Mandapam, the iconic Shastri Bridge, and the deployment of industry-leading solar lights across the Kumbh Mela grounds.

Innovation at its best: One of its kind façade lighting at Viman Mandapam

Signify transformed the Viman Mandapam, a sacred structure at the heart of the Kumbh Mela, into a breathtaking spectacle of light and color with Philips Uni dynamic color-changing linear grazers and flood lights, creating a layered lighting design that accentuates its architectural beauty, achieving a volumetric illumination. While the installation presented unique challenges, including working at height, navigating intricate carvings, and minimizing drilling to preserve the structural integrity of the Mandapam, the multi-layered lighting approach allowed for dynamic control, creating an immersive and spectacular lighting experience for devotees.

The green glow: Maha Kumbh lit up with industry-leading solar lights

The introduction of the solar hybrid installation at such a large-scale event set a significant milestone for the adoption of renewable energy solutions in India. Underlining its commitment to sustainability, Signify deployed SunStay Hybrid solar lights that boast 175 lm/w efficiency throughout the Kumbh Mela grounds. The light's robust, pressure die-cast housing ensures durability, while the hybrid design guarantees 100% lighting throughout the night, even in foggy conditions. This initiative is a step forward with solar energy, sustainably meeting the lighting needs of large-scale events and ensuring brighter paths for the devotees. Mr. Girish K Chawla, Head of Professional Business, Signify Geater India, said, "In line with our #BrighterLivesBetterWorld vision, we at Signify are proud to provide sustainable lighting solutions at one of the largest Hindu pilgrimages in India, Maha Kumbh 2025. This one of its kind mega-festivals, by UP government, Prayagraj Mela Administration, UPSTDC, UPPCL and UP tourism is truly recommendable. We believe that sustainable lighting can play a crucial role in creating a brighter and greener future. Our efforts at the Maha Kumbh serve as a testament to this belief, demonstrating how innovative lighting solutions can contribute to large-scale events while promoting environmental stewardship. We will continue to bring more such innovative and sustainable lighting solutions to communities across India."

Capture Every Live Moment: OPPO Reno13 Series Launched in India with New MediaTek Dimensity 8350 Chipset and AI-Ready Cameras

Hyderabad :OPPO India has officially launched the much-anticipated Reno13 Series 5G, designed to redefine the smartphone experience. Featuring a flagship-level camera system, powered by the MediaTek Dimensity 8350 SoC, and equipped with cutting-edge AI features for both imaging and productivity, the Reno13 Series is engineered to deliver exceptional performance. With its ultra-durable design, the series – including the Reno13 and Reno13 Pro – also boasts IP66, IP68, and IP69 certifications for water and dust resistance, making it the perfect device for those who value both style and durability.

Additionally, the Reno13 Series offers 80W SUPERVOOC fast-charging, ensuring optimal power for extended use. The smartphones are now available for purchase through Mainline Retail Outlets, the OPPO e-Store, and Flipkart, with prices starting at INR 37,999.

Flagship Design with DurabilityThe OPPO Reno13 5G boasts an aerospace-grade aluminium frame and Corning Gorilla Glass 7i on the front and back. Its One-piece Sculpted Glass on the back is a blend of matte and gloss finishes with a unique texture on the Ivory White variant. OPPO has also introduced an exclusive Luminous Blue color variant for India. This variant features a unique glowing effect achieved through offset printing and reflective coating to produce a subtle yet captivating glowing outline around the camera module.

The device comes with OPPO's signature All-Round Armour architecture, protecting the internals against shock for added durability. The smartphone is IP66, IP68, and IP69-certified for resistance to dust and submersion in freshwater up to 1.5 meters, tested up to 2 meters in OPPO labs for 30 minutes. The Reno13 stands out with its slim and lightweight design:

The Ivory White model is a mere 7.24mm thin, while the Luminous Blue model is 7.29mm slim; the handsets tilt the scale at a lightweight 181g. Expansive Infinite View Display with Blue Light SolutionThe Reno13 sports a 6.59-inch flat screen and is equipped with a 120Hz Smart Adaptive 1.5K OLED ProXDR display, offering an impressive 93.4% screen-to-body ratio for a bezel-less viewing experience. With peak brightness of 1,200 nits (HBM), it ensures visibility even under harsh sunlight. OPPO's screen technology is designed for eye comfort with a low-blue-light solution, certified by BOE SGS Seamless Pro Eye Protection.

Premium Camera with the Power of GenAIThe Reno13 features a flagship-level camera system, including a 50MP primary, 8MP ultra-wide camera, and 2MP monochrome camera. The device includes a tri-microphone system, audio zoom, and support for dual 4K video recording from the front and back cameras simultaneously. AI Livephoto in 2K ClarityThe Reno13 offers creative control with its AI Livephoto feature, which automatically records video clips from

OPPO AI Phone

Reno13 Series ^{5G}

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	10% INSTANT CASHBACK*	OR	UPTO 12 MONTHS	ZERO DOWN PAYMENT SCHEMES*
Reno13 5G	₹ 37999	8+128GB	₹ 39999	8+256GB
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First Sale Exclusive Offer Own at ₹2,111/- Monthly EMI				
Reno13 Pro 5G	₹ 49999	12+256GB	₹ 54999	12+512GB
Net Effective Price with Bank Discount*	₹44999		₹49499	
First Sale Exclusive Offer Own at ₹2,778/- Monthly EMI				

Other Benefits

1.5 seconds before the shutter is pressed to 1.5 seconds after. The result is a 2K ultra-clear video, enabling users to select and edit

any frame. Real-time adjustments, such as retouching, makeup, and filters, are also possible for these Livephotos.

Acer Electric Opens New Retail Store in Nagole, Hyderabad: A Leap Towards Eco-Friendly Urban Mobility



Hyderabad :This expansion marks an important milestone in Acer Electric's growing network of retail stores, as the demand for

electric vehicles (EVs) continues to surge across India. With more EV vehicles gaining popularity and public interest, Acer Electric

is excited to meet this demand by providing some of the finest electric mobility solutions available in the market today. The new

Nagole showroom showcases Acer Electric's Phase 1 lineup, including the Muvi 125 5G e-bike, CPX Pro, TC Max, and the Skypher Pro e-cycle—each packed with exciting features designed for performance, comfort, and sustainability. These state-of-the-art electric vehicles are quickly attracting the public, thanks to their advanced technology, sleek designs, and environmental benefits. Acer Electric is proud to offer one of the finest EV options in the market today, providing a seamless combination of power, efficiency, and eco-consciousness. As the demand for electric vehicles continues to grow, more showrooms are planned to open across India in the coming months, further solidifying Acer Electric's commitment to leading the charge in India's EV revolution. Customers can enjoy special launch-day discounts and product demonstrations, giving them the chance to experience firsthand how Acer Electric is shaping the future of green transportation.

The grand opening event was attended by key dignitaries, including Shri Thummala Nageswara Rao, Honorable Minister for Agriculture of Telangana, Shri Balasani Laxminarayana, Former Member of the Legislative Council of Telangana, and Mr. Hari Kiran, Co-Founder & COO, eBikeGo, alongside several Page 3 personalities, adding an extra layer of glamour to the occasion. Visit the new showroom in Nagole to discover the future of electric mobility. For more information, visit www.acerelectric.in.

Must-watch South Indian releases arriving on OTT, all under Tata Play Binge

Hyderabad :With some of 2024's biggest blockbusters in the lineup, South Indian cinema is taking center stage like never before—a true powerhouse of storytelling, emotion, and cinematic magic! As the most anticipated Tamil and Telugu premieres gear up to hit OTT, it's your cue to dive into the best of South Indian entertainment, all in one place: Tata Play Binge. From nail-biting thrillers on regional platforms to deeply moving dramas on global ones, these releases are set to captivate audiences everywhere. So, are you ready to experience the magic? The ultimate binge-watch marathon starts here!

The Smile Man - Aha Tamil

Marking R. Sarathkumar's 150th film, The Smile Man is a gripping crime thriller directed by the duo Syam and Praveen. The film sees former detective Chidambaram (Sarathkumar), battling Alzheimer's, revisit his unsolved 'Smile Man' case after a new string of murders emerges. Teaming up with Aravind, he uncovers the killer, Prabhu—a mortuary worker with a dark obsession. The gripping narrative explores Chidambaram's struggle with memory loss, emotional depth, and a chilling final confrontation. With a powerful performance by Sarathkumar, an extraordinary cast in Sri Kumar, Sija Rose, and Ineya and a riveting storyline, The Smile Man is a must-watch for crime thriller enthusiasts.

Kobali – Disney+ Hotstar

Helmed by Revanth Levaka, Kobali is an intense crime-revenge thriller set in the rugged heartland of Rayalaseema. Starring Ravi Prakash, Syamala, and Rocky Singh, the series delves into a gritty tale of familial feuds, vengeance, and unrelenting determination. With its pulse-pounding action and raw storytelling, Kobali explores the fine line between morality and survival, delivering a no-holds-barred narrative that packs a punch. For those who crave high-octane action and unflinching drama, Kobali is for you!

Sivarapalli Season 1 – Prime Video

A Telugu remake of Panchayat, Sivarapalli follows Shyam, an engineering graduate who unexpectedly becomes the panchayat secretary of the remote village of Sivarapalli. Initially reluctant, he finds himself navigating a series of humorous misadventures, twists, and challenges as he adjusts to the unfamiliar setting. Starring Rag Mayur, Muralidhar Goud, Rupa Lakshmi, and Uday Gurrala, this delightful comedy promises laughter, charm, and warmth—making it the perfect pick for a fun family binge!

Thiru Manickam – Zee5

The eagerly awaited Thiru Manickam follows Manickam, a lottery shop owner, who faces financial struggles while support-

ing his family, including a daughter with a speech impediment. When an elderly man unknowingly selects a winning lottery ticket worth crores, Manickam embarks on a challenging journey to return it, facing opposition and false accusations. His honesty earns public admiration, leading to rewards from the Chief Minister that secure his family's future, while the prize money helps establish a village hospital. Starring Samuthirakani, Nassar, and Bharathiraja, the film is a family drama that adds on to the slice-of-life genre wonderfully.

Razakar – Aha

Razakar dives deep into the gripping

saga of Hyderabad State's tumultuous chapter post-India's independence in 1947, as it remained under the shadow of Nizam's rule. The film unravels the chilling brutality of the Razakars, a violent faction supporting the Nizam, and the harrowing suffering of the people caught in their grasp.

At its heart, Razakar is a tribute to the unyielding spirit of those who rose against tyranny, fighting for justice and freedom. Featuring powerhouse performances by Bobby Simha, Tej Sapru, Makarand Deshpande, and Raj Arjun, this intense historical thriller is a cinematic experience that will grip you from start to finish.

TATA PLAY BINGE

Canon's Latest Lens Redefines a New RF Standard Enrich ultra-wide images with the RF16-28mm F2.8 IS STM's rich f/2.8 bokeh expressiveness

Hyderabad :Canon today announced the RF16-28mm F2.8 IS STM, a new full-frame RF mount wide-angle zoom lens for the EOS R mirrorless system. Equipped with a bright f/2.8 constant aperture, the RF16-28mm F2.8 IS STM is Canon's second lens in affordable yet quality and performance at par with L series after 28-70mm F2.8 STM lens announcement with constant aperture zoom lens.

Versatile Ultra-Wide Angle Zoom Lens

Ultra-wide angle zoom lenses are an extremely popular next lens to get and especially so for creators due to their wider coverage, dynamic perspective, and framing flexibility.

The RF16-28mm F2.8 IS STM will be the first of its class to supercharge these features with a bright, constant f/2.8 aperture. Previously only available on prime lenses or professional-grade lenses, it is now possible for creators who are on a tight budget to create beautiful bokeh or shoot in low light with increased control over exposure settings, regardless if they are creating dramatic compositions at 16mm or more natural-looking context-filled portraits at 28mm.

The lens can also be utilised as a constant aperture standard zoom lens when

paired with APS-C cameras, offering a highly versatile full-frame equivalent focal range of 25.6mm to 44.8mm, ideal for scenes as diverse as landscapes, street and documentary, everyday life, and portraiture. Handheld Still and Video Shooting with Ease Designed to be compact and lightweight, the RF16-28mm F2.8 IS STM is around 9.1cm long when fully retracted, and weighs about 445g, which is similar to the RF28-70mm f/2.8 IS STM. It can also be fitted onto a gimbal, creating a lighter and user-friendly setup that is ideal for travel, hikes, and exploration. When using compatible cameras such as the EOS R6 Mark II, the lens' built-in optical image stabiliser (Optical IS) supports peripheral coordinated control, which corrects the blurring that occurs in the edges of the image that characteristically occurs when shooting stills with wide-angle lenses. Its image stabilisation capabilities during still shooting are shown as below (according to CIPA 2024 standards) Optical IS Only Coordinated Control I (on camera with In-Body IS) Centre Up to 5.5 stops Up to 8.0 stops Corner N. A Up to 7.5 stops When the lens is used with cameras that support Movie Digital IS, the two IS systems coordinate with each other to enhance stabilisation of handheld footage shot while moving.



The trouble with disposing Bhopal's Union Carbide waste | Explained

The story so far: On January 2, Madhya Pradesh government authorities moved 358 tonnes of hazardous waste from the defunct Union Carbide facility in Bhopal to the Pithampur industrial area in Dhar district. On December 3 last year, the Madhya Pradesh High Court had set a four-week deadline for authorities to dispose of this waste, nearly 40 years after the gas disaster that killed more than 4,000 people and injured or debilitated thousands more.

What is the waste's status?

The disaster on the intervening night of December 2-3, 1984, was the result of poisonous gases leaking from the plant, which Union Carbide had set up to manufacture fertilisers. The waste at the facility is composed of the ingredients required to make these fertilisers. After years of lying in Bhopal and multiple petitions from civil society groups, the Madhya Pradesh government was to incinerate the waste at a treatment, storage, and disposal facility (TSDF) in Pithampur more than 200 km away. Officials arranged for the waste to be packaged and labelled according to the Hazardous Waste Management Rules and transported in secure long-haul containers. But protests in the industrial town by a local population fearful of harmful emissions from the incineration have paused the State's plans.

On January 6, 2025, the Madhya Pradesh High Court gave the State government six weeks to safely dispose of the waste. The order came after State authorities had also sought time to spread awareness about the manner of disposal and measures to minimise its effects on health and the environment. The Central government has allocated ₹126 crore to the State to incinerate the waste and deposit the residue in the TSDF landfill.

Why Pithampur?

In 2007, the Madhya Pradesh government had attempted to dispose of some of the waste at an incinerator-equipped TSDF in Ankleshwar, Gujarat, but the facility declined. Five years later, the Supreme Court selected the Pithampur facility as being the most suitable final destination for the waste. According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), this is the sole TSDF in the State and also includes a landfill and an incinerator. The CPCB followed up with an affidavit to the apex court in 2013 attesting to the Pithampur TSDF's ability to 'handle' the waste from the Union Carbide plant. The year after — a decade ago now — Madhya Pradesh organised a 'trial run' during which it incinerated 10,157 kg of the waste at the TSDF, then operated by the Ramky Group. The CPCB monitored the process with help from experts from private laboratories in Chennai and Hyderabad. Notably, the State had secretly advanced the incineration date by a few days to sidestep local resistance. According to Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Department director Swatantra Kumar Singh, the emissions from the trial were under stipulated limits. The State's public relations office also reported no adverse effects on the environment or on public health. The implication was that the rest of the waste could be incinerated and disposed of in the same way.

Is the waste harmful?



The 'trial' waste consisted of 4.8 tonnes of excavated waste, 1.6 tonnes of semi-processed residue, 1.3 tonnes of naphthol waste, 1.3 tonnes of carbaryl residue, and 0.8 tonnes of reactor residue. The State said it had rationed the mass of each waste type according to their relative abundance at the plant. Naphthol is 1-naphthol, a precursor compound in the manufacture of carbaryl, the insecticide the plant was built to make. According to a December 2024 press release from the State's public relations office, the Regional Director (Central) of CPCB Bhopal had collected and tested five water samples from around the Pithampur TSDF. The report (numbered WW24.25-188.189) indicated the water colour, chloride, sulphate, and fluoride concentrations, hardness, and the amount of total dissolved solids "exceeded permissible limits" specified in the IS 10500 standard in two open wells near the landfill.

However, the release said "scientists involved in the analysis" said the higher values "generally reflect groundwater quality and don't appear to be linked to the TSDF operations".

The release also responded to an unspecified media report that it said had claimed people in villages around the TSDF had elevated levels of skin diseases. Experts from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Bhopal and the Indian Council of Medical Research reportedly surveyed 12 villages and found the prevalence of skin and respiratory ailments here to be lower than the national average. Credible media reports in 2015 had said around four-times as much ash and residue as the waste combusted (by mass) had been generated and which the CPCB had said it would dispose of in the landfill, including protections to prevent leachates from escaping into the soil. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has said composite liners at landfills with hazardous waste will degrade and have to be reinstalled at periodic

intervals. What next? The Madhya Pradesh government has temporarily put off incinerating the waste. Authorities have said the local protests, including two attempts at self-immolation, mean they would first like to improve public confidence in the safety of the disposal process. On January 4, as protesters pelted stones at the TSDF, rumours swirled that a truck carrying waste had disappeared. The police subsequently arrested three people. "We are preparing 50-odd master trainers, including science teachers, professors, and officials," Dhar collector Priyank Mishra was quoted as saying. "They will be informed about the exact status of the waste before they reach out to people to dispel

misinformation." There will also be another trial run: a batch of 90 kg will be incinerated at 1,200° C, Mr. Singh said. According to the EPA, most organic compounds (like 1-naphthol) are destroyed when subjected to 590-650° C. Operating hazardous waste incinerators at 980-1,200° C could thus strip the waste of organics. If the resulting emissions don't breach legal thresholds, the rest will be incinerated in batches of 270 kg each over three months. If the emissions exceed, Mr. Singh had told The Hindu the batch size would be reduced and the duration extended to nine months. The next hearing in the High Court is set for February 18. With inputs from Mehul Malpani.

GRAMASABHA IN RAIPALLE VILLAGE



As part of the public governance run by the Telangana public government, a gram sabha was organized in Raipally village of Raikod Mandal about Ration Card, Indiramma Houses,

Raitu Bharosa, Indiramma Atmiya

Bharosa and various schemes. Presidents Prabhakar, Senior Leaders, Raju Kuruma, Kashi Ravi Patel, Rafi, Sheenu Patel, Sasikant Patel, Dhananjay Patel, village Congress party president and senior leaders of the youth Congress leaders participated in the village people

Assam rat-hole mine tragedy: Dying for black gold

Rajib Barman, 39, had heard that the job of a rat-hole miner was hazardous, but he chose to do it because he had a debt of ₹60,000 to pay off. A resident of Sitlabazar village in western Assam's Kokrajhar district, Barman decided to work at the Kalamati mine in the Umrangso area of Dima Hasao district via a middleman. He hoped to bring home ₹90,000 by working in the mine for two months at about ₹1,500 per day — more than thrice the usual wage in the rural parts of Assam. This translated into earning ₹90-100 per kilogramme of coal extracted at an average of 15 cartloads of the fossil fuel stripped off the mine. On January 6, 2025, Barman descended into the dark pit for the first day of mining. "The sardar (supervisor of miners) had told us the previous night that we could start working as the water that had accumulated in the mine had been drained out," Barman says. "We went down 250 feet below the ground at 4:30 a.m. and began working inside one of the tunnels." Barman's body ached as he was working in an awkward position for the first time. After more than two hours, he decided to take a break and crawled back towards the mouth of the tunnel. Rat-holes are the labyrinthine passages that branch out from 300-foot-deep pits. A few feet from the opening, Barman heard screams and the sound of gushing water growing louder. "Seconds later, I was swept into the pit," he recalls. "I managed to clamber up the chain of the crane (used to haul coal) and get out. But my three room-mates could not make it." So far, of the nine miners trapped inside, only four bodies have been recovered. Search and rescue operations by the Indian Army, Navy, the National Disaster Response Force, and the State Disaster Response Force were on for the others, but five days ago, Navy divers were withdrawn from the operations. While dewatering of the mine continues, the government has assessed it could take up to 60 days to drain out all the water.

On January 16, 2025, the Assam Cabinet approved a judicial inquiry into the tragedy and decided to constitute a Special Investigation Team to probe the incident, one of the deadliest in recent times. It also decided to frame a standard operating procedure (SOP) to enforce a blanket ban on rat-hole mining in Assam apart from sealing some 220 pits surveyed so far. Dangers lurk below. For Raju Basumatary, 55, this is the second time a disaster like this has taken place. The first time this happened was at Ksan in Meghalaya's coal-rich East Jaintia Hills district on December 13, 2018. Then too, he was about 200 metres from the pit that devoured some of his fellow miners. These, though, are not the only mishaps that Basumatary has encountered in 26 years as a rat-hole miner. He came to Kalamati from the Khliehriat area of Meghalaya four years ago. "Khibakhibi hoie theaakhe (Something or the other keeps happening)," he says, rattling off all the possibilities. "A miner slips to death in the pit, another is asphyxiated, somebody else dies after smelling toxic gas, the fourth drowns..."

Basumatary says miners put themselves at risk in the dark depths of the earth. All they have is a torch strapped to their head to guide them. "Still, the money is good and it is guaranteed as long as you extract coal during the season," he says. The "season" he refers to is the mining period between November and March. During the first two months of this period, workers invariably drain the water that fills the mines, which are

often interlinked beneath the ground, because of rainfall and seepage from April to October. Then they crawl into the mines and using pickaxes, extract coal from the walls of a rectangular tunnel that is 2-3 metres high or shovel about 20 kg of coal lumps onto a cart. They drag this to the mouth of the tunnel. Large metal troughs, operated with pulleys from a crane, haul a tonne or two of the coal to the surface. Joseph Soren, 40, was in charge of loading the coal onto one of the troughs eased down from a crane when disaster struck on January 6. He was the last of the 23 miners who made it after helping those who could not swim escape first. "I heard shouts of 'water, water!' and rumbling sounds. Before I could figure anything out, water carrying the miners shot out of the tunnels. We grabbed anything — the chains from the crane, the pipe of a water pump, ropes thrown down from people above — to save ourselves. The murky, stinging water made our eyes burn as we moved up. I struggled to keep my head above the water level," he says.

Soren, who is from western Assam's Chirang district, has worked in half a dozen mines in the Umrangso area, of which Kalamati is a part, over as many seasons, but he now has second thoughts about continuing mining. But then, the payment per season is good enough for his family of five to last at least a year. The money was good enough for Ganga Bahadur Shresth, 38, of Nepal's Rampur village, to travel three days from his home to a mine each season, says his wife, Sushila Rai. His was the first of the four bodies retrieved by rescue workers from the Kalamati mine. "His income from mining made our lives quite comfortable but he never let us know how dangerous his work was. We found this out too late," says Rai, a mother of three. Shresth came with more than 20 workers from Nepal to work in Umrangso. Among them was Lijan Magar, 27, who also lost his life. His was the second body to be retrieved. "We started living here after our wedding two years ago. I don't know where to go with our two-month-old baby," says Junu Pradhan, Magar's wife. The other two bodies retrieved were of Khushi Mohan Roy, 57, from Kokrajhar district's Fakiragram, who was one of Barman's room-mates; and of Sarat Goyari, 37, who hailed from Thailapara in north-central Assam's Sonitpur district. "A huge scam! For Assam's landless or marginal farmers such as Mohammed Saifuddin Ahmed of Dalgaon in Darrang district, all roads lead to the mines when family expenditure exceeds income. The last time the 55-year-old worked in a coal mine was in March 2012, three months before 15 miners died in a flooded mine at Nongalbibra in Meghalaya's South Garo Hills district. The mishap, and a petition filed by the All Dimasa Students' Union of Assam, led to the National Green Tribunal (NGT) banning rat-hole coal mining in Meghalaya on April 17, 2014. Upheld by the Supreme Court later, the ban was extended to the other States in the North-east. "But circumstances made me return to mining after all these years because, ban or not, no other job pays as much," Ahmed says. The Ksan incident in 2018 and Kalamati now make it evident that the ban has largely been on paper. In Meghalaya, the Justice (retired) B.P. Katakey-headed committee, which was appointed by the High Court of Meghalaya in April 2022 to investigate ongoing illegal coal mining and transportation, continues to receive complaints. One of the new complaints the panel has received re-



lates to illegal mining in Nongalbibra, where the process of banning rat-hole mines began. "The illegal tag has only increased the price of coal; it has not stopped mining," says Shillong-based anti-mining activist Agnes Kharshiing, who survived a violent attack by coal mine owners in 2018. "Hundreds of trucks continue to transport coal on the highways feeding the coke units and cement plants. You can see mounds of freshly extracted coal on the roadside. The police, politicians, bureaucrats, landowners... almost all of them are involved." In 2023, the High Court of Meghalaya made a similar observation, saying the complicity of the State with the mafia operating illegal coal mines was "clear and obvious". The tribal land ownership system in Meghalaya, a Sixth Schedule State, is often cited to justify the rampant mining since the 1980s. A provision of the Sixth Schedule calls for tribal land and resources to be protected. Another empowers the District and Regional Councils to grant licenses or leases for the extraction of minerals within their jurisdiction. Some council administrators and landowners believe that no one can interfere in their operations within their territory. The Sixth Schedule applies to Dima Hasao, a district governed by a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led autonomous tribal council. Autonomy means limited involvement of the BJP-led Assam government in the affairs of the council.

"That, however, does not mean that the heads of the two governments cannot collude to share the spoils of a high-yielding illegal operation," says Jagadish Bhuyan, a former minister, who had filed Right to Information requests seeking details about rat-hole mining in Assam. He is also the general secretary of the Assam Jatiya Parishad, a political party borne out of the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act movement in 2019. "If a worker risks his life for ₹1,500-2,000 a day, imagine the stakes the mine owners and everyone else along the chain has, to keep the illegal operations going. It is naive to think that the Centre is unaware of the illegal coal trade in Assam and elsewhere in the North-east," he says.

Bhuyan continues, "Look at the chronology of events. Soon after the mishap, the Chief Minister tweeted that the mine appeared to be illegal. Then he said the mine was abandoned 12 years ago, but was under the Assam Mineral Development Corporation Limited (AMDCL). The Government of India, which owns fossil fuels and minerals under the earth, suspended the AMDCL's operating license 12 years ago. So, the AMDCL has no right to extract coal and nei-

ther does it have the right to mine or trade OB coal." OB refers to the layers of soil, rock, etc. that need to be removed to extract coal. The Assam Congress president, Bhupen Kumar Borah, says illegal coal mining in Umrangso, about 260 kilometres from Guwahati, was just the tip of the 'Syndicate Raj' iceberg in the State. "Illegal syndicates are controlling everything. If Assam is really under the control of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, he should be aware of the coal syndicate. That it has been allowed to operate for years explains the government's silence on Debolal Gorlosa and his wife," he says. Politics of former rebels Gorlosa is the chief executive member (CEM) of the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council, which administers the Dima Hasao district. After the mine flooded, Opposition parties fished out an invoice that was issued to Kanika Hojai, Gorlosa's wife, for buying OB coal, or overburden coal, from the AMDCL. While Gorlosa is incommunicado, his aides believe that he is being targeted. Gorlosa used to be the commander-in-chief of the Dima Haram Daogah, an armed group which was disbanded in 2013. "Once mauled by militancy, Dima Hasao district had three CEMs in as many years before Gorlosa. He ensured peace, stability, and development. Some failed leaders of the Dima Haram Daogah, who are desperate to be in power, are carrying out a smear campaign against him," claims one of his aides. Meanwhile, others believe that Punish Nunisa, who was arrested for allegedly operating the mine illegally, has been made the scapegoat to keep the focus off the "real culprits". Money matters Amid the blame game, the AMDCL has come under the scanner for allegedly doing what it is not authorised to do, which is mining coal or residue. In the line of fire, Anand Natarajan, the AMDCL's Managing Director, insists that the Corporation has not set a foot wrong. "I am being maligned for reviving the corporation that once struggled to pay salaries to its employees. Apart from helping increase the State's revenue, we acquired a coal block in Jharkhand and won the bidding for two coal blocks in Assam — Garampani in Dima Hasao and Koilajan in the Karbi Anglong district — more than a year ago," he says. Natarajan adds that the AMDCL was the first to lodge an FIR relating to the Kalamati mine, which is 850 metres beyond the area under its Garampani block. The Indian Forest Service officer also says the dealing in OB coal was within the legal ambit. "If we don't use the OB coal lying in our depot for ages, our revenue will drop," he says.

AAP fulfilled many promises, will implement rest after Delhi win: Manish Sisodia

Senior AAP leader and former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia spoke to The Hindu on Friday about the challenges the party is facing ahead of the Assembly election on February 5 and emphasised that it will work towards realising the unfulfilled promises in its 2015 election manifesto on returning to power. Edited excerpts:

After 10 years in power, what is AAP doing to fight anti-incumbency and the corruption charges its top leaders face? The people of Delhi know these allegations are baseless and the ED and the CBI are being misused and doing a smear campaign. Ultimately, the case will end in court, but it will take time. I believe we are winning this election. People feel that because of [AAP national convener] Arvind Kejriwal, their lives have become easier in Delhi compared with a common man in Noida, Gurugram, or Ghaziabad. In Delhi, electricity and water are free, children are getting good education ... all these things are giving them a comfortable life. People feel that if Arvind Kejriwal is not there, then their comfortable life will be gone.

Last time, from the first day of the campaign, the one core message from Kejriwal was "vote for me if I have worked, else do not vote for me". But this time, that sort of clear messaging is missing. So, what is the party's main message for this poll?

Every election has a tone and it changes. We are fighting the poll on Kejriwal's face and image. If I have to pick one message, it is "your lives have become better because of Kejriwal and because of that bring back Kejriwal".

What is the biggest challenge facing the party this time?

Every election has its own challenges. I don't feel good that the BJP has come down to hurling abuses. It would have been better if the election was being fought on actual issues. If the BJP had said 'we have made schools good in Noida or Gurugram or water supply better' it would have been good, but there is no such talk. Also, the way in which the Election Commission is saying everything is fine in the BJP. There are videos of cash being distributed and saris being distributed, but the EC says it did not find anything. I have never seen the Election Commission this compromised. It has become a 'BJP clean chit agency'.

How challenging will it be for you to establish your foothold in a new seat: Jangpura?

Every election, different factors are at play. I have won Patparganj with different margins twice and it has been a good seat for me. I have worked there especially on schools and provided extraordinary infrastructure. So, when Awadh Ojha asked me, 'you have done so much work on education, can I join and fight from Patparganj?', I agreed. It is my message to the country that if any educationist wants to join us, we are serious about taking them and fielding them from a constituency of their choice. AAP has not fielded many sitting MLAs this time and even after the final list was announced and just two days before the last day for nominations, the party changed two more sitting MLAs. Is it nervous as the election nears?

This is part of micromanagement for the election. Every party does this.

Is it also because people are not happy with these MLAs?

Yes, of course, that is also why we changed them.

In seven seats, where there is a sizeable population of Muslims, the party did not perform well in the 2022 MCD election. Do you think this is a cause for concern especially if the election is going to be a close fight?

AAP has worked for all categories and there has been no partiality. We say with pride that every child will get good education. Many promises that were part of 'Kejriwal's 10 guarantees' ahead of the 2015 election remain unfulfilled. There are many promises we have fulfilled. Kejriwal thinks before making promises and he admits some have not been completed. There are many reasons, but we never said we aren't going to fulfil them.

With run-ins with the Lieutenant-Governor likely to continue, how do you plan to fulfil these promises on returning to power?

Since 2015, we have fulfilled our promises despite confrontations. We installed CCTVs across Delhi, provided free electric-



ity. They tried to stop us, but we still did it. In the run-up to the last poll, the government was able to implement free bus rides for women and provide free electricity up to 200 units. But this time, it hasn't been able to announce a new scheme in the last six months. We will do it. I have faith in our fighting spirit.

Delhi's 'revenue surplus' is dipping and it is likely to become 'revenue deficit'. Fiscal

deficit is also rising. Will it be viable to implement the party's promises?

This is one of the biggest pieces of propaganda that the BJP is spreading. Delhi can never be in revenue deficit. That is just the interpretation of one officer and it is his viewpoint. In a file, 25 officers might write 25 different opinions. Ultimately, what happens is what is finally written (by the Minister or the L-G).

Health warnings about alcohol give only half the story

For many people, the new year brings both a banging hangover and a solemn resolution never to get drunk again. More than a decade ago Alcohol Change UK, which campaigns to cut drinking, launched its "Dry January" campaign. This year it reckons a third of British men will try to stick to it. In America Vivek Murthy, the surgeon-general, is also keen to discourage drinking. Dr Murthy has recommended placing warnings on alcohol to highlight the fact that it raises the risk of some cancers, including breast and bowel cancer. If so, America could become the third country, after South Korea and Ireland, to require labels.

Drinking a lot is indisputably bad for you. Boozing has long been associated with heart attacks, liver disease, stroke and obesity. Drunks are more likely to get into fights or accidents. Alcohol is addictive, and the World Health Organisation (WHO) blames it for about one death in 20 around the world. The link with cancer is less familiar to most people. Dr Murthy's statistics suggest that women who drink occasionally have about a 16.5% lifetime risk of several common cancers, whereas those who have one drink a day—America's recommended maximum—have about a 19% chance.

As the evidence of alcohol's harms has piled up, the public-health messages have become starker. The WHO says flatly that there is "no safe level" of alcohol consumption. America's guidelines say that those who do not drink should not start "for any reason". In 2023 Canada published guidelines recommending two drinks (roughly two cans of



beer) a week for those who want to remain in the "low risk" category, down from 15 a week for men and ten for women. It is all very sobering. But over-zealousness can be counter-productive. Taken literally, the WHO implies that it is unsafe to have even a sip of communion wine. If one bit of public-health advice seems absurd, people may start to doubt other bits, too.

And although there is unanimity that heavy drinking is very bad for you, there is less agreement around light indulgence. In December America's National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine concluded, with "moderate certainty", that moderate drinking (up to two cans of beer a day for men or one for women, as per official American advice) was associated with ben-

efits rather than harms. Benefits in heart health appeared to outweigh the risks from cancer and other ailments, though the effect disappeared quickly with extra quaffing. Many scientists think that the benefits of light drinking are a statistical mirage. But even if the WHO is right, and no amount of alcohol is safe, that is only half the picture. After all, there is no completely safe level of almost anything, from flying to going on a date. Walking is good for you, and touted at book length by the surgeon-general ("Step It Up!"). But 7,500 American pedestrians were killed by cars in 2022.

People balance the dangers of an activity against the benefits it brings. These days, suggesting that drinking might have any benefits at all feels faintly heretical.