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Once a calm suburb, Gachibowli emerges as Hyderabad's noisiest area

Hyderabad: Once an island of tranquillity, tucked away on the city outskirts, the University of Hyderabad (UoH) campus at Gachibowli is increasingly getting swamped by the din.In fact, it is not a commercial Abids or an industrial Sanathnagar, but a demarcated sensitive area of Gachibowli that has emerged as the noisiest place in Hyderabad. The widespread real estate development and high volumes of traffic on the Mumbai old highway here has escalated the place to the top of noise recordings in the city.The data on noise levels generated by the Telangana State Pollution Control Board (TGPCB) reveals how the UoH monitoring station recordings have left behind the other parts of the city including the ever-busy commercial hubs such as Abids, JNTU and even the routinely blamed for pollution industrial areas of Jeedimetla and Gaddapotharam.In areas identified as 'sensitive', the acceptable noise levels are put around 50 decibels (dB) in day time and 40 dB during night time. However, Gachibowli noise recordings have zoomed well ahead of the limits and the PCB recordings for the first ten days of February show them touching the 73.53 dB.In the day time, the day time noise levels here on all the ten days was above 70 dB while during the nights, it hovered between 69 dB and 70 dB.On February 3 for instance, the day time noise levels at Gachibowli was 73.53 dB while at the commercial area of Abids it was recorded as 56.05 dB and at the residential zone of Jubilee Hills, the noise levels were 58.66 dB.Another designated sensitive area of Hyderabad, the Nehru Zoological Park too has been witnessing an increased noise levels with the February's first ten day data ranging 65 dB to 67 dB.Those who have witnessed the metamorphosis of Gachibowli along with its circle of growth that includes Kondapur, Madhapur, Financial District, Nallagandla and Tellapur, recalls how the

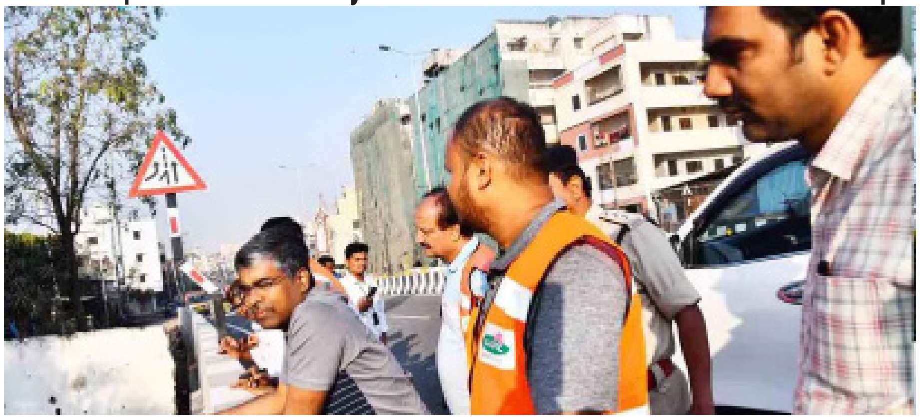
serenity and tranquillity of the place has been shattered in last couple of decades.

Demand to set up Chilli Board in Khammam gaining momentum

Khammam: The demand for setting up Chilli Board in Khammam has been growing louder with farmers and farmers associations insisting that the Central government must look into the issue for the benefit of chilli farmers.Chilli is now among the 52 spices under the purview of the Spices Board of India headquartered in Kochi, Kerala. It is an autonomous body under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for the development and promotion of Indian spices worldwide.

But the farmers associations here feel that nothing much has been done by the board for chilli farmers as it focuses much on other spices. As a result, chilli farmers, when selling the produce, are at the mercy of traders, who are accused of exploiting the farmers in terms of offering a profitable price.Speaking to Telangana Today, CPI (M) Telangana Rythu Sangham district secretary Bonthu Rambabu said that Khammam and surrounding districts have the largest extent of land under chilli cultivation in India. Chilli is cultivated in about two lakh acres in Khammam, Kothagudem, Suryapet, Mahabubabad in Telangana and neighboring NTR district in AP.Setting up a dedicated Chilli Board could help for the prior estimation of the extent of land for chilli cultivation in accordance with the demand at national and international level for the produce. Similarly it helps in weather resistant seeds development, fixing of profitable price, proper market support and allocation funds, he explained.He stated that as the chilli prices have been falling this year the government should ensure that the produce is purchased through National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (NAFED) and Telangana Co-operative Marketing Federation Limited (TG MARKFED).Rambabu said that the yield has decreased due to pests' infestation this year and with fall in prices farmers are dying by suicide. Nevertheless, the Central and State governments are not responding. The governments should fix a price of Rs 25,000 per quintal of chilli, he demanded.CPI leader B Hemantha Rao said that this year, the price of chillies has fallen by half compared to last year while investments have doubled. Solution to the problem could be found only if Chilli Board is set up here adding that the support price should be fixed based on investment.

GHMC Commissioner inspects land acquisition for flyover from Golnaka to Amberpet



Hyderabad: The GHMC Commissioner K Ilambarithi on Tuesday ordered the officials to address the issues pertaining to land acquisition for the flyover from Golnaka to Amberpet taken up by the National Highways and Road Development department at an estimated cost of Rs 335 crore.The Commissioner along with senior officials from the R&B, National Highways Department and the GHMC inspected the incomplete land acquisition work related to the flyover

Architects race to document Secunderabad station as it is razed for a new building

As the news about the demolition of the main building of Secunderabad Railway Station spread, architect Srinivas Murthy rushed his team armed with sketchbooks and cameras to document the building. "I want to document whatever remains. We need to know the dimensions and understand the legacy of the building. It may not be a heritage building but as citizens we need to know how our city looked some years ago," says Mr. Murthy about his endeavour."Every 20 years a new layer is added to cities. That's the nature of urbanisation. But we should not lose information about the underlying layers. The building may not be a heritage site but was iconic and there could have been a workaround the old building while improving amenities," says Mr. Murthy who has extensively document art deco buildings in Hyderabad.While the building being demolished is considered to be from the time of beginning of rail connectivity to Secunderabad in 1874, Mr. Murthy believes the building is late Art Deco dating sometime after the 1940s. "If you see the old photographs the road level has gone up considerably. I am hoping that once they remove the layers to dig the foundation we will find the foundation stone and other details," he says.On Friday afternoon, an earthmover was perched on a heap of rubble bringing down the last vestiges of the central portico and the elevation of the building. It was the same building that American photographer Jack Birns documented in 1948. The photograph from that period shows NSR written on the building for Nizam State Railway. A few decades later, a plaque was added to the main entrance honouring Maha Vir Chakra awardee Wing Commander William Macdonald Goodman. A few decades later bright sparkling Cherial paintings showing Telangana Talli, Sankranthi and other everyday events from Telangana were added to the main foyer. "We did not remove anything from inside," said a worker on the site as a police official shooed away people trying the photograph the ongoing demolition work.

"Sad to see a landmark building go. I don't know if enough thought was given to preserving the facade without affecting development. I don't think it was a listed Heritage Building and the Station was increasingly unusable from this side," says Raghu Cidambi, a long time resident of Marredpally."The building that is being razed can be dated to 1948. This construction was done as a wraparound the old 1874 building.

Till this demolition, the inside staircases were the same as were built when the station was first inaugurated," says convenor of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage Anuradha Reddy."As children when we travelled to Madras, leaving Secunderabad station was like leaving home. Stepping out of the train we felt like we are home. But with this demolition the sense of ownership and belonging is gone. Now the feeling will be like the same that we experience at any airport in the world," says Ms. Reddy echoing the sentiments a number of people for whom the word Secunderabad station brought alive the image of the building with signages in three language and the clock.

Challenges and commitment: A day in the life of Geeta Gautam, an Anganwadi worker in Lucknow

Geeta Gautam, a 37-year-old living in Takrohi in Lucknow, starts her day like any other. She wakes up in the morning and prepares breakfast and tiffin for her husband and 11-year-old son. Having sent them off, she finally turns to pick the pink saree that has been her uniform for over the last seventeen years. She is an Anganwadi worker since 2007.Geeta hurriedly drapes it, keeps her tiffin box in the bag and after a pause stuffs it in a bag of locally made gajak sweets as well. Off she hurries to get an e-rickshaw ride from Takrohi to Chandanapur village. The National Education Policy 2020 has turned attention to children below 8 years of age like never before. However, the success of these plans hinges on how well resourced the Anganwadi workers such as Geeta and the centres are.

Of the ?26,889 crore allocated to the Ministry of Women and Child Development in the Union Budget 2025-26, ?21,960 crore is for Saksham Anganwadis and Poshan 2.0 showing how the network of Anganwadi centres is the backbone of national effort towards the development of women and children. There are over 14 lakh Anganwadi centres with over 13.31 lakh Anganwadi workers that are reaching out to over 10 crore children upto the age of 6 across the country. This data is as of January 31st.The e-rickshaw stops at a small roadside restaurant – Naani ka Hotel and Geeta gathers her saree and her bags, stepping out and handing the driver a folded 20-rupee-note. Right next to the rundown establishment is a narrow cobbled path which she takes and walks the rest of the way to the 'Anganwadi centre'. She reaches the small room, unlocks it and puts her bags to the side. By the time she reaches, it is almost 10 am. There are a few charts put up and some stationery in one corner. Geeta takes out her mobile phone and opens the Poshan Tracker app. The mobile application rolled out in 2018 has become a real-time data collection and monitoring portal for all Anganwadi activities. The Ministry of Women and Child Development won the National Award for e-Governance 2024 (Gold) for this very mobile app in September last year.

On the app, she uploads a location pin to convey that she has reached the centre and marks her attendance. She says, "The phone that we had gotten from the government barely worked so I saved to buy a smartphone. I have learned using it very well because so much of our work is now digital but the internet is often inconsistent and the application works very slow."Geeta scrolls through her WhatsApp groups to check if there are any additional activities or tasks assigned for the day by the supervisor or BDO (Block Division Officer). None yet. She picks some registers where she still maintains some records by hand, some other sheets of paper, stationery and puts them all in a bag headed out to the door. She locks the room and heads out in the other direction. It is quarter past 10. Going to where the children areGeeta is leaving the centre even though her day's work has just begun because the children do not actually come to the centre — it is too far for them. Despite her efforts, she has not been able to secure a room closer to where the children live. Geeta explains, "If I conduct the classes here in this room, barely any students will come. The children in the immediate neighbourhood are either older or belong to slightly richer families who usually have them enrolled in private preschools. There is another locality where there are several children who are ready to come but the rent there will be no less than 2,000. What is most important is for the children to get to learn so I decided to start going to them instead."The rent for Anganwadi centres is supposed to be borne by the government but Geeta says that she, like many Anganwadi workers, bears it out of her own stipend. "In my 18 years of service, it has happened perhaps only for two or three years that we received money for rent. The AWCs that are close to primary schools are integrated and get a room there itself but the others are paid for by the Anganwadi workers themselves. My overall stipend itself is ?6,000 and including the monthly rent, most of it gets used up in things like daily commute, organising monthly activities for children and mothers, internet data packs and so on. There is barely any left to use for my family."It is the Anganwadi workers and helpers, local community women, who are responsible for carrying out essential services in the interest of national ambitions of achieving Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) and an end to malnutrition among others. However, these workers, not even considered government employees and hence not granted most basic social welfare provisions are not only bearing the brunt of overburdening and poor working conditions but also grossly inadequate infrastructure.Geeta is briskly making her way through the pakka-house colony, greeting some locals as she passes by. This is the village she grew up in. As the city has expanded, what earlier looked very different is now lined up with clusters of double and triple-storeyed houses.It was here that she got selected to become an Anganwadi worker, back in 2007 as a 20-year-old. She recalls, "I had just completed my Bachelors in Arts degree and was applying for various

government jobs. I cleared the police exams but to get the position we needed to pay some bribe and that was beyond us. So when I got work as an AWW, I took it up. I started with a meagre stipend around ?2,500 but back then I was unmarried and living with my parents so my expenses were much lesser." The asphalt road gives way to a stony one. On one side is an open field where most of the locality seems to be dumping their garbage and on the other is a walled field of mustard. Beyond that, there are several houses under construction. Just behind them, is the settlement – a patchwork of makeshift homes pieced together with mud, black plastic sheets and thin wooden poles.Apart from the rumble of construction machines and subdued cackles of children, the place is quiet, almost deserted. Most of the adults have left for work— men mostly to construction sites and the women, accompanied by older children, to residential colonies for domestic work. Clothes hang stiffly from sagging lines and only a few elderly people are lying on charpoys in the sun. Right in the middle is a black babool tree and under it are sitting around 15 children from the nearby huts that the Anganwadi helper, Sarla Rawat has managed to gather. They sit cross-legged on a yellow tarpaulin sheet, some fidgeting, some whispering to each other, with their bare feet dusty.

Hyderabad Achieves Historic Milestone: Massive Human Dove Formation by Sudha Reddy Foundation Sets New Guinness World Record for Peace

Hyderabad: A remarkable demonstration of collective purpose unfolded in Hyderabad today as over 2,111 individuals converged to orchestrate the world's largest human image of a dove, the quintessential emblem of peace. This extraordinary accomplishment, a testament to the vision of the Sudha Reddy Foundation, has been officially recognized as a Guinness World Record. The event, held at the Lords Institute Of Engineering & Technology from 7:00 AM to 10:00 AM, saw participants, clad in white, coalesce into the breathtaking aerial tableau.This unprecedented undertaking, orchestrated by the Sudha Reddy Foundation, not only showcased meticulous logistical planning and seamless collaboration but also served as a potent symbol of unity and a fervent call for peace in our contemporary world. The dove, a universally acknowledged icon of harmony and goodwill, was strategically chosen as the centrepiece of this endeavour to catalyse global discourse on the imperative of fostering peace and mutual understanding across communities.Philanthropist Sudha Reddy, the driving force behind the foundation, expressed profound pride in this historic achievement.

"To witness thousands unite in common cause for such a deeply resonant purpose is a source of immense gratification," she affirmed. "This record transcends mere statistical significance; it stands as a beacon of hope and a powerful testament to the enduring human aspiration for peace."The Foundation gratefully acknowledged the indispensable contribution of the enthusiastic participants, whose unwavering dedication and collective spirit were instrumental in transforming this ambitious vision into a tangible reality. This Guinness World Record achievement serves as an inspiration to individuals and organizations worldwide, encouraging them to embrace the principles of peace and cultivate a spirit of solidarity within their respective communities. The Foundation hopes that this event will galvanize a global movement of similar initiatives, propagating the message of peace and harmony far and wide.

JSW MG Motor India Appoints Anurag Mehrotra as Managing Director

Hyderabad :JSW MG Motor India today announced the appointment of Anurag Mehrotra as Managing Director of the company. With three decades of professional experience, he has held key leadership roles in the automotive sector's sales, marketing, strategy, and business development. His extensive experience includes leadership positions at leading national and global companies. His previous roles include Vice President of Strategy & International Business at Tata Motors Commercial Vehicles and President & Managing Director at Ford India. Based in Gurugram, Anurag will drive overall strategic growth initiatives and strengthen the company's four brand pillars: diversity, experience, innovation, and community. Rajeev Chaba has been instrumental in establishing the MG brand in India since its inception. Under his leadership, MG has become one of the country's top car brands and has set standards for innovation and disruption across categories. He led the launch of innovative products that were much ahead of their time. A firm believer in philanthropy, diversity, and transparency, Rajeev's leadership is characterised by authenticity and direct communication with stakeholders. He has built a resilient, high-performing team that has successfully overcome numerous challenges, driving MG's rapid growth and solidifying its position in the Indian market. Rajeev will continue to advise management and shareholders as a member of the Joint Steering Committee.

Speaking about the new appointment, Yu De, Assistant to SAIC President and Head of International Operation, SAIC Motor said, “We are grateful to Rajeev for his exceptional leadership in building the MG brand in India. Anurag's diverse experience, and a deep understanding of domestic and international market dynamics, will be critical in taking this journey to the next level.” Parth Jindal, Director, JSW MG Motor India said, “We are at an inflexion point in our NEV journey and are ready to accelerate into a new era with an exciting product pipeline. We are thankful to Rajeev for his invaluable contribution to the brand and delighted to welcome Anurag to JSW MG Motor India. His deep understanding of the Indian market and his strategic vision for New Energy Vehicles align perfectly with our focus on sustainable mobility.”An industry veteran, Anurag has been credited with steering brands into new growth trajectories. He is passionate about brand-building and has a proven track record of delivering strong business results and growing brands locally and globally.

For enhanced safety and security of goods entering the EU, the Import Control System 2 (ICS2) extends to rail and road on 1 April 2025, covering all modes of transport

Hyderabad :The European Union's Import Control System 2 (ICS2) aims to enhance the safety and security of goods entering the EU by introducing a standardised, pre-arrival customs process for all transportation modes, including road and rail, in addition to the existing air, maritime and inland waterway requirements. By mandating the submission of accurate and complete Entry Summary Declaration (ENS) data prior to arrival, the ICS2 enables customs authorities to better assess the risks associated with incoming goods, thereby improving the EU's ability to prevent and combat customs offenses, and ultimately ensuring a safer and more secure trade environment.

From 1 April 2025, road and rail carriers will need to provide data on goods sent to or through the EU prior to their arrival, through a complete ENS. This obligation also concerns postal and express carriers who transport goods using these modes of transport as well as other parties, such as logistics providers. In certain circumstances, final consignees established in the EU will also have to submit ENS data in the ICS2. Economic operators who are not ready by this date need to contact the National Service Desk of the EU Member State (National Customs Authority) where they have registered and obtained their EORI number to request a deployment window by 1 March 2025, at the latest. Deployment windows are granted only upon request.

To comply with the ICS2 requirements, affected businesses will be required to make sure they collect accurate and complete data from their clients, update their IT systems and operational processes, and provide adequate training to their staff. Economic operators will also need to successfully complete a self-conformance test before connecting to the ICS2, to verify their ability to access and exchange messages with customs authorities. Goods might be stopped at EU borders and might not be cleared by customs authorities if traders do not meet the ICS2 requirements on time.ICS2 in detailThe ICS2 has been developed through close collaboration between the European Commission, Member States' customs authorities and businesses. Starting from 1 September 2025, the ICS1 will phase out. The ICS2 will fully replace the ICS1 with an entirely new business process in accordance with the Union Customs Code.The European Commission organises monthly webinars (in English) where economic operators can ask questions about the operational and technical aspects of the ICS2. Further details are available in the CIRCABC public group (see agenda here).

Sculpting Voids - A Solo Exhibition to Be Held from February 22

Hyderabad: We are thrilled to announce the upcoming solo exhibition, "Sculpting Voids," featuring the acclaimed Master Sculptor Robin David. The exhibition will be on view from February 22 to March 16, 2025, at the prestigious Phoenix Arena, HITEC City, Hyderabad. Sculpture is often viewed through the lens of form and material, but for Robin David, it transcends into the realm of space and existence. "Sculpting Voids" embodies his profound exploration of the relationship between form and emptiness, showcasing how the voids can be as evocative and significant as the sculptures themselves. This exhibition stands as a testament to his relentless pursuit of monumental expression, where each piece narrates a story hidden within its contours, inviting viewers to engage in a dialogue with the intangible.

As a pioneer in the field of sculpture in Central India, Robin David has significantly shaped contemporary Indian art through not only his own exquisite creations but also through his mentorship of aspiring artists across generations. With nearly five decades of experience, his innovative sculptural language continues to inspire, encouraging artists to venture into the monumental landscape while exploring the delicate interplay of space, balance, and light. His remarkable works grace esteemed collections, including the Madhya Pradesh Bhawan, the Reserve Bank of India, and Raj Bhawan, Bhopal, showcasing his enduring impact on the art world. "Sculpting Voids" is an invitation to experience the mastery of Robin David, an artist who has transformed both stone and the very fabric of Indian sculpture. Join us for this exceptional exhibition and witness the interplay of form and the energies that surround it. For further inquiries, please contact: Aman Preet Kaur (Art Curator, Founder Sirjanhara Art Studio)Website: www.robindavidsculptor.com

Government must see challenges as opportunities to innovate: KT Rama Rao

Hyderabad: Former IT Minister and BRS working president KT Rama Rao has emphasised that the challenges faced by the government should be viewed as opportunities before it to innovate and develop solutions, often leveraging technology to create more people-friendly policies.Interacting with young minds during a podcast organised with students from various city schools, as part of an initiative of Under18World's mission intended to educate young people about politics, voting, and civic engagement, he highlighted the fulfilment that comes from impactful public service and fostering connections with constituents, while candidly acknowledging the challenges that come with criticism and negativity.

During the session, he addressed a myriad of questions from the students, on wide ranging issues including the advantages and disadvantages of pursuing a career in politics.The students seized the opportunity to question Rama Rao about his tenure as IT Minister, gaining valuable insights into the inner workings of government. He lauded the proactive stance of Under18 World in combating corruption and appreciated the students' resolve to tackle social evils at their level.

How Karnataka's new Ordinance proposes to crack down on microfinance institutions

On February 12, 2025, after days of deliberations, the State government promulgated the Karnataka Micro Loan and Small Loan (Prevention of Coercive Actions) Ordinance, 2025, which aims to crack down on unregistered and unlicensed microfinance institutions (MFI) and moneylending agencies or organisations that employ forceful means to recover loans given to poor people. The new legislation seeks to regulate the actions of such illegal MFIs, thereby protecting economically vulnerable groups and individual defaulters from the undue hardship of usurious interest rates and coercive means of recovery.

What were the allegations against MFIs?

Over the last few months, incidents have been reported from across the State of large-scale harassment of those who had availed loans from microfinance institutions. MFIs were accused of overlending without assessing borrowers' repaying capacity, thus trapping them in an endless debt cycle, of levying exorbitant interest rates ranging between 21% and 29%, and outsourcing loan recovery to rowdies and agents. While over a dozen people ended their lives, many have had to leave their villages with their families due to harassment from recovery agents. Following public uproar, the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government decided to take the Ordinance route to protect the interests of small borrowers, such as farmers, women and women's self-help groups, vendors, migrant workers, and other disadvantaged groups. It exempts banks and NBFCs registered with the RBI from its ambit. However, Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot returned the draft Ordinance on February 7, seeking six clarifications. This included reservations over the Ordinance benefiting only borrowers with no provision to protect lenders, the "excessive" penal provisions of ?5 lakh fine and 10-year imprisonment, among others. The government resent the Ordinance to the Governor without any changes on February 10 but provided a detailed explanation to the issues flagged by Mr. Gehlot. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, Minister of Revenue Krishna Byre Gowda and officials having a meeting on Micro Finance in Bengaluru.

What is the procedure for registration/renewal of MFIs?

The legislation mandates all existing and new MFIs, money lending agencies, organisations and lenders to register with the Registering Authority – who are Deputy Commissioners of the district – within 30 days from the date of commencement of the Ordinance. Lenders should specify the villages or towns in which they have been operating or propose to operate, the rate of interest being charged, system of conducting due diligence and recovery, list of persons authorised to lend or recover money, details of the borrower and the loan. Upon verification, the Registering Authority can accord registration of operation to the lenders for a period of one year. Lenders seeking renewal of registration must file an application 60 days before the expiry of the one-year period. The RA holds the power to approve or refuse renewal after verification of the lender's performance and hearing objections, if any, from the general public. The authority, either suo motu or upon receipt of complaint by a borrower, is also empowered to cancel the registration of an MFI.

What are the guidelines for lending/borrowing?

To ensure transparency in rates of interest charged by MFIs, the Ordinance lays down only four components in loan pricing – the interest charge, the processing charge, the insurance premium and delayed penal payment. A standard loan agreement should be drawn and the lenders must provide a loan card in Kannada with complete details of the borrower, the loan and rate of interest, terms and conditions, acknowledgements of all repayments as well as final discharge. The rate of interest charged by MFIs must be prominently displayed in all its offices and on the website. All communications to the borrower should be in Kannada. Loan application forms must include all necessary information to enable comparison of terms and conditions offered by different MFIs and must indicate the documents required to be submitted. The day before the loan is availed, every MFI should deliver to the borrower a clear statement on the date of the loan and its maturity, the amount and interest rate, the name and address of the MFI functionary. MFIs must compulsorily give the borrower a duly signed receipt for any payment made. Every MFI must submit a quarterly and annual statement to the Registering Authority with a list of borrowers and the loan and repayment details, failing which the entity shall be punishable with a six-month imprisonment or fine upto ?10,000 or both.

What's in it for the borrowers?

In an effort to offer relief to borrowers, the Ordinance wholly discharges those from "vulnerable section of the society" of every loan given before its commencement, including the amount of interest, payable to unregistered and unlicensed lenders. Further, it says that no civil court should entertain any suit or proceeding against the borrower for the recovery of loan or interest. It states that all suits and proceedings pending against borrowers for the recovery of loans should be closed. The Ordinance also empowers the State government to specify the lending norms, collection and recovery practices by notification. MFIs are prohibited from seeking any collateral from a borrower by way of pawn, pledge or other security for the loan.

What is coercive action?

The Ordinance states that any form of coercive recovery by MFIs or through agents shall be liable for punishment and to suspension or cancellation of registration. Coercive actions against the borrowers can include:

1) Exerting pressure, using violence or insulting or intimidating the borrower or his/her family.

2) Persistently following the borrower, his/her family members or interfering with, depriving or hindering the use of any property owned/used by him/her.

3) Frequenting the house or other place where the borrower resides or works, conducts business.

4) Using the service of private or external agencies, criminals to urge the borrower to make payment using coercive and undue influence.

5) Forcibly taking any document from the borrower which entitles the borrower to a benefit under any government programme.

What are the penalties?

According to the Ordinance, people can file a complaint regarding violation of a provision of the proposed Ordinance at a police station. No police officer can refuse to register a case. A police officer not below the rank of Dy.SP is empowered to file a suo moto case. It also enables the government to appoint an ombudsperson for settling disputes between the borrower and the lender. It has proposed a three-year imprisonment and fine of ?5 lakh for the offences committed under the law.

What are the Governor's suggestions?

While giving his nod to the Ordinance, the Governor suggested that the government study its "legal and social impact in detail in both the legislature Houses," and include any corrective measures in the Bill that would replace the Ordinance. The Governor advised the State government to ensure that the legislation is not misinterpreted or misutilised to harass genuine lenders such as legal and registered bodies like banks regulated by RBI, as well as cooperative banks, non-banking financial companies and housing finance corporations, registered under RBI. Any misuse of the Ordinance could leave genuine lenders with no remedy to recover their pending amounts, which may then lead to legal battles and burdensome litigations, he pointed out.

What power does the State hold?

For the next two years, the State government has the power to make additional provisions to remove any difficulty that could hinder implementation of the existing provisions in the Ordinance through an order published in the Official Gazette. The government can also issue orders, instructions and directions regarding rules for registers, forms, online procedures and portals, help centers. The rules made by the State Government to carry out the Ordinance must be presented before both Houses of the Legislature for a total period of 30 days, which may be comprised in one session or in two or more successive sessions. What are the concerns?

According to the Microfinance Industry Network (MFIN), a Self-Regulatory Organisation (SRO) recognised by the RBI, microfinance institutions currently serve over 63 lakh unique individual borrowers of microcredit loans In Karnataka. The total gross loan portfolio of MFIs in Karnataka – the fourth largest market for microlenders – surged from ?16,946 crore in March 2019 to ?42,265 crore in 2023-24, as per the data given by MFIs. The average loan per client in Karnataka is ?44,036. Experts in microfinance companies say that the Ordinance would adversely impact the recovery of loans both by both registered as well as unlicensed and unregistered MFIs. It could also be be challenged in court.Despite the Ordinance excluding banks, NBFCs and non-banking finance companies-microfinance institutions, an analysis by India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) has said it could have short-term disruptions, impact customer discipline in the near term and lead to an increase in delinquencies in 4QFY25 for NBFC-MFIs.

Woman cheated on pretext of updating KYC in Hyderabad; Robbed of Rs.1.7 lakh

Hyderabad: Cyber fraudsters cheated a woman from the city to the tune of Rs 1.7 lakh on the pretext of updating the 'Know Your Customer' (KYC) details in the bank.The 35-year-old complainant received a call from the fraudsters claiming to be bank executives regarding a KYC update. The fraudster sent a link to the victim via WhatsApp and guided her to update credit card and other bank details.Police said while on the call, the victim entered the card details as instructed. Shortly after, she started receiving debit messages from her bank and was shocked."Immediately, the victim questioned the fraudster, who disconnected the call. Without any delay, she contacted the bank authorities and got her accounts frozen," said a cybercrime official.

‘Relief in tax slabs has stolen the limelight’

The Union Budget 2025 aims to unlock India’s potential in its journey to become a developed nation by 2047. Over the years, the Government has introduced several reforms for ease of doing business and reducing compliances, such as faceless assessment, taxpayers’ charter, faster processing of returns, and the Vivad se Vishwas scheme to settle disputes. Continuing with these efforts, a new Income Tax Bill is proposed to provide tax certainty, simplification and reduce tax litigation.Of course, what has stolen the limelight is the relief in the tax slabs which has overshadowed all the other announcements. This was a long pending ask of the middle class and the enhancement of tax exemption limits will promote more liquidity, boosting household consumption, savings, investment, and uplift the overall sentiment of the middle class.Ease of doing businessRationalisation of TDS / TCS provisions for ease of doing business is another long pending ask which has been addressed. The extension of the date of set up of operations, till 2030, have been proposed for several sectors in the IFSC - like ship and aircraft leasing - which should give investors a good long term horizon view. Rationalisation of provisions for arms-length price determination should also help in certainty and reducing litigation. Other tax amendments focus on increasing voluntary compliance by extending the time limit to file updated tax returns up to four years, support to the startup ecosystem by extending the sunset date by another five years, introducing compliance obligations for crypto assets, and harmonization of provisions of significant economic presence in India. A few key tax expectations which did not find mention were implementation of the OECD’s BEPS 2.0 - Global Minimum Tax, extension of the sunset date for new manufacturing companies and weighted deduction for R&D spends.Consistency in GST changes

Most proposed GST amendments align with ensuring consistency without major surprises, including the retrospective change that tightens legal provisions by explicitly changing “plant or machinery” to “plant and machinery”. This is in line with the government’s intent to disallow input tax credit on the construction of immovable property; however, its future impact remains to be seen. The decision to not treat vouchers as goods or services, thereby exempting them from GST, offers welcome relief to industry. Several steps measures have been unveiledintroduced to streamline compliance, support local domestic firms and recalibrate import duties. The Budget is a testament to India’s commitment to foster a balanced and sustainable economic environment. The successful implementation of its various initiatives will<SU>be<SU>crucial.Budget 2025 is a testament to India’s commitment to fostering a balanced and sustainable economic environment. The successful implementation of the Budget initiatives will be crucial.Budget 2025 aims to unlock India’s potential in its journey to become a developed nation by 2047. Over the years, the government has introduced several reforms for ease of doing business and reducing compliances, such as faceless assessment, taxpayers’ charter, faster processing of returns, and Vivad se Vishwas scheme for dispute settlement. Continuing with these efforts, a new direct tax bill is proposed to provide tax certainty, simplification and reduce tax litigation.Of course, what has stolen the limelight is the relief in the tax slabs which has overshadowed all the other announcements.This was a long pending ask of the middle class and the enhancement of tax exemption limits will promote more liquidity, boosting household consumption, savings, investment and uplift overall sentiment of the middle class. Rationalisation of TDS/ TCS provisions for ease of doing business is another long pending ask which has been addressed. The extension of the date of set up of operations,till 2030, have been proposed for several sectors in IFSC e.g. shipleasing, aircraft leasing which should give investors a good long term horizon view.Each budget we have seen IFSC, getting the right attention it deserves to make it an attractive Financial services zone for the country. Rationalisation of provisions for arms- length price determination should also help in the certainty and reducing litigation. Other tax amendments focus on increasing voluntary compliance by extending the time limit to file updated tax returns up to four years, support to start-up ecosystem by extending the sunset date by another five years, introducing compliance obligations for crypto assets and harmonisation of provisions of significant economic presence in India.A few key tax expectations which did not find mention was the implementation of

the OECD’s BEPS 2.0 - Global Minimum Tax, extension of sunset date for new manufacturing firmscompanies, weighted deduction for R&D spends.Most proposed GST amendments align with those approved by the GST Council, ensuring consistency without major surprises including the retrospective change that tightens legal provisions by explicitly changing “plant or machinery” to “plant and machinery”.This aligns with the government’s intent to disallow input tax credit on the construction of immovable property, however, its future impact remains to be seen. The decision to not treat vouchers as goods or services, thereby exempting them from GST, offers welcome relief to the industry.A range of measures have been introduced to streamline compliance, support domestic industries, and recalibrate customs duties on imports.Budget 2025 is a testament to India’s commitment to fostering a balanced and sustainable economic environment. Tthe successful implementation of the Budget initiatives will be crucial.

How has the Budget allocated funds for urban development? | Explained

The story so far: In 2015, the NDA government positioned urban development as a key pillar of its growth strategy as cities contribute nearly 67% to the GDP. However, in the government’s vision for a “Viksit Bharat,” cities seem to be conspicuously absent.

What was allocation for urban India?

The total outlay for urban development stands at ?96,777 crore, higher than last year’s Budget proposal of ?82,576.57 crore. However, if a modest inflation rate is taken into consideration, there is actually a fall in the outlay. The Revised Estimate (RE) suggests that only ?63,669.93 crore will be spent by March, reflecting an underutilisation rate of 22.9%. One of the biggest shortfalls is in the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) [PMAY(U)], which had an allocation of ?30,170.61 crore for FY 2024-25 but saw a drastic cut in RE to just ?13,670 crore. This highlights a gap between policy ambitions and actual implementation.The increase in total urban outlay is misaligned with the urgent need to bridge infrastructure gaps in cities. Instead of focusing on employment and sustainable development, the emphasis remains on capital-intensive projects.

How has reduction happened?

Transfers to urban India primarily occur through three channels — direct transfers to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs); Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS); and Central Sector Schemes. There has been a reduction in direct transfers to ULBs. With the abolition of octroi — a key revenue source for cities — the expectation was that the lost revenue would be compensated through central devolution. With the introduction of GST, the source revenue of ULBs fell by over

21%. But instead of increasing support, the share for ULBs has actually declined from ?26,653 crore last year to ?26,158 crore this year. This shortfall will force cities to raise their own revenues, burdening citizens with additional taxes.CSS involve cost-sharing between the Union, States, and local governments. Some major urban programs under this category include PMAY, the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), and the Smart Cities Mission. However, the Budget allocations for these schemes fall flat. The PMAY (CSS component) saw a 30% reduction in allocation compared to last year; the allocation for AMRUT and the Smart Cities Mission combined which came about to 10,400 crore in the previous budget decreased this year with almost no money left for the Smart Cities Mission; and while the SBM (Urban) retains the same outlay as last year at ?5,000 crore, RE indicates that only ?2,159 crore will be spent — 56% less than allocated amount.Central Sector Schemes are directly controlled by the Union government and often have strong political overtones. A major share of such urban development is directed toward capital-intensive infrastructure projects, particularly metro rail expansion. Unlike other urban initiatives, metro projects have seen increased allocations. In FY 2024-25, the budget for Mass Rapid Transit Systems and metro projects was ?21,335.98 crore. The RE has now risen to ?24,691.47 crore. Additionally, the 2025-26 Budget proposes ?31,239.28 crore, reflecting a 46% increase over the previous year. Prioritising metro rails over comprehensive urban mobility raises concerns about the long-term inclusivity of urban development.

Dealing with China's weaponisation of e-supply chains

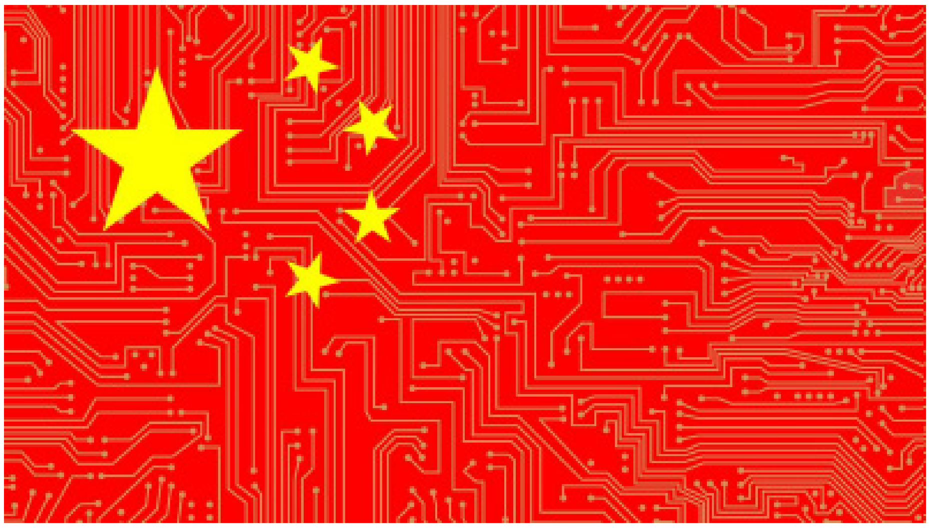
In mid-January this year, news emerged of China preventing travel by its citizens working as engineers and technicians in Foxconn's facilities in India. It was also reported that those already in India were being recalled, and that the restrictions extended to curbs on exports of critical specialised manufacturing equipment, over which China has a monopoly. While Foxconn has reportedly scrambled to bring in Taiwanese workers to fill the gap in manpower, it is the stoppage of specialised equipment that is crippling. Apple-Foxconn remains critical to India's ambitions of becoming a global manufacturing power, and, therefore, such strangulation will affect that larger objective.

What is at playThese zero sum measures by China expand geopolitical competition with India through regulations on flow of capital and other factors of production. Fully cognisant of its dominance in advanced machinery and a well-trained workforce in tightly integrated global electronics production, China intends to also curb the tacit transfer of knowledge from Chinese technicians to their Indian counterparts on the assembly line. Combined with the disruptions on account of non-availability of specialised equipment, China has sought to weaponise its strategic location in the network of supply chains to slow down production in India, and place itself in an advantageous negotiating position.The growing trade tensions between China and the West, specifically the United States, along with the COVID-19-related disruptions have led many global corporations to adopt a China Plus One diversification strategy to future-proof themselves. India has been in the forefront to seek benefits from this move along with countries such as Vietnam and Mexico.

Given the scale and the development trajectory of India's manufacturing sector bearing potential similarities to that of the Chinese experience, Beijing realises the need to limit the rise of its geopolitical rival and also remind global corporations of its own indispensability to the production ecosystem.Over the last few years, the Indian government, in coordination with its State governments, has pulled out all stops to entrench Apple-Foxconn's investments in the southern part of the country. The efforts bore fruit in 2023, with the assembling of iPhone 15 models at Foxconn's facility in Sunguvarchatram, Tamil Nadu along with another line in Tata Electronics' plant in Hosur, Karnataka.In the fiscal year ending March 2024, Apple assembled $14 billion worth of iPhones in India, through contract manufacturers Foxconn, Pegatron and Tata Electronics. In 2024, for the first time, iPhone 16 Pro models were assembled by Foxconn in India. State governments in south India have prioritised Apple-Foxconn in their pursuit of investments.The conferment of the Padma Bhushan on Young Liu, Chairman of Foxconn, in 2024, further underscores the company's importance for India. It appears that the emphasis has been on replicating Apple's symbiotic relationship with China.

A pillar of 'Make in India'Large-scale electronics manufacturing, especially of smartphones, is one of the important pillars of the 'Make in India' programme. The Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, which was launched first in the electronics industry in 2020, has witnessed increased allocation by the central government — a sum of ?8,885 crore ($1.02 billion) in the Union Budget this year, rising from ?6,125 crore in the Union Budget 2024 ($0.70 billion).

A recent news report revealed that over three financial years, from 2022-23 to 2024-25, Apple's contract manufacturers in India (Foxconn, Pegatron and Tata Electronics) had cumulatively received close to ?6,600 crore ($0.76 billion), out of the total disbursed amount of ?8,700 crore ($1 billion) under the PLI scheme. In addition, the Union Budget 2025 has completely removed basic custom duties/import taxes on mobile phone components such as printed circuit boards, camera modules, connectors, and sensors, as also different capital goods/machinery for use in the manufacture of lithium-ion batteries for mobile phones. It is notable that China's zero-sum action happened just a few months after the thaw in India-China ties, post the patrolling agreement in October 2024 to end a four year-long military standoff between the two armies in eastern Ladakh.Economic necessity — visible in the Indian dependence on China for components and machinery — is believed to have hastened the negotiations process. This illustrates how India-China relations do not (necessarily) hinge on a stable boundary, as geopolitical competition between both sides is



only bound to get more acute in the future.

India needs to think long termThere are no easy solutions for India in the short term, and so, it needs to involve both Apple and Foxconn to negotiate with China for easing Beijing's latest measures. Given that these corporations have stakes in both countries, their involvement could possibly help India's case. However, this should also serve as another opportunity to hasten the process of future-proofing in terms of human resources, components and specialised machinery.It needs to be kept in mind that India is still, largely, a centre of final assembly of smartphones. For a well-rounded and holistic manufacturing ecosystem that includes production of various components, ancillary industries need to be incentivised and scaled up.The National Manufacturing Mission for small, medium and large industries, announced in the Union Budget is a good step, but it needs credible financial muscle that leads to development of clusters for technological knowledge-sharing.

On-site training for workers, which includes tacit sharing of knowledge on the assembly line, needs to be complemented and augmented with industry-specific specialisation in skill development programmes.

Germans are growing cold on the debt brake

WHAT DO Angela Merkel, Olaf Scholz, the Bundesbank, the imf, the OECD, Germany's biggest trade union, its state-appointed council of economic experts and most of its European allies have in common? Not much, on the face of it. But they all share the view that Germany's "debt brake" is no longer serving the country well.The debt brake is a blunt instrument placed in the constitution by Mrs Merkel's government in 2009. It limits the federal government's annual deficit to 0.35% of gdp, after adjusting for the economic cycle. It prevents the 16 states from borrowing at all. Now, as Germany's flatlining economy holds down revenues while spending demands mount, it is biting harder than ever. The country needs hundreds of billions for infrastructure, decarbonisation and education in the coming years. Add to that an extra •30bn ($31bn, or 0.7% of GDP) a year that will be needed for defence once a special fund created after the invasion of Ukraine runs out in 2028.

German election tracker: who's leading the polls?

Germany's public-debt stock, at 64% of GDP and falling, is lower than that of most of its peers. Little wonder calls for reform are growing, including from Mrs Merkel herself. Crucially, voters seem to agree. A forthcoming opinion poll conducted for the German

Council on Foreign Relations (dgap) finds that a majority of Germans want reform of the debt brake to allow for higher investment. "Present German voters with trade-offs, and it's clear what they want," says Shahin Vallée of the dgap. He thinks the focus on the debt brake in the campaign for Germany's federal election on February 23rd has concentrated minds. (A dispute in November over whether to relax the rule precipitated the collapse of Mr Scholz's government.)Will they get their way? Much depends on Friedrich Merz, who polls suggest will take over from Mr Scholz as chancellor. His centre-right Christian Democrats are split, but Mr Merz has hinted he could ease the rule. Now Germany's brightest economic brains are buzzing with ideas for reform. These include lifting the 0.35% limit; creating giant funds for infrastructure or defence; or even replacing the rule with fuzzier guidelines with a role for parliament.

Indian immigrants in the U.S.: Shackled in the land of the free

Nearly a week before their children's school broke for winter vacations, Omi Devi and Paramjeet Singh began packing. There was a lot for them to sort out before they made their big move to the United States. Their farm had to be taken care of — Omi's brother Rajesh Kumar had promised that he would see to it. Their house in Kurukshetra, Haryana, had to be emptied, since no one was going to be staying there for a while"The farm was enough for our two families. The children were in a private school. But Omi and Paramjeet felt that a little more money would help them," says Rajesh. "Their oldest daughter, 20, is already in California on a student visa. Obviously, it would be an added bonus for them if one more child found a future there."On December 21, 2024, the family of four flew out of the Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi with two large suitcases and four backpacks. Their first stop was Paris and their final destination was California on the western coast of the U.S. For the move, Omi and Paramjeet had borrowed ?1.25 crore from family members.

However, it was only on January 23, 2025, that Omi and Paramjeet and their children stepped into California, not past immigration, but through a hole cut into the border wall between Mexico and the U.S. near Tijuana. Within hours, they were in shackles and within days, they were on a military plane back to India.The four of them were among the 104 Indians, including 19 women and 13 minors, who were deported by the U.S. after they were caught entering the country illegally. Their journey back to Amritsar, Punjab, took 40 hours. Multiple deportees who spoke to The Hindu since they landed on February 5 say their wrists and ankles were shackled throughout the journey. The children, too, were restrained.In the early hours of February 6, more than 12 hours after they landed in Amritsar, the family returned to Kurukshetra, escorted by the police. They did not move into their house. Instead, Rajesh rented a place for them for the time being in Kurukshetra. Omi and the children were running a fever.Before they had left, Omi's children had told their closest friends in middle school that the family was moving. Their friends had come to the airport to say goodbye. "I never thought that the children would be this heartbroken," says Rajesh. "They are nervous about going back to school."But Rajesh is tenacious. "A dream has been shattered but this is not the end for us," he says.Omi and Paramjeet's family are among the hundreds of thousands of Indians who undertake treacherous journeys, popularly called "donkey routes" in Haryana and Punjab, to make it to the U.S. To reach their destination, they often cross rivers in rickety boats, climb mountains, and trudge across deserts and forests. Many of them die on the way. Most of them have agents who connect the migrants with 'donkers', or people smugglers. 'Donkers' in the transit country help them enter their final destination illegally.According to estimates from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the share of the "unauthorised Indian migrant population" has been increasing steadily from 1990 onwards. It peaked at 5.6 lakh in 2016 before sharply declining to 2.2 lakh in the 2022 estimates. However, in 2023, data from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Nationwide Encounters shows that the number of Indians apprehended by border patrol forces had increased to 43,000 from around 18,000 the previous year. In 2024, this number came down slightly to 40,000.

While illegal immigration has been a point of political concern and a matter of public debate in the U.S. for many decades, it is more pronounced now. During the U.S. presidential election campaign last year, Donald Trump's tough-on-immigration policies resonated with voters. He was sworn in on January 20, 2025. It was around this time that most of the Indians in the first batch of deportees say they had crossed the south-western border of the U.S. on foot.The moment Omi and her family landed in Paris, they found that one of their suitcases was missing. There was no time to recover it before moving on to Italy, their next leg. From Italy, their agent had promised to put them on a small aircraft with 15-20 others to the U.S. with a stopover in Costa Rica. "But the flight did not get clearance to land in Costa Rica and landed in El Salvador instead," Rajesh says, adding that they lost their second suitcase there. Omi and her family were informed that from El Salvador, they were on their own to the Tijuana border.

Robin Handa, 18, is another of the deportees. Robin says his father, a electrician, took a loan of ?30 lakh to send him to the U.S. after Robin completed a course in Computer Science from the Industrial Training Institute in Ambala, Haryana. "My father put together his savings of over ?15 lakh after selling land and took a loan of ?30 lakh to pay an agent who had promised to send me to the U.S. via the U.K.," he says.Robin says he made the "expensive" journey to the U.S. only after he realised that there were neither any jobs for him in his home town, nor any prospects of making a decent living.Robin's agent instructed him to board a flight to Guyana from Mumbai on July 24, 2024. "Then, unlike what he had promised, I was taken to Brazil. First, I travelled some distance by foot along with 30 others, including Indians, Nepalis, and Bangladeshis. Then we crossed seas on small boats and waded through rivers. Then we traversed the Amazon jungles to reach Peru, Ecuador, and finally Colombia. From there, I went to the U.S.-Mexico border. I was arrested from there on January 22," he says.While his agent had promised Robin that he would reach his destination in a month through the "donkey route", Robin says it took him nearly six months. He spent many of these months without proper food. "Anyone who fell sick would be left behind to fend for themselves," he recalls.Jaspal Singh, 36, from Punjab's border district of Gurdaspur, entered California through the Tijuana border crossing on January 22, a day before Omi and her family crossed over with their children. But his journey began more than two years ago. "I had arranged for the ?40 lakh that my agent had asked for, and left Delhi in February 2022. I flew to London on a tourist visa. The agent said I would have to wait there until he could get the paperwork done to get me into the U.S. I kept waiting. I found a dormitory and spent two years doing construction work," he says.Jaspal says he was even able to send money home: "You know how much daily labour charges are here500 a day. Do you know how much I made there? At least £70 (around 7,600)."Meanwhile, Jaspal would call his agent every day to check on the progress of his U.S. paperwork. "I have my heavy vehicle drivers' licence. I have studied only till Class 10. I just wanted to go to the U.S. and drive trucks. What's wrong in wanting to seek a better life," he asks.After two years in London, Jaspal went to Barcelona, where he believed his agent was staying. "I kept speaking to him on the phone, but he would not meet me. A few days later, he finally put me on a flight to Brazil, saying the people there would sort out my paperwork."

After running from pillar to post in Brazil, Jaspal was told that he would have to make his way to the Mexico-U.S. border by road from Brazil. "There were about a dozen people with me. We travelled by bus, taxi, and walked for days on end. We walked a lot in Panama," he recalls.Within hours of reaching California, Jaspal was arrested by uniformed officers, shoved into a bus, and sent to a camp in San Diego. "They took all our belongings except for the clothes on our backs. During the day, we ate biscuits, fruit, and chips. At night we would get bread," he says.After 10 days in the camp, Omi's family, Jaspal, and other Indian deportees were shackled and put on a bus to the air strip. There, they boarded a military aircraft. "Throughout the journey, there were perhaps two instances when our handcuffs were removed," recalls Omi.Jaspal says everyone near him on the flight was crying. No one knew where exactly they were going. "About 6-7 hours into the flight, I asked the security personnel where we were headed. He said, 'India'. I asked where in India. He said, 'I don't know,'" he says.Robin is upset. "I did all this only to be chained like an animal and brought back to the country," he says. He is also angry with the way the deportees were treated. "The women and children were also handcuffed and their legs tied with ropes," he says.According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, a global policy forum that promotes policies to improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world, the number of asylum requests in the U.S. from Indian nationals rose from about 6,000 in 2020 to 51,000 in 2023. According to data cited in a 2025 Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies paper, 66% of asylum cases involving Indian nationals between 2001 and 2022 had been filed by Punjabi speakers. Of the 104 Indians deported by the U.S. last week, the highest number (33) was from Gujarat, 29 were from Punjab, and 33 from Haryana.

Within hours of being sworn in, Trump banned the Customs and Border Protection One mobile app that had been used to allow migrants to schedule appointments at eight southwest border ports of entry, requesting asylum.For Indians taking the 'donkey route', downloading an app was never their first priority. They say their priority was to reset their phones to factory settings, destroy their SIM cards and, if possible, dispose of the phone. "The moment Omi's family crossed into the U.S. on January 23, I was cut off from them," says Rajesh.Jaspal says the agents had made it clear to them that their phones should not help people figure out their identities.

'Dreams are dreams'The moment the deportees landed in Amritsar, they were fed "properly," remembers Jaspal. The deportees were told at immigration to jot down whatever details they remembered of their respective agents. "It is impossible to remember their phone numbers. Also, it is not as if we have very good relationships with the agents," he says.The police have launched extensive operations to try and identify these agents and prosecute them. Both the Haryana and Punjab police have registered cases against travel agents who allegedly "duped" the deportees who landed in Amritsar last week."When we were being escorted back, I remember the Punjab police telling us that they would help us to the extent possible," says Jaspal.Rajesh says he is not surprised that the police have been willing to help identify these agents and recover money. "I know cops' children who have taken the illegal route. They also want to find out who these agents are," he says.Jaspal has had enough for the time being. "I have lost everything. I can't bring myself to think about retrying the trip," he says.However, Rajesh refuses to give up. "We were raised in the village. We don't stop just because we failed once. The dream is alive," he says.Rajesh says he speaks not just for his family, but for most of his village. "It is not like our granaries are running empty," he explains. "Even if we don't do any work here in the village, we will survive; we have enough food. But is this enough? There are no jobs for us here and dreams are dreams."Rajesh says they see neighbours sending children abroad and showing off their money in the form of new cars. Pointing to a group of giggling children on their way home from school, he throws a challenge: "