Multi-Level Marketing fraudsters target women and job aspirants

Hyderabad: The Multi-Level Marketing fraudsters are back in the market and with yet another modus operandi. They are targeting women, specifically home makers and job aspirants luring them with higher returns on investments.The police have warned citizens, particularly women, to be aware of falling into the trap of these fraudsters and the youth was asked to stay away from such fake schemes, as money does not come for free.According to the police, owing to the easy trap methods into Multi-Level marketing frauds, the fraudsters have always returned to snare vulnerable people in newer ways possible."The most important fact about this fraud system is the new techniques adopted by the fraudsters to get into the minds of their victims," said an official from the Hyderabad Cybercrime Unit.However, from time to time the police authorities in Hyderabad, Cyberabad and Rachakonda have been issuing warnings to all the people, especially house wives, young women and unemployed youth about the fraud system. In some instances, women are harassed and sexually assaulted as well.In the recent

past, in a MLM fraud system case, the Miyapur police had arrested a gang of four people who cheated several people.The masterminds lured people with promise of high returns on investment in their fake scheme. They used to harass the victims to make others join the scheme and once they are completely trapped into the system they also used to exploit the women sexually.

Meanwhile, concerns are also raised over the practice of multi-level marketing companies, which are accused of deceiving people to the tune of lakhs of rupees, in promoting their products extensively.

"The managements of businesses and also celebrities should reconsider aligning with such questionable organisations as official partners and brand ambassadors. It is essential for law enforcement agencies to take appropriate legal action against such firms and put an end to these fraudulent activities," said an official from Cyberabad.Advisory:*Promoters of these schemes float companies with attractive names and start in one area and keep shift-

ing base*Promoters are aware that the scheme is not practical*While promoting schemes, they invite celebrities and honour them by organizing parties with fanfare to convince public.*They give attractive slo-

gans like 'Work from home', 'Work four hours and earn Rs.50, 000 per month', 'You are the boss of your business'* Victims of are mostly poor, middle class women and retired persons

Paddy farmers wait for bonus in Karimnagar

Karimnagar: Paddy farmers, who sowed the fine variety of the crop during the Vanakalam season, are still waiting for the bonus promised by the State government. About 20,000 farmers are waiting in the erstwhile Karimnagar district, where the bonus to be paid amounts to Rs.41 crore.The Congress party, which promised to provide Rs 500 bonus to all paddy varieties during the time of elections, had changed its voice after coming to power and announced bonus only for fine variety. Though there is huge demand for fine variety rice in the market, farmers used to stay away from the cultivation of fine variety paddy because of various reasons. High investment, less yield and the crop getting easily infected by insects were the main reasons. Moreover, it requires high maintenance when compared to the normal variety.

However, with the State government's announcement of a Rs 500 bonus, a considerable number of farmers shifted to fine variety paddy. In the Vanakalam season, paddy is usually cultivated in about 9.50 lakh acres in the erstwhile Karimnagar. However, it crossed 9.65 lakh acres in the last season. Of that, fine variety was sowed in about 3 lakh acres. While minimum support price (MSP) of Rs.2,320 was announced for quintal Grade-A (fine variety) paddy, Rs 2,300 was promised for the common variety. In addition to the MSP of Rs.2,320 announced by the Centre, the State government had promised Rs.500.Though a majority of the farmers got the bonus, about 20,000 are yet to be paid. A total of 3.94 metric tonnes of paddy worth Rs.197 crore was procured. For this, Rs 156 crore was paid to the farmers while Rs.41 crore was pending.

After 50 years hiatus, OU to reopen doors for UG education in Arts College

Hyderabad: After a 50 year hiatus, an undergraduate programme is making a comeback in Osmania University's Arts College. The university decided to introduce the BA (Hons) Telugu, a four-year undergraduate programme, in the forthcoming academic year.This is the first time in the university's history that a four-year BA Honors programme is being launched in the campus college. This marks a major shift for the varsity, which until now offered PG

programmes after the discontinuation of undergraduate programmes from the Arts College in 1973.The decision to launch the new programme was taken during the undergraduate arts programmes syllabus revision meeting, which was called by the Telangana Council of Higher Education in collaboration with universities on Monday. The BA (Hons) Telugu is expected to have 60 seats and the syllabus is being framed by the OU's Telugu department.Further, artificial intelligence,

which is so far limited to engineering and science programmes, will soon foray into the arts faculties as well. The TGCHE decided to introduce AI into BA programmes, particularly in political science and economics. Along with AI, other emerging fields like Data Science and Cyber Security will also be introduced into the BA. Students will be taught the basics of emerging technologies, equipping them with essential skills needed in the contemporary job market.In another crucial

move, the Council made a decision to introduce subjects like reasoning, arithmetic and general English language, which are vital for competitive exams, including Civil Services, Railway Recruitment Board, Staff Selection Commission and banking exams, into the undergraduate degree programmes.TGCHE Chairman Prof V Balakista Reddy said 20 to 30 percent of the existing needs to be changed by taking inputs from the experts concerned as per the regulatory bodies.

The fight for intersex rights in India: a medical ethics and social justice perspective

Intersex individuals, born with physical or biological sex characteristics that do not fit typical definitions of male or female, continue to face numerous challenges, including non-consensual surgeries, lack of recognition, and misclassification as transgender or hijra. In India, the struggle of intersex individuals is particularly acute, with a lack of awareness, education, and recognition perpetuating the stigma and marginalisation.The science of intersex is complex, encompassing a range of variations in sex characteristics, including chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, and genitalia. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 1.7% of the global population is born with intersex traits, although this figure may be higher due to underreporting. Intersex conditions can arise from genetic, hormonal, or environmental factors, and may manifest in various ways, such as chromosomal variations, gonadal variations, hormonal variations, and genital variations. For example, Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (CAH) is a common intersex condition, where the adrenal glands produce excessive amounts of androgens, leading to the development of male characteristics in females.

Understanding intersexIntersex refers to sex characteristics of a person. The distinction between sex, gender, and sex characteristics is often misunderstood, leading to confusion and controversy, particularly in the context of intersex individuals. Intersex traits refer to physical or biological sex characteristics that do not fit typical definitions of male or female.

Sex characteristics encompass the physical and biological attributes that define an individual's sex, including chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, and genitalia. Intersex traits can manifest in various ways, such as hyperandrogenism, a condition characterised by elevated levels of testosterone. This condition has been the subject of controversy in the sports world, where female athletes with intersex traits have faced challenges in competing in women's events.The concept of sex identity refers to an individual's established birth identity as male or female, which may or may not align with their sex characteristics. In contrast, gender identity refers to an individual's internal sense of being a man, woman, non-binary, or something else, shaped by cultural, social, and personal factors. Interestingly, the term "gender" is a relatively recent concept, coined by sexologist John Money in the 1950s. Money introduced the term "gender role" to describe the social and cultural expectations associated with being male or female. Over time, the concept of gender has evolved to encompass a broader understanding of identity, expression, and experience.However, the distinction between sex and gender is not always clear-cut, and the two terms are often used interchangeably. This conflation can lead to confusion and misunderstandings, particularly in the context of intersex individuals.The complexities of sex, gender, and sex characteristics are particularly evident in the context of intersex athletes. Regulatory bodies, such as the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), have implemented rules governing the participation of female athletes

with intersex traits in women's events. These rules require female intersex athletes to undergo medical tests and treatments to reduce their testosterone levels, in order to be eligible to compete. These rules have been criticised for being discriminatory and invasive, and for failing to recognise the complexities of intersex traits.

Experts argue that a more nuanced approach is necessary, one that takes into account the diverse experiences of intersex individuals and promotes inclusivity and respect. Despite the diversity of intersex experiences, many individuals face similar challenges, including non-consensual medical interventions and social stigma. Non-consensual surgeries and medical interventions can cause significant harm, both physically and psychologically. The medical community has a crucial role to play in addressing the issues faced by intersex individuals, and prioritising their bodily autonomy and well-being.

The medical ethics surrounding intersex individuals are complex and multifaceted. The principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice must be carefully considered when providing medical care to intersex individuals. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), WHO, and other medical organisations have acknowledged the harm caused by non-consensual surgeries and recommend a more nuanced approach, prioritising the individual's well-being and autonomy.In India, the medical community remains largely unaware of the issues faced by intersex individuals. There is a significant lack of awareness and education among medical professionals, which can lead to misdiagnosis, inappropriate treatment, and further marginalisation. Providing training and resources to medical professionals is essential to ensure that they can provide informed and compassionate care to intersex individuals.Prioritising the autonomy and well-being of intersex individuals is essential to ensure that they receive appropriate medical care and are protected from harm. The Indian government must take a comprehensive approach to address the issues faced by intersex individuals, including providing education and awareness, reforming medical practices and policies, and ensuring legal recognition and protection.In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the need to reform medical practices and policies related to intersex individuals.

Countries, such as Australia, Germany, and Malta, have already recognised intersex as a legitimate category, providing a model for India to follow. In Australia, for example, intersex individuals can choose to identify as intersex on their passport, while in Germany, intersex individuals are protected from non-consensual medical interventions.The Madras High Court's landmark judgment in April 2019, banning non-essential sex-selective surgeries on intersex infants, was a significant milestone in the fight for intersex rights in India. The court's direction was reinforced by a government order in August 2019, aimed at implementing the ban. However, despite these efforts, the Tamil Nadu government's failure to implement the government order has led to a lack of accountability and enforcement.Alarmingly, more

than 500 infants born with intersex traits underwent sex-selective surgeries in Tamil Nadu from 2020 to 2024. More than 40 intersex infants underwent surgeries at the Government Hospital in Madurai alone, highlighting the egregious failure to uphold the ban and protect the rights of intersex individuals. This underscores the need for increased awareness, education, and training among medical professionals, as well as the importance of implementing policies that protect the rights of intersex individuals.Furthermore, the Tamil Nadu government's inaction in constituting a high-level committee, as mandated by the Tamil Nadu government order, has exacerbated the issue. This committee was intended to provide a platform for intersex individuals, experts, and stakeholders to discuss and address the challenges faced by intersex individuals in Tamil Nadu. It has resulted in a lack of oversight and accountability, allowing harmful practices to continue unchecked.

Lack of response to PILThe Indian government's repeated failure to respond to a critical Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by me at the Supreme Court of India is glaring in this regard. Despite four opportunities, the government has neglected to provide a response, with the most recent instance occurring on February 3. This PIL, Gopi Shankar M. vs Union of India, seeks to address long-standing issues faced by intersex individuals in India. The petition demands recognition of intersex individuals, an end to non-consensual surgeries, and increased awareness and education about intersex issues.On April 8, 2024, a three-judge bench led by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud served notices to over seven government departments and agencies, emphasising the importance of the government's response in determining the future of intersex individuals in India. By acknowledging intersex as a legitimate category, the government can ensure that intersex individuals are accurately represented in the census, have access to necessary medical care, and are protected from discrimination and violence. The government's response will be crucial in shaping the lives of intersex individuals in

India.The inclusion of intersex individuals in the Census and other official documents is essential to ensure that they are counted and recognised. In Kenya, for example, intersex individuals are now recognised and protected under the law, with the option to register their gender as intersex on their birth certificates. Whereas in India, the Registration of Birth and Death Act, 1969, is a critical piece of legislation that governs the registration of births and deaths. However, this Act has a significant flaw — it excludes intersex individuals. The Act requires that every birth and death be registered, and it mandates that the sex of the individual be recorded as either male or female. This binary sex classification system excludes intersex individuals, who do not fit into the traditional male/female dichotomy.As a result, intersex individuals face significant challenges when trying to register their births or deaths. They are often forced to choose between male and female, which can be a difficult and traumatic experience. This exclusion also perpetuates the erasure of intersex individuals and their experiences.Furthermore, the exclusion of intersex individuals from this act has far-reaching consequences. It can lead to difficulties in accessing essential services, such as education, healthcare, and employment, which often require proof of identity and sex. It is essential to amend the Registration of Birth and Death Act, 1969, to include a new option for intersex individuals. Additionally, the Indian government must take steps to educate and sensitise officials responsible for registering births and deaths about intersex issues. This would help to reduce the stigma and trauma associated with the registration process.The fight for intersex rights in India is a complex and multifaceted issue, requiring a comprehensive approach to address the medical, social, and legal challenges faced by intersex individuals. By prioritising the autonomy and well-being of intersex individuals, the Indian government can ensure their constitutional rights also that they receive appropriate medical care, are protected from discrimination and violence, and are recognised and valued as equal Indian citizens.

JSW MG Motor India Celebrates 15,000 Production Milestone of MG Windsor

Hyderabad :JSW MG Motor India today announced that the MG Windsor, India's 1st Intelligent CUV, has crossed the production milestone of 15,000 units. The CUV emerged as the best-selling EV four months in a row (October 2024 – January 2025) since launch and has contributed to the overall growth of the EV segment in India.Speaking on the occasion, Biju Balendran, Deputy Managing Director, JSW MG Motor India said, "We are delighted with the response that the MG Windsor has been receiving and are grateful to our customers who have helped us cross the 15,000-unit production milestone. The CUV has been widely accepted by car buyers for its overall pricing and packaging, and for offering a luxurious business-class experience to customers. Smart initiatives such as BaaS, the buyback program, and a lifetime warranty, have all boosted consumer confidence in EVs. As we diversify our portfolio, we remain committed to bringing quality products to our customers at a faster rate." "Consequently, we are increasing the capacity of the facility

at Halol to meet the rising demand for Windsor. Additionally, we are undertaking certain facility modifications to ensure readiness for new products under MG Select which is due for launch in the first half of this year. Hence, we anticipate a production slowdown during the month of February, which may temporarily affect our wholesales during this period", he added further. JSW MG Motor India will be diversifying its portfolio by launching two new products in the Indian market.

This includes the MG Cyberster and MG M9 that will be launched under MG Select, company's new 'accessible luxury' brand channel. About JSW MG Motor India

SAIC Motor, a global Fortune 500 company with a presence in over 100 countries and JSW Group (India's leading conglomerate with interests across B2B and B2C sectors) formed a joint venture - JSW MG Motor India Pvt. Ltd. in 2023. The joint venture aims to build an innovative and sustainable automotive ecosystem while continuing to stay focused on developing a diverse port-

India's bestselling EV since launch is receiving overwhelming customer response; order book remains strong

folio of vehicles to give car buyers better access to advanced technologies and futuristic products with attractive value propositions. JSW MG Motor India Pvt. Ltd. is committed to introducing world-class technology,

strengthening the manufacturing landscape, best of innovation across its business operations, and generating significant employment opportunities through extensive localization.

The Habitats Trust Grant Invites Applications for its 8th Edition, Offering Over Rs3.5 Crore in Conservation Funding

Hyderabad :The Habitats Trust, a not-for-profit dedicated to protecting India's natural habitats and indigenous species, has announced the launch of the 8th edition of The Habitats Trust Grants. A key highlight of this edition is the introduction of the THT Research Grant, aimed at encouraging interdisciplinary research on ecological, social, and technological aspects of conservation. Applications opened on February 15 and will close on March 17, with the final selection to be announced in October 2025. Interested individuals rand organizations can apply at www.thehabitatstrust.org. This year marks the largest funding cycle in the initiative's history, with grants exceeding Rs 3.5 crore to support conservation projects nationwide.

Important Dates to Note

Application submission dates

15th February to 17th March 2025

Grant Recipient Announcement

October 2025

Rushikesh Chavan, Head of The Habitats Trust, emphasized the significance of this year's expanded grants, stating, "The THT Grants represent our commitment to conserve and drive meaningful change for lesser-known species and critical habitats. By investing in impactful projects, we partner with organisations and individuals who are creating solutions to protect and restore India's biodiversity."

Evaluation Process

Applications will undergo a multi-stage evaluation by a panel of experts, including scientists and conservationists. Projects will be assessed based on their relevance, expected conservation impact, stakeholder engagement, scalability, replicability, and sustainability. The rigorous process ensures

that funding is directed toward initiatives with the potential for long-term, on-ground impact. Prospective applicants working towards biodiversity conservation in India can apply under the following categories:

THT Conservation Grant

The THT Conservation Grant will provide ?1 crore each to two organizations with at least five years of experience in conservation. It focuses on critical challenges such as habitat degradation, biodiversity loss, and human-wildlife conflict.

Last year, Dr. Umesh Srinivasan and Dr. Anubhab Khan from the Indian Institute of Science, along with Millo Tasser and the Singchung Village Council, received the Grant for their work in Arunachal Pradesh to conserve the Bugun Liocichla, a critically endangered bird found only in a single locality, with just 14 to 20 known individuals.

THT Action Grant

The THT Action Grant will offer 25 lakh each to three selected organizations or indi-

viduals for targeted conservation efforts focused on lesser-known species and habitats.

Last year's recipients included Divya Panicker, a cetacean and bioacoustics expert studying endangered blue whales in the Lakshadweep Archipelago using passive acoustic monitoring; Malyasri Bhattacharya, who is protecting critically endangered vulture habitats in Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, through community-led ecotourism involving Gaddi and Gujjar herders; the Durgapur Wildlife Information and Nature Guide Society, which is implementing a community-driven conservation program in West Bengal to safeguard Indian grey wolves in human-dominated landscapes through monitoring and conflict mitigation; and the Veditum India Foundation in Madhya Pradesh, which is enhancing environmental governance and citizen participation to protect riparian habitats threatened by sand mining, benefiting species like gharials, Gangetic dolphins, and Indian skimmers.

Three arrested for kidnapping two-year-old from pavement in Hyd

Hyderabad: The Afzalgunj police solved the kidnapping of two-year-old boy Prem Kumar, who was abducted when he was sleeping beside his mother on the pavement on February 15, and arrested three persons on Tuesday.

The arrested persons include Shaik Amer alias Tara (25), a labour from Hakimpet, Majida Begum and Mohammedi Begum, both from Tolichowki. The absconding suspect is Abdul Salman from Tolichowki.According to the police, the

toddler's mother B Devi, a construction worker from Kadapa in Andhra Pradesh came to the city a week ago along with him, in search of her cousin – Kumari. However, she lost her contact details and remained wandering on the streets of Hyderabad and slept on the pavements in Gowliguda.On February 15, when she was fast asleep under the influence of alcohol, the suspects abducted Prem Kumar who was sleeping beside her. When she woke up, she realised the child was missing and approached the Afzalgunj police.

South Indian Thrills takes over Lionsgate Play! Telugu crime drama 'Dhakshina' is set for its World Digital Premiere on 21st February

Hyderabad :Justice has a new name – ACP Dhakshina! Lionsgate Play is set to drop its most thrilling South digital premiere yet, Dhakshina', a crime action film on February 21. Starring Sai Dhanshika (Kabali fame) as the fierce ACP Dakshina, the film traces her relentless pursuit of a ruthless serial killer terrorizing Vizag, and how this investigation pushes her to confront not just the criminal but also her own instincts & beliefs. Directed by Osho Tulasi Ram and produced by Ashok Shinde under the banner of Cult Concepts, Dhakshina blends high-stake action with emotional depth, keeping viewers on the edge of their seats.

Set against the backdrop of a city with gruesome murders, the film follows ACP Dhakshina and her team as they race against time to track down a psychopathic murderer targeting young women. With every clue they uncover, the mystery only deepens, leading to shocking twists and hidden conspiracies that challenge everything they know. Staying true to Lionsgate Play's 'Thrilling, Fun & Exciting' promise,

Dhakshina delivers a gripping mix of action, suspense, and intrigue. Whether you're drawn to intense crime dramas or dynamic female leads, this fast-paced film is a must-watch thriller.

Talking about her character and OTT premiere, Sai Dhanshika shared, "Dhakshina has been such an exciting role for me to embody. She's fearless, intimidating and her courage is unbreakable. It's a role that demands both physical stamina and emotional strength, balancing the strength of the character while also ensuring her softness comes through was challenging, but I'd like to hope I've done her justice. After Kaathadi which was released in 2018, this is my second time playing a cop and I hope audiences embrace ACP Dhakshina with the same love that they always have."

She added, "The film's gripping concept and my character's transformation hooked me from the start. Dhakshina evolves from a fierce cop to a rugged personality, and I'm sure her journey will leave audiences on the edge of their seats wondering what led to it.

The suspense and unexpected twists make Dhakshina a thrilling ride and I hope all my fans enjoy the OTT premiere on Lionsgate Play."

SMFG India Credit Sets Guinness World Record for Largest Cattle Welfare Lesson Across Multiple Venues during Pashu Vikas Day

presence of 1000+ branches, our primary focus is on Tier-2+ locations, with nearly 90% of our branches strategically positioned in these regions. In fact, over the last two years, we have added around 300 branches, all located in Tier-2+ geographies. Our goal is to drive financial inclusion by providing the right products and financial solutions, enabling us to serve communities at every stage of their life cycle.I would also like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to each of our dedicated employees for their outstanding commitment and hard work in achieving the Guinness World Record for the Largest Cattle Welfare Lesson across multiple venues. It is truly heartening to see that this year's Pashu Vikas Day not only surpassed expectations in cattle care, but also introduced specialized knowledge sessions across multiple venues in India, which earned us the Guinness World Record."

Southern Travels receives VETA Travel Award-2025

Hyderabad: Southern Travels has been conferred with the prestigious VETA Travel Award-2025, recognising its excellence in the sector, at a function that was attended by leaders from the travel industry, in New Delhi.Southern Travels has been a pioneer in the industry, offering a diverse range of over 2,000 domestic and international holiday packages, corporate travel solutions, and customised holiday experiences for over 55 years, a press release said.Krishna Mohan Alapati, MD, Southern Travels, said, "We are honoured to receive the VETA Travel Award-2025.

Hyderabad :SMFG India Credit has made history by achieving a Guinness World Record for the 'Largest Cattle Welfare Lesson (Multiple Venues)' with 517 participants across 6 venues in India. This milestone was accomplished as part of the company's 7th edition of Pashu Vikas Day (PVD), the largest one-day cattle care camps across the country. These camps were simultaneously held in 500 locations across

16 states, benefiting around 1,90,000 beneficiaries (1,50,000 cattle and 40,000 cattle owners).

In India, approximately 65-70% of the rural population relies on agriculture or agriculture-related activities for their livelihood. Hence, cattle and livestock play a crucial role in their livelihood generation activities and financial wellbeing. Recognizing this unbreakable bond, SMFG India Credit celebrated the

7th edition of Pashu Vikas Day under the theme 'Mera Pashu Mera Parivar,' reinforcing the importance of livestock in the lives of these rural families.

Mr. Shantanu Mitra, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of SMFG India Credit, said, "At SMFG India Credit, we remain steadfast in our commitment to championing social initiatives that create a meaningful impact. With a strong Pan-India

What's a DDoS cyberattack that hit Karnataka's Kaveri 2.0 portal?

Story so far: In January, web-based portal Kaveri 2.0, which streamlines property registrations in Karnataka, faced sporadic, crippling server outages. As a result, property registration and document-related citizen services went almost to a standstill in the state. On investigating the outage, the Revenue Department and E-Governance Department concluded that it was not due to "technical glitches" but a "motivated Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack" on Kaveri 2.0 - a portal launched in 2023 to reform land registration. The sustained cyberattack on the portal, orchestrated by unidentified miscreants, highlights the vulnerability of critical online services to cyber threats.

What happened after the attack?

Following the incident, K. A. Dayananda, Inspector General of Registrations and Commissioner of Stamps (IGR & CS) lodged a complaint with the cyber-crime police. The Cybercrime, Economic offences, Narcotics (CEN) police registered a case under the Information Technology Act, 2000, against the unidentified miscreants."The Kaveri 2.0 faced some performance issues during December 2024. Upon analysis and inputs from the Centre for Smart Governance [CSG], it was found that these issues were caused by a malicious DDoS attack using automated tools or bots," the FIR said.

What is a DDoS attack?

A DDoS attack is a malicious attempt to disrupt the normal functioning of a targeted server, service, or network by overwhelming it with a flood of internet traffic. Unlike a Denial of Service (DoS) attack, which typically involves a single source, a DDoS attack leverages multiple compromised systems, often infected with malware, to generate the traffic. These compromised systems are collectively known as a botnet. Such attacks may be aimed at saturating the bandwidth of a particular site, exploiting weaknesses in the network protocol stack, or targeting specific weaknesses in applications or services.

How does DDoS attack affect web portals?

DDoS attacks can lead to a service downtime, which is the primary goal of a DDoS attack -- to render a service unavailable, leading to a disruption or potential loss of revenue. While DDoS attacks do not directly steal data, they can be used as a distraction while other forms of cyberattacks, such as data breaches, are executed. Organisations that fall victim to DDoS attacks may suffer reputational damage, as customers and partners question their ability to protect against cyber threats.

What happened in the case of Kaveri 2.0?

The Kaveri 2.0 portal, a critical application for property registrations, experienced performance issues in December 2024 and January 2025. Fake accounts were created, and entries were made into the database using these accounts, overwhelming the system. The attack involved 62 email accounts originating from 14 IP addresses, highlighting the distributed nature of the assault.In January 2025, a similar attack occurred, with extremely high traffic observed from citizen-side users for encumbrance certificate (EC) searches, which was eight times more than usual. At one point, the portal received 6.2 lakh requests from malicious users in just two hours, using random keywords to perform searches. This surge in traffic crippled the portal, significantly reducing the number of registrations.

What are some ways to mitigate such attacks?

To protect against DDoS attacks, organisations implement advanced traffic filtering mechanisms to distinguish between legitimate and malicious traffic. Monitoring tools can help identify unusual traffic patterns and take pre-emptive actions. Enforcing rate limiting can control the number of requests a user can make in a given time frame, preventing the system from being overwhelmed.Bot detection technologies, such as CAPTCHA challenges and behavioural analysis, can identify and block automated tools or bots. Robust authentication mechanisms and regular security audits can strengthen the security of online services and prevent unauthorised access.Organisations also work closely with cybersecurity agencies to help investigate attacks and identify perpetrators. They share information and collaborate on mitigation strategies to prevent future attacks by developing and implementing an incident response plan. This will include having a dedicated team to monitor and respond to security incidents.For the user, knowing about the risks of phishing and other social engineering attacks can help prevent account compromises. Companies can encourage the use of strong passwords and multi-factor authentication to enhance security.

What next for Kaveri 2.0?

The cyberattack had crippled the Kaveri 2.0 portal and the number of registrations had fallen significantly on February 1 and 4. While the portal was restored on February 5, the DDoS attack should serve as a wake-up call for organisations, particularly governed agencies, to prioritise cybersecurity and implement robust mitigation strategies. As cyber threats continue to evolve, understanding the nature of DDoS attacks and taking proactive measures to protect against them is crucial.The battle against DDoS attacks is ongoing, but with the right strategies and vigilance, organisations can safeguard their digital assets and maintain the trust of their users.

Are there any other prominent DDoS attack?

There are several such attacks, but most recently Elon Musk-owned X platform was targeted in August 2024. Mr. Musk reported that the platform experienced a massive DDoS attack, which caused delays and disruptions. This attack occurred just before his scheduled conversation with U.S. President Donald Trump (who was then the Republican candidate for presidency), highlighting the vulnerability of even high-profile platforms to such cyber threats.In another occasion, several years earlier in 2015, Microsoft-owned code repository GitHub was targeted by China-based botnet. The attack specifically aimed at two GitHub projects that provided tools to circumvent Chinese state censorship. The attack involved injecting malicious JavaScript code into the browsers of visitors to Baidu, China's most popular search engine, and other sites using Baidu's analytics services.These attacks underscore the importance of robust cybersecurity measures to protect against DDoS threats, which can disrupt services, lead to financial losses, and damage the reputation of online platforms.

Bikers roar across Hyderabad with modified silencers

Hyderabad: Despite the traffic police taking up special drives to curb the noise pollution cause by modified silencers particulars of motorcycles and high end bikes, the problem continues unabated in the city.

Hundreds, perhaps thousands of motorcycles fitted with modified silencers are moving in the city creating problems for the people in particular the senior citizens, patients, infants and those in need of rest within the privacy of their homes.

"Situation is horrible during the night. At dead of a night from somewhere a bullet fitted with modified silencers zooms past the streets in colony and disturbs the sleep of families," complained Mohd Fazal, a senior citizen from Mehdipatnam.

Mohd Sultan, a resident of Falaknuma complained that it has become a trend for youngsters to come on the road with motorcycles having altered silencers move around post-midnight. "It might be a thing of pride for the motorcycle owners. But the problems caused by such behaviour for other residents are being ignored by the youth or their parents who fail to counsel them," complained Sultan.

N Roshni Rao, a psychologist said mental peace is a crucial part of our emotional and intellectual health. "The constant barrage of high-decibel sounds forces our bodies to release stress hormones, leading to feelings of anxiety, irritability, and sleep disruptions. For children, the noise makes it hard for them to concentrate, leading to struggles with focus, poorer academic performance, and slower cognitive development. Over time, this constant noise exposure can contribute to attention disorders and emotional instability," she said.

The traffic police officials, however point out that special drivers are organised across the city and cases booked against the owners of the motorcycles for using the modified silencers. "Any specific complaints can be made at the local police station including Law & Order and action will be initiated," said an official of Hyderabad City Police.

When can President's Rule be imposed? | Explained

Four days after Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh resigned, the State was put under President's Rule on February 13. Though the ruling BJP still holds a majority in the Manipur Assembly, the party was unable to find a consensus Chief Minister candidate. The State has also been wracked by ethnic violence between the Meiteis and Kuki-Zo communities since May 2023, and Mr. Singh faced criticism for his handling of the conflict from many sides, including from within his own party. This is the 11th time that President's Rule has been imposed in Manipur, the highest in any State.

President's Rule is a provision under Article 356 to be imposed in case of the failure of the constitutional machinery in a State. In such situations, based on a report by the State's Governor or other inputs, the President can issue a Proclamation taking over the functions of the State's government and Governor — effectively transferring them to the Union government — and transferring the powers of the State Assembly to Parliament. The President cannot, however, assume any of the powers vested in a High Court. The President's proclamation must be laid before Parliament, and will expire in two months unless both Houses ratify it. It may be renewed by Parliament every six months, for a maximum period of three years. After the first year, renewal can take place under certain conditions, of an Emergency being declared in the country or the State, or the Election Commission declaring that State elections cannot be held. Article 356 does not list the various specific circumstances under which President's Rule can be imposed, leaving it to the judgment of the President (and the Union Council of Ministers advising her) to satisfy herself that "a situation has arisen in which the Government of the State cannot be carried on in accordance with the Provisions of this Constitution". A comprehensive assessment of President's Rule published by the Lok Sabha Secretariat in 2016 listed situations in which it has been imposed, apart from militancy and law and order: defections by MLAs, break-up of coalitions, passing of no-confidence motions, resignations of Chief Ministers, absence of legislatures in newly formed States, and public agitations leading to instability. The Supreme Court's judgment in the 1994 S.R. Bommai vs Union of India case also listed the circumstances in which President's Rule could and could not be imposed, though it made it clear this was not exhaustive.

What are some previous instances of the imposition of President's Rule?

President's Rule has been imposed 135 times, in 35 States and Union Territories, including some that no longer exist. The first instance was in June 1951, in Punjab, when the State's Chief Minister Gopi Chand Bhargava resigned due to internal differences in the Congress party. In all, Punjab has been under Central control for well over a decade largely due to terrorist and separatist activities leading to unstable law and order conditions. The only State which has spent more time under Central control is J&K, which has had President's Rule imposed for almost 15 years (including in the Union Territory of J&K), with the longest continuous stints of more than six years each from 1990 to 1996 and from 2019 to 2024.

After Manipur, where it has now been imposed for the 11th time, the most frequent imposition of President's Rule has been 10 times in Uttar Pradesh. Though it is more common for President's Rule to be imposed in a State where the ruling party is opposed to the one at the Centre, There have also been several instances of Article 356 being applied in cases where the same party is in power at both Centre and State, including in Andhra Pradesh in 1973, Assam in 1981, Gujarat in 1974, Karnataka in 1990, and now in Manipur in 2025. In 1977, the newly elected Morarji Desai government imposed President's Rule on nine Congress-ruled States at one go, claiming that they no longer held the confidence of the electorate which had voted out the Congress at the Centre. When Indira Gandhi returned to power in 1980, she returned the favour, imposing President's Rule in nine States for the same reason. The Supreme Court at the time refused to interfere in the matter.

Why has it become less frequent?

A few decades later, the Bommai judgment marked a shift in the court's stance. The nine-judge Bench said that courts could review the President's proclamation by "examining whether it was issued on the basis of any material at all or whether the material was relevant or whether the proclamation was issued in the mala fide exercise of the power," former Attorney-General late Soli Sorabjee said in a critique of the 1994 judgment. "This means the proclamation can be struck down if found to be unconstitutional. This is a clear deterrence to the government," said P.D.T. Acharya, a former Lok Sabha Secretary General. Between 1950 and 1994, President's Rule was imposed 100 times, an average of 2.5 times a year. In the three decades since, it has been imposed 30 times or about once a year. In fact, the imposition in Manipur is the first since Puducherry in February 2021, almost four years ago. Since the Narendra Modi-led NDA government came to power in 2014, President's Rule has been imposed 11 times including four times in J&K. Of these, the courts have struck down the proclamation twice, in Arunachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

What does it mean to keep a legislature in suspended animation?

Though Manipur has been placed under President's Rule, its Assembly has not been dissolved. Instead, it has been kept under suspended animation. In 111 cases of President's Rule till 2015, the State's Legislative Assembly had been dissolved simultaneously with the proclamation 53 times, according to the Lok Sabha Secretariat's report. In the remaining instances, the legislature has been placed in suspended animation. Though Manipur has been placed under President's Rule, its Assembly has not been dissolved. Instead, it has been kept under suspended animation. When the Assembly is placed under suspended animation, it can be revived whenever it becomes possible to form a popular government after President's Rule is revoked. In the Bommai case "one view the court took was that the proclamation only temporarily suspended the constitutional function of the Legislative Assembly during its existence and the moment the proclamation was revoked, the

constitutional suspension would end and the legislature would spring back to life," says constitutional lawyer Abishek Jebaraj. "The Supreme Court also cautioned that granting unfettered powers of dissolution to the President under an Article 356 proclamation would both be fraught with danger and add to the Constitution a measure its founders never intended." Mr. Acharya, however, felt that "suspended animation" — which is never mentioned as such in the Constitution — has no constitutional sanction.

"If Parliament takes over all its powers, what is the point of keeping an Assembly alive?" he asked. "It is unconstitutional."

M23: Rebels who lost their cause

A militia that derives its name from a peace agreement is a paradox in itself. Embodying this conundrum is the M23, or the Mouvement Du March 23, which operates in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, drawing support from neighbouring Rwanda. Taking after a failed truce deal signed on March 23, 2009, the militia, on January 27, captured the mineral-rich city of Goma in eastern Congo's North Kivu. The group began its advance towards South Kivu province and stands at the outskirts of the capital Bukavu, eastern DRC's second major city. The origins of the M23 are rooted in noble intentions for it claims to protect the minority Tutsis from Hutu ethnic militias. The group was formed in 2012 by some members of the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP), which itself was an offshoot of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) — the Tutsi rebels credited with ending the Rwandan genocide of 1994. However, the persecution of Tutsis has been prevalent long before the pogrom. The region has been rife with strife since colonial times; so much so that some 1,50,000 Tutsis had migrated to neighbouring countries even before Rwanda's independence from Belgium in 1962. The Rwandan genocide — in which the Hutu-led administration in Rwanda and the Hutu Interahamwe militia, went on a rampage, killing some 8,00,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus over 100 days — exists as a window for the rest of the world into the plight of the Tutsis. With the RPF at the helm, Hutus feared reprisals and fled post-genocide Rwanda for the DRC. Among the 2,00,000 Hutus that migrated, were the perpetrators of war crimes, who banded together and formed the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) — one of the more than 120 armed groups active in the region. To date, Rwanda, led by President Paul Kagame, has persisted in preventing attacks by these Hutu militias. Both Mr.

Kagame and the M23 have made it their mission to clamp down on the Hutu militias operating in the DRC. Efforts to this end included two invasions by Rwanda, called Africa's World Wars, in 1996 and 1998, which ended in 2003, after claiming the lives of five million from battle, disease and starvation. Mr. Kagame's tacit support for the M23 and its earlier iterations also stems from this fear of an FDLR reprisal. Since then, Rwanda has been on a constant ascent under Mr. Kagame, who also enjoyed support from Western nations. On the contrary, the M23's activities have ebbed and flowed. The group came into existence after the 2009 plan to integrate CNDP fighters into the Congolese military forces (FARDC) fell apart.

Shortly after its formation, the M23 captured Goma in late 2012. Despite withdrawing from the city in December, the group still accounted for 20% of the violence in the DRC between 2012 and 2013. Concerted efforts by UN peacekeepers and the Congolese military, accompanied by reduced support from the Rwandan military, saw to it that the group retreated into Uganda where its leader Sultani Makanga surrendered. Then came a brief lull of nine years until they resurfaced in late 2021, which was marked by the capture of mineral-rich regions such as Rubaya, Kasika, Walikale, Numbi and the more recent Goma.

This also begs the question as to whether the M23 is acting as a proxy for Rwanda, which stands to benefit from the Coltan ores in the DRC. Tantalum obtained from this ore is much sought after in the global market due to its use in mobile phones and other gadgets. In its pursuit to safeguard the 'rights of Congolese Tutsis', the M23 stands accused of crimes such as child slavery, rape and other war crimes by the UN. A report by the agency has also found that close to 4,000 Rwandan troops were fighting with the M23 in the DRC.

What is the cancer vaccine Russia is offering? | Explained

In December last year, Russia announced that it had developed a new, mRNA-based personalised 'vaccine' for cancer which would be available free for patients by early 2025. Media reports state that Andrey Kaprin, General Director of the Radiology Medical Research Center of the Russian Ministry of Health, spoke to Radio Rossiya about the vaccine. Reports also say that Alexander Gintsburg, Director of the Gamaleya National Research Center for Epidemiology and Microbiology, said the vaccine's pre-clinical trials had shown that it suppresses tumour development and potential metastases.

What is an mRNA cancer 'vaccine'?

mRNA or messenger RNA vaccines gained attention during the COVID-19 pandemic following the use of this technology to manufacture vaccines. Unlike traditional vaccines, that use weakened or inactivated pathogens to trigger an immune response in the body, mRNA or messenger RNA vaccines provide genetic information that teaches the body's cells to produce an antigen (protein or other substance that triggers an immune response), training the immune system to produce antibodies against it. When these antigens are detected on cancer cells, the immune system can potentially launch an attack against them.

How do these 'vaccines' work?

An mRNA cancer 'vaccine' is a form of immunotherapy. For some years now, immunotherapy research has been gaining ground when it comes to cancer treatment. "Cancer cells often develop mechanisms to avoid being detected and destroyed by the immune system. This immune evasion mechanism has now been understood, and the idea of immunotherapy, therefore, is to boost the body's immune system to find and destroy cancer cells, preventing their spread. The advantages of this treatment are that, unlike chemotherapy, only the cancer cells are killed, and the side effects are lowered," said M. Manickavasagam, professor and head of medical oncology, Sri Ramachandra Medical College, Chennai.While 'vaccines' are one form of immunotherapy, others include the use of antibodies, CAR T cell therapy, immune checkpoint inhibitors, etc.The mRNA cancer vaccines therefore, are not meant for healthy patients to prevent disease like other vaccines; they are meant to be used in patients who already have cancer, in order to target and treat the tumours,' says Arvind Krishnamurthy, professor and head, surgical oncology, Cancer Institute, WIA, Chennai.This treatment is tailored to target specific antigens that each patient's tumour has, making them personalised and potentially more effective. Unlike, say, the COVID-19 mRNA vaccine that targets one antigen — the spike protein of the coronavirus, the cancer mRNA 'vaccines' may also be designed to target multiple antigens.

Is Russia's the only research into a 'vaccine' for cancer?

No, it is not. Last year, the U.K.'s National Health Service launched the Cancer Vaccine Launch Pad, a trial programme, in collaboration with pharmaceutical company BioNTech to "speed up access to mRNA personalised cancer vaccine clinical trials for people who have been diagnosed with cancer" and "accelerate the development of cancer vaccines as a form of cancer treatment," according to its website.In the U.S., global biopharmaceutical company CureVac announced in September last year that its CVGBM cancer vaccine showed promising immune responses in a phase 1 study in patients with glioblastoma (brain cancer).Currently, more than 120 clinical trials are underway in various parts of the world. Predominantly these are studies in cancers of the lung, breast, prostate, and melanoma, and pancreas and brain, says Dr. Krishnamurthy.

What does it portend?

Doctors stress that unlike infectious diseases, since cancer, in general, is not caused by a single organism, the use of the word 'vaccine' may be misleading. In terms of prevention of cancer, the Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine can prevent cervical cancer since over 90% cases are known to be caused by this virus, says Prasad Eswaran, senior consultant, medical oncology, Apollo Proton Cancer Centre, Chennai. Also, the Hepatitis B vaccine that is given to prevent the Hepatit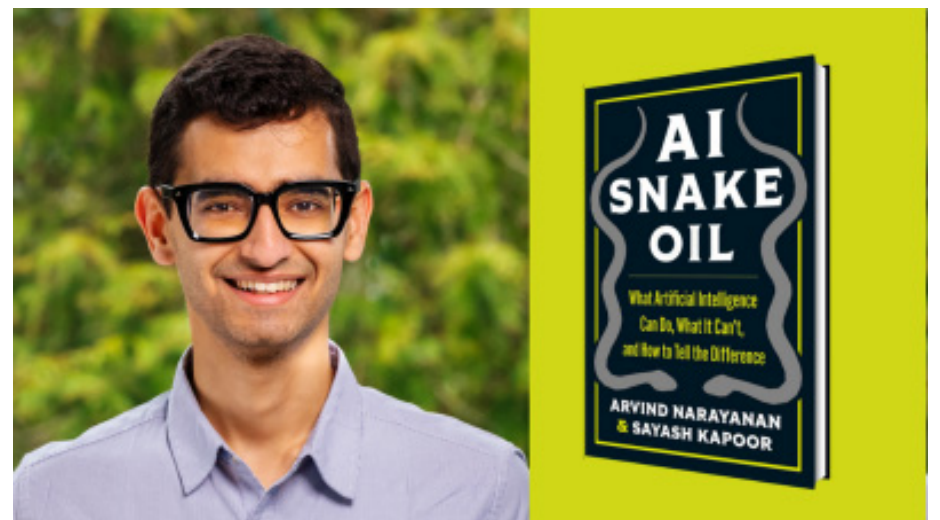is B viral infection, may have a protective role in the prevention of liver cancer, says Dr. Manickavasagam. "Patients must understand that these immunotherapy treatments are not preventive in nature," he emphasised.At the moment, there is very little information available about the Russian treatment being offered. Any new drug goes through multiple stages of clinical trials, a process that takes years, before it can finally reach the market. Without all of this data being available publicly, it is difficult to say what stage this treatment is at and how safe and effective it will be, Dr. Prasad points out.While immunotherapy remains an exciting new form of therapy and has shown promising results for certain cancers, it may not be suitable for all kinds of cancers or for every cancer patient. Research is ongoing, and time will tell how effective this may be, say doctors.

What works in AI, and what's just hype

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has rapidly evolved from a theoretical concept to a transformative force in our world today. But with this progress has come a surge of misinformation and exaggerated claims. In an effort to cut through the noise, AI Snake Oil, a book co-authored by Arvind Narayanan and Sayash Kapoor, critically examines AI's limitations and the often-unrealistic hype surrounding it. On The Interface podcast, Mr. Sayash explores the crucial need for a clearer understanding of AI's true capabilities and its pitfalls."It's crucial, just like the creation of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the early 20th century was necessary to prevent snake oil salesmen from taking advantage of the public, that we now separate the genuine advances in AI from the false promises," Mr. Sayash explained.

The term "snake oil" refers to the deceptive sales of miraculous products in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, paralleling the misleading claims about AI today. According to Mr. Sayash, AI's ability to deliver real progress is often overshadowed by companies selling unproven and unreliable technologies as the next big thing.In the book, the authors draw attention to two main categories of AI: predictive and generative. Predictive AI, which seeks to make predictions about individuals based on past data, has been particularly susceptible to such overblown claims. Mr. Sayash points out that while AI can often be positioned as a tool to revolutionise sectors like hiring or law enforcement, predictive AI has shown consistent flaws."A tool that uses video interviews to predict job performance is essentially no more than an elaborate random number generator," he noted. Despite the lack of supporting evidence, such tools continue to be marketed to companies across industries.

Generative AI, however, offers a more promising outlook. Unlike predictive AI, which attempts to foresee future outcomes, generative AI focuses on creating useful content based on existing data. "We aren't trying to predict the future, but rather create something useful in the present," Mr. Sayash said. He highlighted the impact generative AI has already had in knowledge work, especially in areas like coding."More than half of the first draft of code I write these days is done using generative AI systems," he added, acknowledging that tools like these can greatly improve productivity, provided their limitations are understood and respected.

While generative AI offers benefits, Mr. Sayash is cautious about its current shortcomings, particularly the issue of "hallucinations"—when the AI generates false or fabricated information. These errors have led to significant consequences, particularly in the legal field. There were instances where lawyers have been penalised for using AI-generated content without verifying its accuracy.Despite these challenges, he believes that with human oversight, generative AI can be valuable. "When experts are aware of the limitations and know how to correct mistakes, generative AI can be very useful for most knowledge work," .

Unearthing an ancient Tamil civilisation

While inaugurating the three-day International Conference on the centenary of the discovery of the Indus Valley Civilisation in Chennai on January 5, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin announced a $1 million prize for experts or organisations that succeed in deciphering the scripts of the Indus Valley Civilisation. A couple of weeks later, on January 23, he released a report, 'Antiquity of Iron: Recent radiometric dates from Tamil Nadu' and announced: "The Iron Age began on Tamil soil. The antiquity of iron in the Tamil landscape dates back to the first quarter of the 4th millennium BCE." Citing the carbon dating results, he said the usage of iron was prominent in south India over 5,300 years ago. These announcements have shifted the spotlight towards the findings of various excavations carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology (TNSDA) in Tamil Nadu over the years. The antiquity of iron in the Tamil landscape, dating back to the first quarter of the 4th millennium BCE, was based on samples drawn from archaeological excavations carried out here. The TNSDA excavated eight locations, including five habitation mounds and three burial sites, in and around Sivagalai, an Iron Age habitation-cum-burial site on the northern bank of Thamirabarani river in Thoothukdi district, between 2019 and 2022. The burial site called 'Sivagalai-parambu', spanning 500 acres, lies in the northwestern part of the village. Skeletal remains, iron objects and paddy grains were among the objects unearthed during the excavations. The paddy sample collected from an urn dated back to 1,155 BCE. Analysis of charcoal samples obtained from three trenches dated the antiquity of iron in Tamil landscape between 2,953 BCE and 3,345 BCE. Located on the northern bank of Thamirabarani river in Thoothukdi district, Adichanallur was first excavated by F. Jagor, a German Archaeologist, in 1876. It was subsequently excavated by British officer Alexander Rea between 1902 and 1904. Nearly 100 years later, ASI did an excavation in 2004-05. The ASI and TNSDA conducted excavations again between 2019 and 2023. These series of excavations yielded a wealth of materials, including gold diadems, metals, human remains such as bones, microlithic tools belonging to the Stone Age, female figurines, iron weapons and potsherds with Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions. The charcoal sample collected in association with iron objects found here in the habitation mound dated the usage of iron to mid of the 3rd millennium BCE.

A series of excavations by ASI and TNSDA at Keeladi, a hamlet in the Sivaganga district located 12 kilometers south-east of Madurai, since 2015, have proved that an urban civilisation existed in the ancient Tamil landscape on the banks of Vaigai river. K. Amarnath Ramakrishna, the then Superintending Archaeologist of ASI, discovered and oversaw the first two phases of excavations. Heaps of pottery unearthed here suggested the existence of a pottery-making industry that flourished using locally available raw materials. Hundreds of potsherds containing Tamil Brahmi inscriptions were found. Spindle whorls, copper needles, terracotta seals, hanging stones of the yarn, terracotta spheres and earthen vessels to hold liquid suggest various stages of a weaving industry. Gold ornaments, copper articles, semi-precious stones, shell bangles, ivory bangles and ivory combs reflect the artistic, culturally prosperous lifestyle that existed in Keeladi. The materials unearthed during the excavations by TNSDA in the ancient port town of Korkai in Thoothukdi district in 1968-69 and in recent years had shed light on the long-established trade relations of ancient Tamil Nadu. On-shore excavations have been taken up since the late 1960s point to the existence of a shell bangle-making industry. Organic materials found during the excavations date back to 785 BCE. Several fully intact, many half-cut and numerous fully broken conch shells were also found showing evidence of manufacturing of ornaments. Black Slipped ware of Gangetic plains, nine-storeyed perforated filtering pipe, and a large pot placed in the centre of a brick structure were also unearthed. Mayiladumparai in Krishnagiri district is yet another significant site, besides Sivagalai, with respect to the antiquity of iron. Excavations by TNSDA here had placed the existence of the Iron Age in the Tamil landscape 4,200 years ago. Excavations yielded cultural items such as microlithic tools, neolithic celts, neolithic tool polishing grooves, rock paintings, Iron Age graves, Tamil-Brahmi inscribed potsherds, memorial stones and trade guild inscriptions covering the time-span from Microlithic times to late Medieval period. Some of the other materials unearthed include merchant guild inscriptions, Neolithic stone tools, and hero stones.

GangaikondacholapuramLocated a few kilometres north of River Kollidam in Ariyalur district, excavations at Gangaikondacholapuram, the capital of the Cholas for about 250 years, were first carried out in the 1980s by the then TNSDA's director R. Nagaswamy. It brought to light the hidden structures of a palace and the city that Rajendra Chola-I built after his victorious expedition up to the Gangetic plains. Remains of a palace were exposed at Maligaimedu (the mound of a palace), about two km away to the rear of the famous Brihadisvara Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Subsequent excavations unearthed more such medieval-era mega brick structures, broken pieces of a bracelet made of gold and copper; and a figurine made of ivory. Situated about 6.5 km to the east of Pudukottai town, a Sangam-age fort is believed to have existed at Porpanaikottai where the TNSDA has been conducting excavations for the last couple of years manner. The unearthed materials at the site include hopscotches, glass beads and bangles, soapstone beads, crystal beads, iron nails, terracotta wheel, antimony rod, copper coins, rubbing stone, grinding stone, agate beads, spindle whorl, copper nails, carnelian beads, and terracotta earrings. A bone point probably used as a tool for weaving, a tiny broken piece of gold, glazed ware, porcelain potshard, black ware, red ware, perforated ware, torpedo jar and rouletted ware were also found during the excavations that were carried out at 'Aranmanai Thidal' and 'Kottai Karai'. Located on the banks of the Vaippar river in Virudhunagar district, excavations at Vembakottai have unearthed terracotta, shell bangles, artefacts made of gold, pot shreds, carnelian and glass beads, shell and ivory bangles, hopscotches, and iron and copper objects. Last year, a carnelian intaglio showing a humped bull was found. It was the second such carnelian intaglio found in Tamil Nadu. Earlier a similar material showing a wild boar was found in Keeladi. Archaeological excavations at

Kodumanal, lying on the northern banks of the Noyyal river about 15 km from Chennimalai in Erode district, revealed that the area flourished as an industrial and trading centre more than 2,000 years ago. Kodumanal was referred to as Kodumanam in Pathitrupathu of Sangam literature. It is believed that Kodumanal, lying on the ancient trade route connecting Karur, the capital of Cheras with Muziris, their ancient port town which is currently in Kerala, had a bustling industrial activity. Shell bangles, coins, potsherds inscribed with Tamil Brahmi scripts, precious stones, and beads made of carnelian, amethyst, and quartz were unearthed during the excavation carried out between 1985 and 2011. A menhir (standing stone) and a few megalithic burial sites were also found. Located close to Chennai city, Pallavaram, originally known as Pallavapuram, was one of the oldest inhabited places in the southern part of India, since the Paleolithic Age. More than 160 years ago, in 1863, geologist Robert Bruce Foote discovered a stone tool on the Parade Ground at Pallavaram cantonment. It was a hand-axe made of quartzite. Prehistoric man had crafted it to dig out tubers and roots from the soil, and to butcher animals and take out the meat. In the same year, he also found numerous stone tools, including hand axes, cleavers and flake tools at Attirampakkam, near the Kosasthalaiyar river, in Tiruvallur district. Since then, Pallavaram gained a historical significance. In 1888, British officer Alexander Rea for the first time unearthed a sarcophagus at a hillock in Pallavaram. Later in 2017, the ASI unearthed a six-foot-high terracotta sarcophagus believed to be more than 2,000 years old from the same locality.

R.N. Ravi: In pursuit of controversies

Neither Tamil Nadu nor its Governor Ravindra Narayan Ravi is a stranger to controversies. However, the last three-odd years of the tenure of the 72-year-old Governor, a retired IPS officer of the Kerala cadre (1976 batch), has all along been full of controversies. As an officer of the Intelligence wing in the police initially and an interlocutor subsequently for the Naga peace process for seven years, Mr. Ravi, who was also Nagaland Governor during August 2019-September 2021, must have used his diplomatic skills greatly. This could be seen from the fact that he, as the Union government's representative, signed a framework agreement with one of the rebel Naga groups in New Delhi on August 3, 2015. It was another matter that he later courted one controversy after another as the Governor of the north-eastern State.

But, in the case of the southern State, the trouble began more than 40 months ago even before Mr. Ravi became the 26th Governor of Tamil Nadu. The then chief of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, K.S. Alagiri, questioned the motive behind Mr. Ravi's shift and recalled how another retired police officer Kiran Bedi, as Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry (May 2016-February 2021), and the former Congress government, headed by V. Narayanasamy, had fractious ties. The first sign of trouble between the Governor and the DMK government, led by M.K. Stalin, was visible over the issue of clearance to the legislation seeking exemption from the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) for admission to undergraduate medical courses. The latter gradually found that Mr. Ravi was not acting as a facilitator for sending the Bill to the President for assent. It was then — January 2022 — that the DMK began making its demand for his ouster. After Mr. Ravi sent back the Bill on the ground that it was against the interests of students from rural areas and economically weaker sections, the State Assembly in February 2022 readopted it and returned it to him. Eventually, the Governor had referred the Bill to the President, leaving the matter pending. On many other Bills, the State government had to seek remedy from the Supreme Court, which, in November 2023, described as a "serious concern" the "constitutional deadlock" created by Mr. Ravi. On February 7, 2024, the top court asked whether the Governor referred to the President 10 Bills repassed by the State legislature only to avoid having to give consent to them. Mr. Ravi is in no way different with regard to higher education where he has a direct role to play in the form of Chancellor of State Universities, six of which have not been having Vice Chancellors (VCs). For the purpose of selecting VCs, he is pushing for the implementation of the UGC's 2018 Regulations, which stipulates the formation of a panel of 3-5 persons,