

Telangana lacks plan amid rising Guillain Barre Syndrome cases

Hyderabad: While cases of Guillain Barre Syndrome (GBS) continue to rise across Maharashtra, the Telangana State government is yet to form a cohesive plan to treat patients, procure life-saving immunotherapy drugs and take up and build the capacity of healthcare workers in ICUs and physiotherapy. Treating GBS patients is prohibitively expensive, costing upwards of Rs 4 lakh to Rs 5 lakh. About 25 percent of GBS patients need ventilator support, while nearly all require long-term physiotherapy support that could last for at least months. Since treatment GBS involves extensive rehabilitation, ventilator support and potentially physical disability, patients without private medical insurance will struggle with out-of-pocket medical expenses.

Currently, there is no indication that the wave of GBS cases reported in Pune will also occur in Hyderabad and elsewhere in Telangana State. "Instead of waiting for GB cases to rise, it's better to be proactive and prepare for at least 50 beds at Gandhi Hos-

pital or any other hospital for exclusive treatment of GB syndrome patients. During the Covid pandemic, the BRS government procured ventilators, which can be utilised for GB syndrome patients," senior neurologists familiar with the issue said. There is also a need to train caregivers, who are exclusively involved in bed-side assistance of patients. "At least 25 percent of GB patients need ventilator support. Such patients also may have special needs.

Moreover, they also need a lot of physiotherapy support. So, there is definitely a need to have set-protocols and training for at least a week on handling GB syndrome positive cases," senior neurologists on condition of anonymity said. GB syndrome patients must be administered with Intravenous Globulins (IVIg). The total dose is 2 grams per kilogram of body weight, which is split into 5 days, and given as infusion," he advises. The IVIG injections are sold in two dose forms including 5 grams and 10 grams vials with cost of each vial ranging from Rs



15,000 to Rs 20,000 approximately. "The total cost of IVIG would be around Rs 2,50,000 to Rs 3,00,000 for one single patient. The

State government must take measures to procure these drugs at the earliest," doctors advised.

Adilabad farmers send selfie videos to Rahul Gandhi demanding enhanced Rythu Bharosa



Adilabad: In a novel protest, farmers have sent selfie videos urging Congress leader Rahul Gandhi through social media platforms, asking him to realise his poll promise of extending enhanced Rythu Bharosa crop investment support of Rs 15,000 per acre at model village Mukhra (K) in Echoda mandal on Monday. "What have we done wrong, Rahul Gandhi, that Revanth Reddy cannot provide us with financial assistance that was promised?" the farmers asked in the video. The protesting farmers recalled that Rahul Gandhi had assured them that he would provide 15,000 per acre to every farmer, Rs 12,000 in Indiramma Athmeeya Bharosa, and Rs 2,500 per month to every woman in the Maha Lakshmi scheme, but now your Chief Minister A

Revanth Reddy is implementing the crop investment support to farmers of only one village in the mandal. The farmers lamented that the Chief Minister Revanth Reddy could not fulfill the promise you made in the Warangal Declaration. "He did not provide Rythu Bharosa during the Vanakalam season. We raised various crops in Yasangi season and still did not receive the investment support so far," they said, urging Rahul Gandhi to fulfill his promise to ensure security to farmers at least now. Farmers were reeling under severe financial crisis due to crop failures and low yield. The village Sarpanch Gadge Meenakshi, MPTC Gadge Subhash, Vittal, Prahlad, Datta, Nagnath, Tirupati, Tulsiram and several farmers participated in this programme.

Telangana caste survey: Congress government's Rs 160-cr expense raises eyebrows

Hyderabad: The Congress government's Rs 160-crore expenditure on the Social, Economic, Employment, Education, Political, and Caste Survey-2024 has sparked controversy, with BC leaders and opposition parties questioning the massive spending.

The survey, conducted primarily by local government employees, has raised doubts about the necessity of such high costs. Adding to the concerns, data entry

operators responsible for uploading the survey findings have not been paid their salaries for four months, forcing them to protest for their salaries. Critics argue that while the State claims to empower marginalised communities, it has failed to ensure fair treatment of its own workforce. The controversy deepens with comparisons to Karnataka's Socio-Economic and Education Survey in 2014, which also cost the exact Rs 160 crore, but remained unpublished due to internal disagreements within the Congress.



Where rituals and reverence converge: The sadhu akharas of Kumbh Mela

Amidst the vibrant chaos of the Kumbh Mela, one presence stands out — the sadhu akharas. These sects of ascetic monks, rooted in ancient traditions, set up sprawling camps across the mela grounds, where they conduct rituals, perform yogic feats, engage in deep meditation, initiate new followers, and offer spiritual teachings and darshan to devotees. The akharas wield immense influence, shaping the festival's character and earning the veneration of pilgrims. But what are these akharas? How did they come to be, and why are they so central to the soul of the Kumbh Mela?

The term akhara, or akhada, originally referred to a physical arena for sports, particularly wrestling. However, in the context of the Kumbh Mela, it has evolved to represent the 13 traditional sects of sadhus (monks) that have been integral to the festival for centuries. In his book *Divine Kumbh: Echoes of Eternity: Ganga, Shipra, Godavari, and Sangam*, journalist and author Deepak Kumar Sen describes each akhara as a meticulously structured institution, organised into eight *davas* (divisions) and 52 *marhis* (centres), each overseen by a Mahant (head). The origins of the akharas are steeped in both history and mythology. Many monks trace the establishment of the akharas to Adi Shankaracharya, the revered Indian philosopher and Vedic scholar, who is believed to have united ascetics into these organised groups. However, some scholars argue that the akharas developed organically over time as ascetic communities began to form their structures. Historian Kama Maclean, in her study of the Kumbh, reveals that before the consolidation of British colonial rule in northern India, the Haridwar Kumbh was dominated by fiercely competitive akharas. These sadhus were not only religious devotees but also traders, transporting valuable commodities such as gold, silk, and spices along the pilgrimage routes. For them, festivals like the Kumbh Mela served dual purposes — religious gatherings and marketplaces for their goods. Till the late 18th century, many akharas also functioned as mercenary warriors, defending their possessions and asserting their economic power. While the akharas today have largely shed their commercial roles, they still maintain a complex blend of spiritual and cultural influence. The 13 akharas are broadly categorised into four groups based on their devotional focus — Shaiva akharas, Vaishnava akharas, Udasina akharas, and Sikh akhara. According to Sen, Shaiva akharas are dedicated to Lord Shiva, while Vaishnava akharas worship Lord Vishnu. Litterateur Nityananda Misra, in his book *Kumbha: The Traditionally Modern Mela*, characterises Udasina akharas as neutral, with the Sikh akhara adhering to Sikhism. As Misra explains, of the 13 akharas, seven are Shaiva, three are Vaishnava, two are Udasina, and one is Sikh. Four paths of faith: The Shaiva Akharas are composed of sadhus who follow Lord Shiva and wear the sacred tripundra, a horizontal mark on their foreheads. They march in a precise order, with the Mahanirvani Akhara leading alongside the Atala Akhara, followed by the Niranjani Akhara paired with the Ananda Akhara, and finally the Juna Akhara, accompanied by the Avahana and Agni Akharas. Among these,



the Atala Akhara is one of the oldest, believed to have been established in the 7th century CE. Based in Varanasi, it has centres across India, including Prayagraj, Haridwar, Nashik, and Ujjain. Historically exclusive, admitting only males from the three upper varnas (Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas), it remains relatively small, with around 500 sadhus as of 2016. In contrast, the Juna Akhara is not only the largest akhara — with an estimated five lakh sadhus — but is also considered the oldest. Its network spans numerous branches and centres throughout India. Story continues below this ad. Maclean notes in her article *Seeing, Being Seen, and Not Being Seen: Pilgrimage, Tourism, and Layers of Looking at the Kumbh Mela*, the Juna Akhara has also become media-savvy, negotiating exclusive rights with photographers and journalists. The Vaishnava Akharas trace their origins to the 18th century. Originally comprising seven akharas, they were later reorganised into three: Nirvani, Digambara, and Nirmohi. Each Vaishnava Akhara features an image of Lord Hanuman on its flag, symbolising strength and devotion, and they march after the Shaiva Akharas during the bathing processions. The Nirvani Akhara is particularly notable for its focus on physical fitness. The Digambara Akhara is the largest Vaishnava Akhara, with around two lakh sadhus across 450 branches. This akhara venerates Sita, Lord Ram, and Lord Hanuman.

The Nirmohi Akhara plays a crucial role in preserving Vaishnava traditions. Sen adds, "Members of these akharas wear clothes and have signs in particular colours to differentiate themselves... Nirmohis have a yellow-coloured sign, Digambers a motley-coloured one, and Nirvanis a silver-coloured sign." The Udasina Akharas derive their name from the Sanskrit word *udasina*, meaning 'neutral.' True to their name, Misra argues that Udasina sadhus do not fully align with Shaivism, Vaishnavism, or Sikhism. According to Sen, however, there are three Udasina akharas of Sikhs following Guru Nanak and guided by Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh scripture. They are divided into two subcategories: the Bada (large) Udasina Akhara and the Naya (new) Udasina Akhara. A unique feature of the Udasina tradition is its ritual of

offering madira (alcohol) to fire, along with its practice of initiating children, including orphans, as Naga sadhus, writes Misra. A young Udasina Akhara disciple practising martial art The Sikh Akhara, known as the Nirmala Akhara, is the last to participate in the ceremonial bathing procession. Based in Kankhal (Haridwar), it comprises around 15,000 sadhus and has centres across India. These sadhus, according to Misra, revere both Hindu scriptures such as the Vedas, Bhagavad Gita and Upanishads, as well as the Sikh scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib. An emerging presence at the Kumbh Mela since 2019 is the Kinnar Akhara. "The 14th Akhada, which was made for transgender individuals, was recognised in the last Kumbh," says Neeraj Bora. However, Sen, in his interview with *indianexpress.com*, mentions that the Akhara Parishad (Council) has not officially recognised it yet.

Though the Kumbh Mela is often hailed as a symbol of spiritual unity, it has also been marked by fierce competition and intense rivalries among the akharas. In earlier centuries, the Haridwar Kumbh was a battleground for economic and spiritual dominance, where sadhu akharas fought for the right to control the festival and reap its lucrative rewards. The victorious sect claimed a prestigious honour: being the first to enter the sacred waters of the Ganga on the most auspicious bathing day. These contests, which often descended into violent clashes, became embedded in the British administrative imagination. The very thought of angry sadhus armed and ready to turn their weapons against the colonial authorities was a cause for concern. Misra says that during the 1760 Haridwar Kumbh, a fierce battle erupted over the right to bathe first. According to Captain Raper, writing in 1808, as many as 18,000 sadhus — mostly Vaishnavas — were killed in the violence, although Misra suggests that this figure is likely exaggerated. A similar conflict flared up in the 1796 Haridwar Kumbh, when a clash between Shaiva sadhus and Nirmala Sikhs resulted in around 500 deaths. The British, seeking to manage these rivalries, codified the order of precedence in the late 19th century, granting the most pow-

erful akharas the right to bathe first. Even today, tensions between the akharas manifest in disputes over the grandiosity of processions, the number of banners carried, and how rituals are performed. "The Akhara Parishad decides who enters the water first, with larger akharas typically going first. It's a display of strength, and that's where the competition lies," observes Sen. Another historically contentious issue has been the practice of naga sadhus. While nudity was outlawed by the British in 1840 as part of their campaign to impose 'public decency,' the sacred nature of the Kumbh Mela presented a grey area for colonial authorities. Although Maclean notes that British newspapers and missionaries occasionally petitioned to ban naked processions, these requests were largely ignored by the administration, which prioritised crowd control and sanitation over policing religious customs. Today, Misra opines, "The relations between Shaiva, Vaishnava, Udasina, and Sikh akharas are largely peaceful." The ritualistic core of the akharas Before the Kumbh Mela officially begins, a grand ceremonial procession known as the *peshwai* marks the arrival of the akharas in the city. As Misra describes in his book, "The *peshwai* is an occasion for residents of the city and *tirthayatri*s (pilgrims) to welcome the sadhus to the Kumbh Mela." Traditionally, the sadhus, who usually eat only once a day, partake in a simple meal of *khichdi* before the procession begins. This event is nothing short of a royal spectacle. Sadhus march alongside horses and elephants, while bands play vibrant music to accompany them. The *Shri Mahantas* (leaders) of the akharas are seated on ornately decorated vehicles transformed into chariots and naga sadhus captivate the crowd with acrobatic displays and martial arts performances using sticks, swords, and spears. Locals and pilgrims shower the sadhus with flowers, presenting them with garlands. Shortly after the *peshwai*, the raising of the *dharma-dhvaja* (the 'flag of dharma') by the akharas marks the official start of the Kumbh Mela. The flag is kept raised throughout the festival, only being lowered at the end to signify its conclusion. Sen notes that the sadhus of the akharas are the first to dip into the holy river, followed by the pilgrims.

MG Sewa Drives Social Change, Empowering 70,000 Women & Girl Children Among 1.2 Lakh Beneficiaries Over the Last Year

Hyderabad :JSW MG Motor India, a prominent name in India's automotive landscape, is driving social change through its flagship initiative, 'MG Sewa'. Launched even before the company's first car rolled out, MG Sewa embodies a vision of societal upliftment that transcends conventional boundaries. At its core, MG Sewa focuses on bridging gaps in access to education and hygiene, with a special emphasis on girl child education and women empowerment. In 2024 alone, the initiative has positively impacted the lives of over 1.2 lakh beneficiaries, with more than 70,000 of them being females. By enabling access to advanced learning opportunities, fostering early literacy, and supporting mothers' education, MG Sewa nurtures aspirations and unlocks potential among young women and their families. The program's holistic development approach extends beyond education, addressing critical aspects of personal growth, community health, and inclusivity. Focused interventions create inclusive opportunities for children with unique needs, empowering them to thrive and succeed in their educational journeys and beyond.

What sets MG Sewa apart is its genesis and philosophy. Unlike many corporate initiatives, MG Sewa was established purely as a mission-driven endeavour, without a mandated CSR team or obligations. This approach reflects JSW MG Motor India's belief that businesses can voluntarily contribute to impactful social change. Through programs like WASH (Water, Sanitation, and

Hygiene), MG Sewa has positively impacted the lives of over 16,730 women and girls by promoting menstrual hygiene in regions where many challenges still prevail. In rural Odisha, MG Sewa's educational programs are making mathematics accessible to tribal communities in over 100 government schools, using innovative methods tailored to their native languages. These ongoing initiatives have reached over 80,000 children, empowering them to overcome educational barriers.

Commenting on the initiative, Rajeev Chaba, CEO Emeritus said, "Community is a core brand pillar at JSW MG Motor India, and our care for people transcends beyond our customers and employees. Sewa, our voluntary community service initiative, was conceptualized well before the launch of our first car. Aimed at creating a positive impact in the fields of women's empowerment and girl child education, under Sewa, we have supported over 70,000 females across the country in the past year. Our vision is simple yet powerful – 'to support as many women as the cars we sell'. We strive to drive meaningful change and contribute to a brighter, more equitable future for all." MG Sewa reflects JSW MG Motor India's commitment to creating meaningful social impact by driving initiatives that focus on holistic development. Through a dedicated emphasis on girl child and women's education, health, hygiene, and overall well-being, MG Sewa showcases how businesses can go beyond their core operations to foster positive



change. By collaborating with trusted partners, the initiative works to empower communities and pave the way for a brighter,

more inclusive future, ensuring every effort contributes to building a stronger foundation for growth and opportunity.

Grand B.Ed Special Education Graduation Ceremony



Hyderabad: The graduation ceremony for students was conducted grandly on Wednesday at Swayamkrushi B.Ed Special Education College, located in Balaji Nagar, Jawahar Nagar Division. Students who successfully completed the Special B.Ed course

received their degree certificates. Professor K. Shashikant, Controller of Examinations, Osmania University, attended as the chief guest and distributed the certificates to the students.

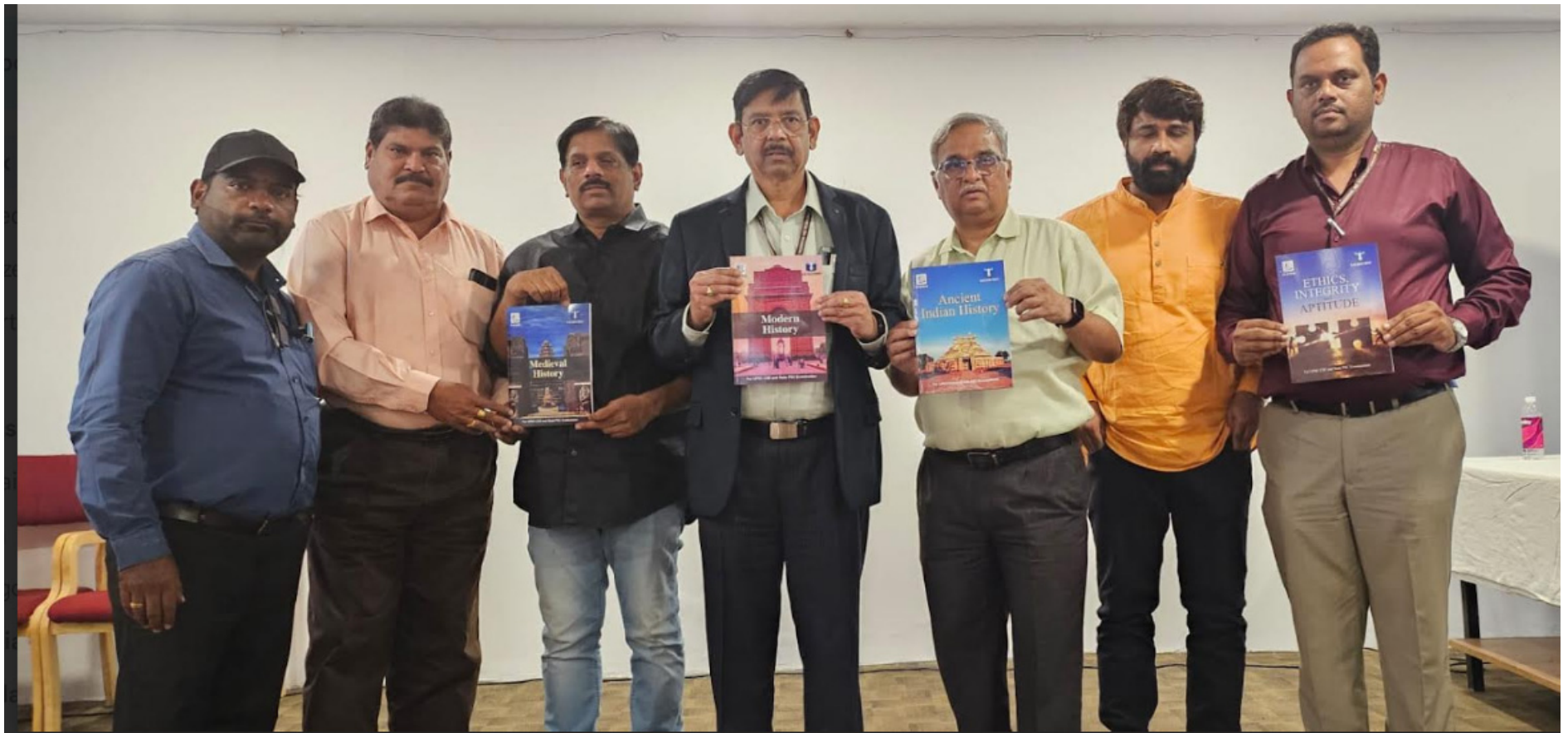
Several students expressed their joy in

receiving their Special B.Ed degree. Cultural programs organized on this occasion captivated the audience.

The event was attended by OU Additional Controller of Examinations Prof. D. Radhika Yadav, Prof. Sujatha, Education

Department Assistant Professor Dr. J. Lalitha, OU faculty member Dr. B. Sujatha, Swayamkrushi Director Dr. Manjula Kalyan, Principal Dr. P.V.B. Sudhakar, Dr. Sushil Kumar, faculty members, and other dignitaries.

Seminar on “How to Crack Civil Services in the First Attempt” Held at JBIET.



Hyderabad, Feb 5: A seminar on “How to Crack Civil Services in the First Attempt” was organized at J.B. Institute of Engineering and Technology (JBIET), Moinabad, by VINGS Media and G5 Media Group in collaboration with 21st Century IAS Academy. Mr. P. Krishna Pradeep, Chairman of 21st Century IAS Academy, addressed the students, sharing the inspiring journey of Smt. Pamela Satpathy, the current Collector of Karimnagar, Telangana. He highlighted how she was underestimated by

her peers during her school days due to her academic struggles. However, with perseverance and dedication, she overcame these challenges and achieved success in the Civil Services Examination. Mr. Prasad elaborated on her transformation, mentioning that she hails from Roorkee and became a collector through sheer determination. Mr. Krishna Pradeep advised students to take their careers seriously and always think big.

Dr. Bhavani Shankar, Chief Mentor and Director of 21st Century IAS Academy, de-

bunked the myth that UPSC success is limited to students from elite institutions. He emphasized that with the right strategy, dedication, and a strong foundation in fundamental concepts—even from the 6th-grade curriculum—any student can clear the Civil Services Examination. Welcoming the attendees, JBIET Principal Dr. P.C. Krishnamachary encouraged students to make the most of the session and announced the launch of a Civil Aspirants Club to support and guide UPSC aspirants within the

college. As part of this initiative, books authored by experts from 21st Century IAS Academy were unveiled by the principal. The event was attended by college secretary Mr J.V. Krishna Rao, Dr. Md. Asif (Career Guidance Cell Coordinator & TPO), Dr. Narsappa Reddy (HOD-ECM), Dr. Himanshu Sharma (Dean-Admin), Dr. Venkata Krishna (Dean-CS), Mr. Giri Prakash (Director, VINGS Media and G5 Media Group), Mr. Ganesh (Editor), Mr. Mahesh (Manager), faculty members, and enthusiastic students.

104 Indians deported from US land in Amritsar. Here's what happens now

As many as 104 illegal Indian immigrants deported from the United States landed in a US military C-17 transport aircraft at Punjab's Amritsar airport on Wednesday. Of these, 30 are from Punjab, 33 each from Haryana and Gujarat, three each from Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, and two from Chandigarh, sources said. The US military aircraft, which took off from Texas's San Antonio and landed at Amritsar's Shri Guru Ramdas Ji International Airport around 1:55 pm. The administration conducted initial questioning of those deported and made arrangements to send them back to their respective homes. It was said that no family members of the deportees reached the airport to receive them. Sources said that after thorough verification of their documents and credentials, along with a medical examination, the deportees will be taken to their respective states and hometowns. They further said that the concerned state governments arranged for special buses to bring the

deportees home, and have also deployed local police personnel in the bus for their security. Those Indian migrants who hail from Maharashtra and Gujarat will be sent to their homes by air, sources said. Notably, several people from Punjab, who entered the American soil through “donkey routes” or other illegal ways by sending lakhs or rupees, are now facing deportation. Trump crackdown on immigration The Trump administration in Washington got down to business as the President took charge of the White House on January 20. So far, US has used military aircraft to deport illegal migrants to Guatemala, Peru, and Honduras. India was one of the farthest destinations for America to send its aircraft for deporting the illegal immigrants. Earlier, External affairs minister S Jaishankar had said that it would facilitate the return of Indian nations “overstaying” or residing without proper documentation in the US or “anywhere in the world”. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal had also reiterated India's stance on illegal immigration,



A gangster's shadowy trail from Moga to Surrey

In 2020, two years after he left for Canada, gangster Arshdeep Singh Gill aka Arsh Dalla made a trip to India. Investigations later revealed that the visit was to kill his friend-turned-rival Sukha Lamme. Police say Dalla allegedly injected Lamme with poison, mutilated the body, and discarded it in a canal in Moga. For months afterwards, he allegedly operated Lamme's social media handle, using the dead gangster's identity to expand his extortion and smuggling rackets. The deception came to light in May 2021, when the Punjab Police arrested one of Dalla's gang members, who confessed to Lamme's murder. By then, Dalla had returned to Canada, orchestrating a sprawling crime syndicate from his base in Surrey. Over time, his ability to exploit legal loopholes and hide behind fake identities became his signature as he allegedly coordinated crimes across Moga and adjoining districts from the safety of his Canadian hideout. The 27-year-old Dalla, designated a terrorist by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in January 2023, has over 70 cases registered against him in India. With Dalla reportedly being detained in Canada on October 29, the Indian government is all set to seek his extradition. Police say his network, which allegedly included his father Charanjit Singh and brother Baldeep, thrived on extortion, arms smuggling, and targeted killings, with victims ranging from small traders to prominent figures, both in Punjab and Canada.

Dalla's reported arrest in Canada came a day after a grenade attack at a petrol pump in Punjab's Mansa district — a rare and alarming escalation in extortion tactics. It was the second FIR against the 27-year-old Dalla that week and the third in October. An FIR filed on October 23 accused him of making threatening calls to a rice sheller in Faridkot. On October 9, he was accused of carrying out the murder of a Sikh activist, Gurpreet Singh Hari Nau, in Faridkot district. Member of Parliament from Khadoor Sahib and Warris Punjab De head Amritpal Singh, who is in Dibrugarh jail, was also named in the case along with Dalla. But Dalla later released an audio clip in which he claimed responsibility for the murder while clarifying that Amritpal Singh was not involved. His "arrest" in Canada remains shrouded in mystery. Canadian authorities have yet to confirm his detention, but reports suggest his name has surfaced in a case involving a shooting in Ontario on October 28. Born in 1996 into a family of sarpanches — both his grandfather and father held the post in his ancestral Dalla village near Moga — Dalla and his younger brother Baldeep went to the tony Sacred Heart School in Moga, where they did their matriculation from the ICSE Board. Villagers say a financial crisis forced his father, who tilled land on lease, to move Dalla to the village government school, where he studied till Class 12. His descent into crime began soon after. He was 19 when the first FIR was filed against him for snatching a rifle from a security guard in Barnala in 2015.

Despite this case and another of attempted murder, he managed to obtain a passport from the Jalandhar Regional Passport Office in 2017 following a 'paper mar-

riage' with a woman from Rajasthan and, in 2018, left for Canada. Investigations revealed that Dalla allegedly operated his syndicate from his base in Surrey, Canada, where he lived with his wife and minor daughter. As Dalla's influence grew, so did his family's alleged involvement. Charanjit was accused of exploiting his son's notoriety for extortion in Moga and nearby areas. Baldeep Singh, meanwhile, operated as a key accomplice, reportedly handling extortion and crime logistics. "His father Charanjit and brother Baldeep funnelled the money they extorted in his name through wire transfers. This helped him sustain his network in India and Canada," said Assistant Sub Inspector with Moga Police, Kiker Singh, who has investigated many of the cases against Dalla. Police say Baldeep's cautious use of disposable phone numbers and encrypted communications allowed him to evade police scrutiny for years. In August 2021, Baldeep was arrested at Delhi airport while attempting to flee to Canada. However, he got out on bail and, embarrassingly for the Punjab Police, managed to secure a forged passport and flee to Australia in January 2023. An FIR revealed that Charanjit and four others allegedly assisted him in obtaining the passport. Police sources say Baldeep is believed to be in Australia. They say Baldeep, who lived lavishly while in Moga despite being unemployed, maintained communication with Dalla through untraceable WhatsApp calls, complicating police efforts to track him. Charanjit is at present lodged in the Faridkot jail. Dalla allegedly orchestrated his syndicate of over 300 operatives who executed crimes on his orders, including the murder of Moga businessman Jitendra alias Pinka in 2020. Police say Dalla got weapons, ranging from tiffin bombs to grenades, smuggled across the Indo-Pak border for use by his network in India. In January 2023, Punjab police seized pistols, grenades, and live cartridges linked to Dalla's network. Over 60 of his associates have been arrested, with most weapons traced to Pakistan.

On January 7, Punjab Police's Special Branch apprehended Gurpreet Singh alias Gopi and two others at a checkpoint near Mehna village in Tarn Taran. The three were allegedly found with two pistols, two grenades and 12 live cartridges. Investigations linked them to Dalla, with the weapons reportedly originating from Pakistan. This arrest shed light on Dalla's expansive cross-border arms supply network. Dalla's enmity with other designated terrorists underscores the infighting within Punjab's gangster networks. Dalla is at daggers drawn with the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, which allegedly assassinated his close aide Sukhdul Singh, alias Sukha Dunike, in Winnipeg, Canada in December 2023. Dalla accused Landa of betrayal, claiming that Landa initially relied on him for weapons but later turned against him. Dalla also targeted the late Harvinder Rinda, alleging that Rinda sided with his enemies and facilitated the supply of weapons used in the Sidhu Moosewala murder. Dalla's criminal activities took on a communal angle in December 2020 when a post on Sukha Gill Lamme's Facebook account — then being operated by Dalla — claimed responsibility



for the murder of Manohar Lal, a Dera Sacha Sauda follower, as "revenge" for the 2015 sacrilege incidents. The killing was seen as an attempt to garner sympathy from the Sikh community. Investigative agencies linked this murder to pro-Khalistan groups, further deepening Dalla's ties to extremist networks. In July 2022, the NIA filed a chargesheet implicating Dalla and Hardeep Singh Nijjar in a conspiracy to kill Hindu priest Kamaldeep Sharma in Jalandhar. The attack

was allegedly part of a broader plan to disrupt communal harmony in Punjab. Dalla's name surfaced in another case in January 2023 when Delhi Police arrested two operatives linked to the Lashkar-e-Toiba for a murder intended to instill fear and communal discord. Later that year, the NIA declared Dalla a terrorist under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and as a key operative of the Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF). A Red Corner Notice was issued against him by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

WhatsApp bans over 8.5 million accounts in India for policy violations

New Delhi: Meta-owned WhatsApp banned more than 85 lakh "bad" accounts in India in the month of September for violating its policies. Between September 1-September 30, the company banned 8,584,000 accounts and 1,658,000 of these accounts were proactively banned, before any reports from users, according to the social media platform's monthly compliance report under the new IT Rules 2021. The popular mobile messaging platform, which has more than 600 million users in India, received 8,161 grievances from the country, and the records "actioned" were 97. The account "Actioned" means complaints where WhatsApp took remedial action. WhatsApp also received two orders from the Grievance Appellate Committee in the country and complied with both, according to its monthly compliance

report. "We will continue with transparency to our work and include information about our efforts in future reports," said the company. It employs a team of engineers, data scientists, analysts, researchers, and experts in law enforcement, online safety, and technology developments to oversee these efforts.

"We enable users to block contacts and to report problematic content and contacts to us from inside the app. We pay close attention to user feedback and engage with specialists in stemming misinformation, promoting cybersecurity, and preserving election integrity," said WhatsApp. The abuse detection operates at three stages of an account's lifecycle: at registration, during messaging, and in response to negative feedback, which we receive in the form of user reports and blocks.

Justice Hrishikesh Roy interview: 'A mature govt wouldn't interfere too much with judiciary'

Justice Hrishikesh Roy, who retired from the Supreme Court Friday, was appointed as Gauhati High Court judge in 2006. He was the Chief Justice of the Kerala High Court in 2018 before entering the Supreme Court in 2019. Apart from being a member of the Collegium, he was part of many key verdicts, including the 2023 ruling on the appointment of Chief Election Commissioner; and the 9-judge bench ruling that held that not all private property can be a material resource of the community in which he penned a dissent. He spoke to Apurva Vishwanath. Excerpts: I don't think it is fair to say that 34 judges, coming from varied backgrounds, can have all that bonhomie and a backslapping kind of a relationship but there is certainly a relationship of cordiality and mutual respect. The recent gathering that Chief Justice of India Sanjeev Khanna initiated brought a bit of light-heartedness. We travelled together in a bus with our families, and everyone felt that there was a greater bonding.

Did you also discuss business? There was a plan to reiterate or update the judicial code of ethics?

The CJI had a couple of ideas, of course. He wanted to introduce a process of interaction with potential judges in their region rather than calling them to Delhi. We discussed the potential reaffirmation or updating of the ethics code. Not like a formal announcement, but we had discussions about how the institution might address certain situations.

Are you referring to how the Supreme Court intervened in the incident where Allahabad High Court judge made controversial remarks against Muslims in speech?

That is the recent incident. But whenever such incidents happen, there are a few options. Trying to counsel or talk to the individual, transfer, holding back work, the in-house inquiry procedure or impeachment. Even when you transfer, if the government does not want it, there are instances when it has not given effect to such transfers.

So what should the institutional response be in such cases?

I am not sure. I think all our options are soft options and not very effective. We are not equipped to deal with such situations. You see, the Constitution has several safeguards for judges, which are required for us to do our job, free from any external pressures. These safeguards are required but they are also coming in the way of institutional responses. But I must add that this is just one or two judges in over 1000 judges of constitutional courts. Perhaps, we made a mistake in choosing a person but it's not as if everything is bad.

You mentioned transfer as an option. A transfer to the North-East is considered a punishment in judiciary but is that a solution?

Transferring someone as punishment to any of the Northeastern High Courts would offend the people there. They feel insulted if a person with a bad reputation from state X is sent to them. You see, these are much smaller high courts, some with three judges. If one of the three judges is problematic, one-third of the High Court is affected so the impact is much larger. I feel it is better to move them to a larger state where their impact is

less.

What difference has live streaming and social media made to the work of the courts?

When I was a lawyer in Guwahati, Assam was a disturbed area and because I did a lot of pro bono work, media persons would ask me for details of some important hearings. Eventually, alongside my practice, I also used to write, as a legal correspondent, for the Press Trust of India and The Assam Tribune. Being a lawyer means being sensitive enough to understand that the judges' passing remark does not necessarily reflect the final judgement. Nowadays, with constant focus and live streaming, reports are often limited. They may catch the readers' eye, but have very little to do with the actual proceedings. By the time you are in the Supreme Court, there is some experience. But at lower levels, like in a trial of a high-profile person, it is challenging for less experienced magistrates, not to be swayed by external focus. Story continues below this ad

How does one uphold judicial ethics amid this constant public gaze...temptation to play to the gallery.

Everyone is administered the oath when they become a judge but for those who lead by the oath, these principles are sacrosanct. Why do we administer the oath in a solemn ceremony? So the person knows that they are stepping into a responsible position and cannot behave in a manner unbecoming of a judge. They need to be aware of their responsibilities, not only during court hours, but beyond. Most of us do that but if someone doesn't believe in that, perhaps a mistake was made in choosing such a person. The judging or choosing process may involve scrutiny. You may find someone suitable, but over time it may appear that they were not the right choice. Such mistakes can happen in any system...right now we do not have an effective answer to address such an aberration.

Is it worrying when a High Court judge resigns to join a political party?

It is not just now... any government tends to prefer people on the bench who are sympathetic to their cause. It's a natural tendency. Judges with their experience can balance into the right thing, but the government must also realise that it is not forever. We are a democratic country. Today, we have a government. Tomorrow, it could be another government. A mature government wouldn't interfere too much with the judiciary. It does not benefit them.

What has changed in the judiciary since the 2018 press conference by four judges?

With hindsight, the four judges, I think, were pushed to the wall and felt that they had to act. I'm sure they thought it through, even if not for long, considered the implications of organising a press conference. Perhaps, one or two judges were more active and others went along. Maybe they wanted to make a statement but there was a battery of media persons and whether that was known to everybody is also a question I have in mind. But, privately, there is a sense that they should have avoided it if they could have.

Since the press conference, there is a bigger spotlight on the office of the CJI and how they deal with other judges...



A Chief Justice, besides being wise about the law, needs to be wise about life. Life is never a level playing field. There are pressures, counter pressures and a constant flux. The dilemma is always there to do something or not to do something. A judge is judged by the way he is conducting himself. The visible part is what you see in court but the other parts are not visible to public eye. You may talk about one judge or two judges but not about the rest. If a judge is not talked about, she is a judge who can be considered to have balanced things well.

What are your views on former CJI DY Chandrachud inviting the Prime Minister for the Ganesh puja?

Obviously, it was a private function and he is a friend of mine. He may be Chief Justice Dhananjay for you, for me, he is Dhan. We are batch mates from law school. I thought it would have been better if it had been avoided. Or, at least, if there were other guests, it would have not mattered. I am sure nothing of importance was discussed in that meeting. I am very confident about that. That image could have been avoided because the public will interpret it in a certain way.

The government last year issued a circular withdrawing from arbitrations in big public contracts. Does that add to the pendency problem?

When the governments aims to make India a hub of arbitration, such memos send contrary signals. Either make a policy deci-

sion that you're not interested in arbitration and everyone speaks in one voice...In different forums, the government has expressed a desire to make Delhi or Mumbai hub of arbitration and compete with cities like London or Singapore. I feel this may not reflect the government's complete policy. Because internationally investors want assurance of a quick redressal mechanism which is crucial for attracting big investments.

Will you be taking up a post-retirement job if the government offers one?

I was sounded out a few months ago to gauge my interest and I said no. I have politely declined when someone from the government called me as well. I want to be a private individual after retirement. My immediate task is to find rental accommodation and Delhi is an expensive city so I hope for professional work to sustain myself. Apart from that, I have my calendar marked out for the theatre festival organised by the National School of Drama, which I will go see. When people say they must raise the retirement age, I say oh, no, not for me!

As you retire, what is one thing about the judiciary that worries you and what gives you hope?

The complexity of issues we deal with is only increasing. That is a challenge for the future. What gives me hope is that the younger lot is bright. For many of them, law is a first choice and they want to build their career so they will bring great value.

New I-T Bill to be introduced in Parliament next week

New Delhi: The government will introduce a new Income Tax bill next week to take forward the "trust first, scrutinise later" concept, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Saturday. In another major reform move, the Minister announced that the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the insurance sector will be increased to 100 per cent from 74 per cent. Presenting the Budget for 2025-26, Sitharaman said that over the past 10 years, the government has implemented several reforms for the convenience of taxpayers, including faceless assessment.

Sitharaman also mentioned the govern-

ment coming out with taxpayers' charter, faster returns process and almost 99 per cent of the income returns being on self-assessment. The government will introduce new Income Tax bill next week in Parliament to take forward "trust first, scrutinise later" concept. The Bill is expected to simplify the current Income Tax (I-T) law and make it easier to comprehend. Pursuant to the Budget announcement by Sitharaman for a comprehensive review of the Income-tax Act, 1961, the CBDT had set up an internal committee to oversee the review and make the Act concise, clear, and easy to understand, which will reduce disputes, litigation, and provide greater tax certainty to taxpayers.

What the Economic Survey says: key takeaways from the govt's report on India's economy

The Economic Survey for 2024-25 was tabled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Parliament on Friday. The Survey is a report of the state of the Indian economy in the financial year that is coming to a close. It is prepared by the Department of Economic Affairs in the Union Finance Ministry, under the guidance of the Chief Economic Advisor (CEA). This is what the Economic Survey said. The Survey has flagged two main concerns. Introducing the Economic Survey, CEA V Anantha Nageswaran said that the broader global economic environment has become unfavourable and challenging, and global trade and investment have "come to a crawl".

"Global trade dynamics have changed significantly in recent years, shifting from globalisation to rising trade protectionism, accompanied by increased uncertainty," the Survey says. The impact of this shift in global structural forces is reflected in global trade growth, and "signs of secular stagnation in the global economy are beginning to emerge". The second big challenge concerns the dominance of China as the world's manufacturing superpower — a third of all global production happens in China, and it alone manufactures more global output than the next 10 countries put together. However, thanks to global economic fragmentation and upheaval, "the world's modus operandi of outsourcing manufacturing to China pursued vigorously in the globalisation era is poised for a reset," says the Survey. State of Indian economy The Survey contends that the domestic economy remains steady amidst global uncertainties.

Story continues below this ad
REAL GDP: Real Gross Domestic Product, which maps economic activity from the demand side of the economy, in the current financial year (FY25) is pegged at 6.4%; in the coming year (FY26), the Survey expects it to lie between 6.3% and 6.8%. The share of private final consumption expenditure — the money Indians spend in their individual capacity (the consumer demand) — in India's GDP (at current prices) is estimated to increase from 60.3% in FY24 to 61.8% in FY25. "This share is the highest since FY03," says the Survey. **GVA:** On the supply side, which is mapped by Gross Value Added (GVA), India's growth remains close to the decadal average (Chart). Aggregate GVA surpassed its pre-pandemic trend in the first quarter of FY25, and it now hovers above the trend, the Survey points out. **INFLATION:** "Headline inflation", the CEA said, "is moderating because of moderating core inflation". Core inflation refers to inflation in goods and services except food and fuel. Story continues below this ad
 However, food inflation increased from 7.5% in FY24 to 8.4% in the current financial year, "driven by factors such as supply chain disruptions and vagaries in weather conditions". Antony Cyriac, one of the additional economic advisors present at the CEA's press conference on Friday, agreed that "food inflation is 8%", but argued that "if we remove these 4-5 items (such as vegetables and pulses), it becomes close to the target (of 4%)". **EMPLOYMENT:** The Survey says "India's labour market growth in recent years has been supported by post-pandemic recovery and increased formalisation." It quotes the 2023-24 annual

Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) report that shows that all key employment related metrics such as unemployment rate, labour force participation rate and the worker-to-population ratio (WPR) have improved. Survey's recommendations Among the CEA's several recommendations, the most important is the need to deregulate the Indian economy in a way that unleashes economic growth. Story continues below this ad
 Asked what his recommendation to the government was to boost consumer demand, the CEA said: "The recommendation...[to] not just...the Union government but to all governments around the country is actually a step to boost employment, income generation, and therefore consumption. The recommendation for deregulation is exactly towards that... By simplifying regulations and by looking at the nuts and bolts of regulation that affect small businesses we are lowering the cost of doing business for them, therefore opening up the space for them to hire more, which will lead to income growth and therefore higher consumption." Referring to the Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP) formulated by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), the Survey states that there is a positive correspondence between business reforms and the level of industrial activity, suggesting the need for deregulation and enterprise-friendly reforms in aspiring and emerging states.

While the Survey sounds sanguine about India's post-pandemic economic recovery, on the whole, it sounds an alert. "India faces limitations in producing critical goods at the scale and quality required to



serve the infrastructure and investment needs of an aspiring economy," says the preface of the Survey. "Getting out of the way" and allowing businesses to focus on their core mission is a significant contribution that governments around the country can make to foster innovation and enhance competitiveness," the CEA has said. For, "business as usual carries a high risk of economic growth stagnation, if not economic stagnation." These words contrast starkly with the optimism this same CEA exuded in the Economic Survey in 2023: "2014-2022 is an important period in the economic history of India. The economy underwent a gamut of wide-ranging structural and gover-

nance reforms that strengthened the economy's fundamentals by enhancing its overall efficiency... This situation is analogous to the period 1998-2002 when transformative reforms undertaken by the government had lagged growth returns due to temporary shocks in the economy. Once these shocks faded, the structural reforms paid growth dividends from 2003. "Similarly, in the present decade, the presence of strong medium-term growth magnets gives us optimism and hope that once these global shocks of the pandemic and the spike in commodity prices in 2022 fade away, the Indian economy is well placed to grow faster in the coming decade."

This asteroid might collide with Earth in 2032

Queensland: On 27 December last year, astronomers using the ATLAS survey telescope in Chile discovered a small asteroid moving away from Earth. Follow up observations have revealed that the asteroid, 2024 YR4, is on a path that might lead to a collision with our planet on 22 December 2032. In other words, the newly-discovered space rock poses a significant impact threat to our planet.

What do we know about 2024 YR4? And what would happen if it did collide with Earth?

As Earth moves around the Sun, it is continually encountering dust and debris that dates back to the birth of the Solar system. The system is littered with such debris, and the meteors and fireballs seen every night are evidence of just how polluted our local neighbourhood is. But most of the debris is far too small to cause problems to life on Earth. There is far more tiny debris out there than larger chunks — so impacts from objects that could imperil life on Earth's surface are much less frequent. The most famous impact came some 66 million years ago. A giant rock from space, at least 10 kilometres in diameter, crashed into Earth —



causing a mass extinction that wiped out something like 75% of all species on Earth. Impacts that large are, fortunately, very rare events. Current estimates suggest that objects like the one which killed the dinosaurs only hit Earth every 50 million years or so. Smaller impacts, though, are more common.

The 1-in-77 chance of collision to watch 2024 YR4 has been under close observa-

tion by astronomers for a little over a month. It was discovered just a few days after making a relatively close approach to our planet, and it is now receding into the dark depths of the Solar system. By April, it will be lost to even the world's largest telescopes. The observations carried out over the past month have allowed astronomers to extrapolate the asteroid's motion forward over time, working out its orbit around the Sun.

Ahead of Delhi Assembly elections, talking politics with a slice of electorate

As the last of shoppers trickle out of Nexus Select CityWalk Mall in Saket past 10 pm, a visibly exhausted Ali, 29, closes the shutter of the small store where he works. Behind the polished glass facade of this mall, one of Delhi's largest retail hubs, are workers like Ali, whose lives are shaped by a very different reality from the shoppers they serve. "I've been working since 1 pm today. No matter who wins in this election, my life will stay the same," says Ali, cranking the shutter's handle in slow motion. On February 5, the national capital will go to the polls. For some like Ali, the Assembly elections are just another date that will "make no difference" to their daily grind, for others, they promise a chance at a better future. With an estimated population of over 2.5 crore, this is set to be a make-or-break election for the incumbent Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), led by former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. For the AAP, which was founded in 2012 and first came to power in Delhi in 2013, the past year was full of major setbacks — besides its senior leadership, including Kejriwal and former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, getting arrested in the excise policy case, four of its MLAs, including former minister Kailash Gahlot, switched parties since their arrests in other cases. Legal troubles

Even as AAP's rivals — the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which is banking on both Prime Minister Narendra Modi's charisma and AAP's recent legal troubles, and the Congress, which is betting big on Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi to revive its declining fortunes — keep raking up issues like Yamuna's deplorable condition, pollution, political revdis (freebies) and corruption charges against it, there is one question on every mind: will Kejriwal sit on the CM's chair for the fourth consecutive term?

The Indian Express spent a day at Nexus Select CityWalk Mall, a microcosm of the national capital, where the wealthy and the working class coexist, but rarely interact beyond the transactional. Despite attracting crores of visitors annually, at the four-floor shopping complex with over 200 stores, including some of the most expensive international and Indian brands, politics remains a distant concern among its shoppers. Take for example, Radhika Nayyar, 29, an assistant store manager at Ethos Summit, a high-end watch store. Dressed in a black uniform, her eyes keep flitting to the Excel sheet on her laptop. A graduate in Luxury Brand Management from Pearl Academy, she is no stranger to the world of expensive goods. But when it comes to Delhi's political landscape, she says the election is "just another day" for her. "I don't really follow politics. Life is good and I am focused on my career," she admits. Story continues below this ad. Growing up in Model Town, one of Delhi's affluent neighbourhoods, she says she has never had to worry about basic amenities or public services. Though issues with public transport leave her frustrated — like a metro delay earlier in the day causing her to reach work 50 minutes later than usual — these inconveniences have failed to change her outlook on the polls. "I have never depended on a government scheme," she says with a shrug. Like her, Anu Sharma, 57, a resident of Delhi's Dwarka and a frequent shopper at

the mall, reveals her disinterest in the political process. A home-maker who "helps out with her husband's air-conditioner business", she says she "doesn't even have a voter ID card".

To a question on the upcoming elections, she says, "Honestly, I don't follow politics all that much. I think the AAP will lose this time. They just didn't deliver on their promises — at least that's what I have been hearing on the news. My entire neighbourhood is a mess, there's trash everywhere." As she surveys the shelves in a ground-floor boutique, her hands skimming over the neatly folded clothes, Anu says, "The kurti I used to buy for Rs 700 costs Rs 2,000 now." Story continues below this ad

Delhi, one of India's most populated cities, has among the highest per capita incomes in the country — Rs 2.74 lakh, over twice the national average — according to data from the Reserve Bank of India and Delhi Economic Surveys. For Anu, the rising cost of essentials like clothes is a reflection of how inflation has quietly crept into her comfortable life. "My daughter got married recently. The wedding cost us double of what it would have cost a decade ago," she adds. Unlike Anu, her friend Nandu, 55, a software engineer from Uttam Nagar, prefers the "convenience" of online shopping. A supporter of the Bharatiya Janata Party, she says voting is a "social responsibility". "The AAP is lazy and did not fulfil its promises. (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi (of the BJP) is hard-working. The party works hard, campaigns all year and reaches out to people more often," she remarks. Sudhir Messi drives toy train at the mall. Nearby, in the children's play area, Sudhir Messi, 46, who drives a toy train around the mall, sits in the loco pilot's seat in his uniform. As high-end shoppers pass him by, their bags full, their worries distant, something about Anu's remarks hit Sudhir differently today. Story continues below this ad. A resident of Delhi for over two decades, Sudhir, who originally belongs to UP's Bulandshahr, has been working at the mall for two years now. Keeping an eye on the playful chaos of children around him, he says, "I used to vote, but not anymore. I consider it a waste of time now. Though I have not seen any big changes, the free electricity, water and schooling have definitely helped my family." An opportunity for change

For Rajeshwari, 24, who is a part of the mall's housekeeping staff, the upcoming election is an opportunity for change. Hailing from Sangam Vihar, one of Delhi's largest slums, she spends her days scrubbing floors and toilets in the mall. Earning Rs 18,000 a month, she is, at present, the sole breadwinner of her family, which includes four younger siblings. She says her father, a carpenter, is recovering from an injury that has rendered him unable to work.

Glancing at the mall's stores, she says, "I can't even dream of buying anything from this mall. It's not for people like me. We work here but we don't belong here." Unflinching about her political loyalty, Rajeshwari says she has benefited from AAP's "freebies" — free electricity, water and free travel on city buses for women. Story continues below this ad. Stating that these subsidies have helped



ease her family's financial burden, she says with a smile, "I have availed of revdis twice in my life. Vote toh AAP ko hi jayega (My vote will only go to the AAP). They have worked a lot for the poor." On what according to her are Delhi's biggest problems, Rajeshwari declares without hesitation, "Pollution has become a big problem." To a question on why she doesn't consider the BJP a viable alternative, she says, "I don't like the BJP as much. The AAP is the best party. The roads in the city are getting better. Even metro connectivity has improved over the past 10 years. Since AAP took charge, corruption in Delhi has reduced." Referring to Modi, she adds, "Until he remains the Prime Minister, there will be inflation in this country and taxes will keep increasing. The BJP can reduce these taxes, but they are not doing that." A resident of Delhi's Kalyanpuri since 1986, he has raised his three children in the city. Reeling from the bite of rising costs in Delhi, he says the tangible benefits of schemes promised by the AAP or the BJP are yet to reach "people like him". He says, "We don't even have potable water. We have to buy two bottles every day. This is how our life has been since the AAP came to power. Our situation is so bad that we can't even afford decent food now. There is no safety in this city either. So many murders and rapes happen here. If you are poor, your life in this city is over. Broken promises. Accusing the AAP of "not having done much work over the past 12 years" and holding the BJP "responsible for inflation", he says, "My children study in a government school in Saket. When one of them failed in Class 10, the school refused to keep him on its rolls. There has been no improvement in the state of government schools. This was not the case earlier." Story continues below this ad. On duty from 6 am to 4 pm, Sureshpal says his daily life is one of exhaustion. Holding out hope for "political change", even if he doesn't see it happening anytime soon, he says, "Rahul Gandhi is the future. He is an educated leader. I understand that the Congress is weak in Delhi, lekin jo girta hai vo uthta hai (the one who falls, rises again). With the election around the corner, political promises are taking the center stage. In his political rallies in Delhi, Prime Minister Modi has

promised that all existing welfare schemes would be "retained" and "enhanced" under his party. One of the key promises included in his party's manifesto is the introduction of Atal canteens, where "nutritious meals" would be served for just Rs 5 to those living in slum areas. For workers like Sureshpal, this promise offers far too little and comes far too late. "Why are they not promising jobs? We need lower taxes and more education. What will a person like me do if these canteens shut down one day? Give us jobs, not free meals," says Sureshpal, sounding visibly agitated. Across the mall, Deepak Kumar, 40, a housekeeping employee, mops the polished mall floors. Calling himself a housekeeping veteran of "20 years", the Dakshinpuri resident says political promises over the years have left him "weary".

"I used to vote for the Congress earlier, but then I started voting for the AAP. I don't think I will vote this time. The AAP made promises to support the girl child, but nothing happened. The BJP also made empty promises — Modiji said everyone would get lakhs in their accounts (during the 2014 campaign for the Lok Sabha elections), but no one received any money."

Deepak's concerns extend beyond unfulfilled promises. "There is no safety for women across the country under the BJP. Look at the Hathras case (a Dalit girl, 19, was gang-raped by four upper caste men in 2020) — there was no justice for that family. Or the recent rape and murder of a doctor in Kolkata. Incidents like these leave us with little faith in these political parties."

Despite his obvious disenchantment, he credits the AAP for improving the quality of Delhi's government schools. "My daughter is studying in a government school. The AAP has done a good job. The schools are better than they used to be," Deepak says. To a query on his "disappointment" with the Congress, he says, "If it had a stronger leader, its fight in Delhi would have been easier this time. Iss baar bhi, gareeb AAP ko vote denge, aur ameer BJP ko (This time too, the poor will vote for the AAP, the rich, for the BJP)." A North Delhi resident, 27, who works with the Union Ministry of Skill Development, offers a different perspective.