

## Brisk pace of development works at Warangal Railway Station

Hyderabad: Works are going on a brisk pace at the Warangal Railway Station which is being modernised at a cost of Rs 25.41 crore. The modernisation is being taken up as part of the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS) launched by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi last year. According a press release from the South Central Railway (SCR) here on Friday here are the works being taken up at Warangal Station: Improvements to station building façade. Provision of entrance portico. Construction of 12 m wide Foot Over Bridge (FOB) along with Provision of 3 Lifts & 4 Escalators for convenience of passengers. Platform surface improvements. Provision of additional Cover over platforms. Improvements to existing Toilets, Construction of new toilet blocks including Divyangjan facilities. Improvements to waiting hall. Landscaping in circulating area, Circulating area improvements for smooth traffic flow. Depicting of Art & Culture in the station area. Provision of passenger friendly signages, Train Indication Boards, Coach Indication Boards etc. The press release said the Station is a major transportation hub, connecting the city to various

parts of India. It has four platforms and handles a large volume of passenger traffic. Now this station, further upgrading with various passenger-friendly facilities, including a spacious concourse, waiting halls, food stalls, and restrooms. It also has provisions for divyangjan passengers, including separate toilets and ramps etc.

The Warangal Railway station in the Secunderabad Division is categorized as Non-Suburban Grade-3 (NSG-3). The station in the Kazipet – Vijayawada section has an average footfall of 31,887 passengers per day and annual earnings of Rs 41.09 Crore. This station serves the passengers in and around Warangal, Hanumakonda and Kazipet. One pair of trains originate/terminate and about 137 trains halt at Warangal station. This station has stoppage for important superfast trains in several directions like New Delhi, Howrah, Chennai, Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, Secunderabad and Tirupati etc. The Warangal Railway Station is part of the Delhi-Chennai main line under the SCR. The ABSS scheme is being implemented in 40 Railway stations across Telangana for redevelopment at an estimated cost of Rs



2,737 crore, to provide modern passenger amenities and convert them into growth centers to the regional population. The list includes the major upgradation of Secunderabad Railway station works that were taken up to meet world class standards.

In addition, to reduce congestion on other existing rail terminals in the twin cities region, Charlapalli station has been developed with all facilities and is being converted as alternate terminal for the convenience of city public.

## Power department on alert with demand to go up this summer



HYDERABAD: With power demand increasing steadily this season, the energy department has directed its engineers to be more alert as the peak demand is expected to cross 17,500 MW in the summer. The highest peak demand of 16,601 MW was recorded on February 26. Energy Department Principal Secretary Sandeep Kumar Sultania reviewed the implementation of the TGNPDCL's Summer Action Plan to meet the increasing loads during the ongoing Rabi and summer season on Friday. During the review meeting, the principal secretary ap-

preciated all the employees of the power sector for their efforts in providing quality, reliable, and uninterrupted power supply. TGNPDCL CMD K Varun Reddy said that as part of reducing overload, the works of new substations (33), 33KV feeders (83), 11KV feeders (341), and 33KV interlinking lines (98) to provide alternative power supply have been completed.

He also said out of 105 overloaded power transformers, works pertaining to 99 power transformers were completed. Of the total 4,850 overloaded distribution transform-

ers, works of 4,530 transformers were completed and the remaining works will be completed by March 10, he said. D Krishna Bhaskar CMD of TGTRANSCO said that the augmentation works of 16 power transformers have been completed.

The balance of six works in the NPDCL area would be completed before March 10,

he added. In order to save the standing crops of the farming community, the principal secretary directed the officials to deploy Emergency Response Team (ERT) vehicles to rectify or replace troublesome distribution transformers, if any. Further, widespread awareness should be created among all consumers to utilise the 1912 system for effective redressal of their grievances, he added.

## Parents demand action against Inter students for ragging juniors in Mancherial

Mancherial: Parents demanded action against Intermediate second year students from the Telangana Social Welfare Residential College for Excellence (Boys)-Bellampalli for allegedly ragging their sons. They staged a sit-in in front of the college on Monday. Parents alleged that one boy, Chakradhar, and another student Nikhil were thrashed by the Intermediate second year students for bringing ragging to the notice of the principal of the college. The parents accused the Intermediate students of forcing Chakradhar to strip and making him smoke cigarettes as part of the ragging. Bellampalli Rural Inspector Afzaluddin said no case was registered against the students so far with the parents not coming forward to lodge a



complaint with the police. On February 18, seven students from Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Residential School-Chennur were booked for allegedly thrashing another student of the institution. The parents of a Class X student confronted the principal of the school after the student disclosed that seven students beat him severely.



# Clicking through barriers, empowering persons with disabilities

As India strives toward achieving a \$1 trillion digital economy by 2028, digital citizenship has become indispensable for accessing e-governance services and basic entitlements. At this critical juncture, where India emphasises the need for “digital inclusion”, it is imperative to evaluate the effectiveness of the government’s strategies vis-à-vis the scale of digital reach, adoption, and impact in the last mile. One such vulnerable community from the ‘last mile’ we have often overlooked in the digital sphere is Persons With Disabilities (PwDs). This is especially concerning given the draft Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Rules, 2025, that were released in January by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY). These rules aim to enforce a crucial provision within the main legislation: obtaining ‘verifiable consent’ from the ‘lawful guardian’ of individuals with disabilities. The writers of this article first highlight the critical challenges and unique vulnerabilities faced by PwDs in the digital age and then argue the need to fundamentally reconsider the considerations around digital policies, such as the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023 and the rules there under, to adequately address the specific needs and rights of PwDs, while safeguarding the interest of all citizens. A pan-India study on challenges

A pan-India study by the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), the Broadband India Forum (BIF) and the Center for Development Policy and Practice (CDPP), titled “ICTs for Empowering Accessibility/Inclusion: The Impact of Digital Integration On The Lives of PwDs”, showcases the various challenges faced by PwDs in the digital ecosystem. We know that in a society that is deeply entrenched in ableism, systemic barriers continue to limit the full participation of PwDs. Barriers manifest themselves in various forms, including limited access to education, health care, employment, and other essential services, leading to adverse socio-economic outcomes and severe social exclusion. The study has found that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) offer significant potential for PwDs, including improved access to information, social welfare schemes, employment opportunities, and increased community engagement. However, a ‘digital inclusivity vision’ is not just about the existence of technology and infrastructure. It is also about access to the same.

For instance, the study found that out of 112 PwDs surveyed, 36.61% visited digital service providers weekly, indicating regular utilisation, while encountering difficulties in accessing services tailored to their diverse needs. These services included essential tasks such as photocopying and printing documents, assisting with government scheme applications, and providing training on digital skills, safety, and security, as well as the use of ICT tools and government schemes. The socioeconomic and demographic diversity among PwDs and the types of disabilities are often overlooked in policy discussions surrounding digital discourse. Census data plays a pivotal role here in accounting for the PwD population and its diversity, to build effective policies for a disabled-inclusive digital design — especially for those affected by the digital and social

divides. The IS standard, issue of autonomy

A significant legislative step taken by India ensures web accessibility through the adoption of the ICT Accessibility Standard IS 17802 (Indian Standard for Information and Communication Technology Accessibility), which integrates ICT accessibility with tailored assistive technologies and accessibility features to ensure meaningful digital adoption among PwDs. The adoption of the accessibility standards among public and private service providers will ensure meaningful access to the Internet. Moreover, the role of service providers is crucial here in leveraging the innovation ecosystem to design and deploy subsidised and low-cost digital infrastructure that enhances digital reach and adoption among PwDs. Another critical aspect of policymaking that is imperative for achieving widespread ICT adoption among PwDs is the development of contextual and targeted approaches that address the needs of the local digital ecosystem alongside enabling remote access to avail the services of the physical digital service centres. Digital solutions catering to hyperlocal settings, which comprise literacy programmes, skill training and capacity-building are essential for availing education and livelihood opportunities.

The research study involving 300-plus PwD digital changemakers demonstrated the transformative potential of digital technologies in empowering and enabling PwDs to live a life with dignity and respect. However, the measure of digital integration, enablement and adoption, determined solely by the number of ICT users, has proven insufficient, indicated by the extent of the ever deepening digital divide in the country. It is, therefore, essential to depart from the binary framework of the haves and have-nots for meaningful digital inclusion. Another key aspect of the study is a recommendation to MeitY regarding the re-examination of certain provisions within the DPDP Act. The DPDP Act was enacted in August 2023, and the Draft Rules were released for public consultation on January 3, 2025. The writers argue that while the DPDP Act acknowledges PwDs as a distinct category, and the Rules have defined ‘guardian’ and ‘PwDs’, a few concerns remain regarding the effectiveness of the Act in empowering the community. To explain this further, Section 9(1) of the DPDP Act could potentially undermine the autonomy and personhood of PwDs by authorising legal guardians to grant consent on their behalf without mentioning any specific circumstances. This approach contradicts the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which emphasises the right to autonomy, independent living and self-determination. Second, by grouping PwDs with children in the same provision, Section 9(1) infantilises PwDs and overemphasises the role of legal guardians in decision-making. This also raises concerns about the potential for abuse of power by guardians, while completely lacking any legal safeguards to protect the sensitive personal data of PwDs.

Third, while numerous technologies and services exist to support PwDs, the government’s pivotal responsibility lies in ensuring that these technologies are accessible and viable for all members of society.



Currently, many digital services are limited to physical locations, hindering the flexibility of PwDs to access services, training, and support remotely. The government must first focus on conducting a comprehensive inventory of available solutions and tailor them to suit the specific requirements of PwDs in India.

Furthermore, enhancing Internet connectivity in remote regions is crucial to ensure equitable access to online resources for PwDs in marginalised communities. Moreover, collaborative efforts involving the government, private sector, civil society, and the tech-for-good sector are essential to equip digital service providers with the necessary assistive technologies and accessibility features. On ‘meaningful’ connectivity

Several pieces of legislation in India, including the DPDP Act and the Telecommunications Act, mandate a “digital-by-design” approach, acknowledging the importance of digital accessibility. However, the study emphasises the need for the government to

critically examine these regulatory frameworks to enable meaningful connectivity for all communities in India. For instance, it is suggested that any digital-by-design framework should be built on a citizen-centric rather than a consumer-centric model — a bottom-up model of policy advocacy that addresses the contextual, evidence-based, and specific digital needs of diverse communities in India. The term ‘meaningful’ is crucial here to bridge the graded digital inequalities and build digital equity for all. In conclusion, empowering PwDs in the digital age requires a multi-pronged approach.

By working collaboratively with PwDs, civil society and the tech sector, the government can create a truly inclusive digital landscape where everyone, regardless of their abilities, can fully participate and thrive. Arpita Kanjilal is the Head, Research and Advocacy Division, Digital Empowerment Foundation. Mira Swaminathan is the Director-Policy Advocacy and Communications at Broadband India Forum

## The transformation of Koraput’s tribal food basket

Koraput, a district in Odisha, is a beautiful landscape, rich in biodiversity and home to a predominantly tribal population. But there is also a paradox. There is rampant poverty and undernutrition. There is no dearth of government schemes, in the form of direct feeding programmes or schemes for livelihood activities. Yet, undernutrition levels remain high. According to an estimate based on the National Family Health Survey-5 data (2019-21) 43% of children under five years of age are stunted (low-height-for-age) and 33% are underweight. Only 17% are fed an adequate diet. More than 50% of women are anaemic. The question is what is it that people can do themselves order to have access to healthier diets and a better environment? Between 2013 and 2022, the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) embarked on a community-based model of nutrition literacy in order to empower tribal communities to take action in diversifying their household food basket with nutritious foods. The aim was to facilitate a trans-formative process, spearheaded by the com-

munity, to move towards nutrition security. As it is an agricultural population with small and marginal land holdings and engaged in subsistence farming, a nutrition-sensitive farming approach to maximise and diversify food production was adopted along with sanitation hygiene and Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices (IYCF). Since transformation begins at the individual level, it was decided to build the capacity of a core group of adult men and women through a residential training programme. The first step was to sensitise the community to its own nutritional status. This involved assessing the nutritional status of women, children, adolescent boys and girls by taking their height and weight, consolidating secondary data and presenting them to the community. After subsequent discussions, villagers agreed to select a few men and women from every village, representing various caste groups, to undergo a residential training programme on key nutrition concepts, such as a balanced diet, IYCF practices, the role of dietary diversity, sanitation and hygiene.



# Seminar on “How to Crack Civil Services in the First Attempt” Successfully Held at CMR College

Hyderabad, March 3: A seminar on “How to Crack Civil Services in the First Attempt” was successfully conducted at CMR College of Engineering and Technology, Medchal, by VINGS Media and G5 Media Group in collaboration with 21st Century IAS Academy on Monday. Mr. P. Krishna Pradeep, Chairman of 21st Century IAS Academy, addressed the gathering, emphasizing the prestige and responsibility that comes with a career in civil services. He shared the inspiring journey of IAS officer Amit Kataria, known as “The Dabang Officer,” who set an example of selfless service by accepting just one rupee as his salary while relying on his wife’s income for family support.

Dr. Bhavani Shankar, Chief Mentor and Director of 21st Century IAS Academy, debunked the common misconception that only students from premier institutes like IITs and IIMs can clear the Civil Services Examination. He stressed that students from regular degree colleges also have a fair chance, as many UPSC questions are based on fundamental concepts taught as early as the 6th grade. He urged aspirants to pursue civil services not just for career advancement but to create a meaningful impact on society.

The seminar also witnessed the official launch of the Civils Aspirants Club poster by Major Dr. Narayana, Director of CMR CET along with 21st Century IAS Academy and VINGS Media Group. Additionally, books authored by the academy’s experts were unveiled and made available in the univer-



sity library to assist students in their UPSC preparation. Dr. P. Ravi Kumar, Dean – Faculty and Student Affairs, welcomed the attendees and encouraged students to seize

this golden opportunity to shape their careers. The event was graced by esteemed dignitaries, including Ch. Gopal Reddy, Secretary and Correspondent; Dr. Ch. Abhinav

Kumar, CEO; Major Dr. Narayana, Director; Dr. A. Sheshu Kumar, Principal; Dr. G. Devadasu Dean Academics, and several others.

## Sai Ronak starrer ‘Rewind’, a time bending Telugu sci-fi romance is set to premiere on Lionsgate Play this March 7

Hyderabad :Time waits for no one, or does it? Get ready to be locked in for an unforgettable ride through love, loss and second chances with Rewind, a gripping Telugu sci-fi romance premiering exclusively on Lionsgate Play this March 7 in both Telugu and Hindi. Directed by Kalyan Chakravarthy, produced by Krosswire Kreation and starring Sai Ronak and Amrutha Chowdary, this mind-bending time travel adventure explores a question many of us have wondered: Can you really change the past to fix the future. This modern day love story follows Karthik (Sai Ronak), a young software developer who falls in love at first sight with Shanti (Amrutha Chowdary). When he finally impresses her and is about to propose, things take a twisted turn, and he loses her to fate. Determined to rewrite their story, Karthik stumbles upon a groundbreaking technology - a time machine that allows him to alter reality. With the suspense of whether he can change their destiny, along with unexpected twists and a love story like no other, Rewind will have you hooked from beginning to end, never letting you miss a beat. Talking about the film and his role in it, Sai Ronak shared, “Rewind is unlike anything I’ve done before. It’s not just a thriller, it’s a puzzle that pulls you in deeper with every twist. Playing a character who is constantly torn between

past and present, right and wrong, was an intense experience. I’ve done romantic dramas and feel-good entertainers before, but this role pushed me into a completely different space, darker, more complex, and emotionally charged.” Further talking about the digital release, he added, “The film makes you question: if you could go back and change something, would you... even if the risks were unimaginable? However, at its heart, Rewind is about love, redemption, and whether we truly get second chances. I can’t wait for audiences to experience this gripping journey on Lionsgate Play.” Along with stunning performances, breathtaking visuals, and a fresh take on time travel, the film also boasts standout tracks, such as “Love You...Nana” sung by Jaaved Ali and “Love at First Sight” by Karthik. Lionsgate Play recently released Sai Dhanshika starrer Dhakshina and will also feature refreshing flavors from the South with exciting Telugu titles like Nene Na (starring Regina Cassandra & Akshara Gowda), Sabari (Varalaxmi Sarathkumar, Mime Gopi, & Ganesh Venkatraman), Viraaji (Varun Sandesh & Pramodhini), Satyabhama (Kajal Aggarwal, Naveen Chandra, & Prakash Raj), and Atharva (Karthik Raju, Simran Choudhary & Arvind Krishna) amongst others alongside the newest Hollywood premieres.





# How football goalkeepers with glorious time-wasting theatrics chew the clock, featuring Jordan Pickford and Emi Martinez

The only earthly abode where time wasting does not denote inaction is perhaps a football field. To run the clock down, footballers feign injuries, clutch their limbs in pain, roll on the grass, pose as though the roof has crumbled on them, so much so that it is theatre unto itself. It's the opposite of the phrase in the lexicon—spending time doing nothing. But footballers have transformed it into a specialised (dark) art, and 140-odd years later, the lawmakers have emerged none the wiser in eliminating the malaise (or genius) that has plagued the sport, continuing to devise clampdown measures.

So to bell the old but pesky cat, the International Football Association Board (IFAB) has reached a consensus that football's worst time-keepers are the goalkeepers, and so referees will award corners and indirect free-kicks if they hold onto the ball for more than eight seconds from next season. The prevailing law affords only six seconds, but has been leniently implemented. Even the most hard-fisted referee refrains from awarding indirect free kicks, unless in extreme cases. The conditions too are loosely coded. The clock would now start when the goalkeeper is deemed to have effective possession of the ball. The tweak, experimented with "positive outcomes" in Italy's under-20 Primavera 1 league, where goalkeepers released the ball in five seconds, would come into effect from July and be used in all tournaments and leagues worldwide. The goalkeepers' brethren would feel the world is conspiring against them. As such, their responsibilities have only swelled. From merely guarding the goal, they are expected to use their feet, act as an auxiliary sweeper, initiate the attack, play-make and even assist goals (Manchester City net-minder Ederson has as many assists as Arsenal playmaker Martin Odegaard). The back-pass rule, four-step diktat, six-second time-limit, they have systematically adjusted to rule tweaks across decades.

But it is beyond argument that goalkeepers are the thespians in the art of wasting time. Since 2013-14, the gloved men feature most consistently in the instances of yellow cards being brandished for time-wasters. Ten of the top-12 offenders in the English Premier League are goalkeepers. Seven of them are active—the list not startlingly includes Emi Martinez, Jordan Pickford, irresistibly prone to theatre. It has famously back-fired for Martinez, in a game against Arsenal last season, though he had tipped the ball over the crossbar and immediately plunged on the grass, ready to reel in pain, before the ball rebounded off his crossbar, ricocheted off his head and rolled into the nets. Such stray moments of pantomime aside, he has perfected the act of wasting time. Perhaps, it is an occupational hazard. The scope of outfielders are limited. They can, at best, brood on free kicks, throw-ins or stagger to the dugout during substitutions. But goalkeepers, for the sheer reason that they can hold onto the ball with their hands, are the most eligible candidates for this role.

No keeper in modern football can pretend to be saints. It is just that some do it more than others, elevating it into nuanced craft that requires planning and practice. Pickford, the Everton keeper, catches the ball, clutches it to his chest, as though it is a



holy relic, falls down without any provocation, grimaces as though he has hurt himself, rears his head up a few times, and gets up only when everyone has vacated the area. He would get up in slo-mo, as though his limbs were seriously hurt, then slowly place the ball on the turf, snail back a few yards to hoof the goal kick, then meditate on the ball indefinitely, until the referee whispers sweet nothings in his ears. A good twenty seconds are gloriously wasted. Other familiar sights include fumbling deliberately, pretending that it was a genuine mistake and diving on it, or letting the ball burst through the palms (not goal-bound). Or playing tiki

taka with defenders. Often, it's a team plan. Ben Foster, previously of Manchester United, was another artist of time-trimming. "I played under Tony Pulis and he was the world's best at making you waste time. If you went 1-0 up or something, his instruction was, 'You've got to time waste'. Me, as a goalie, I would be the first guy to enforce that. I would take my time with a goal kick, I'd take ages over it," he said two years ago. It is something of an unspoken tactic on the strategy table. It's not just about the seconds, but how it gives the defending team the undue advantage of breathing space, an opportunity to reset the shape and destroy the mo-

mentum of the opposite team. Adding time at the end of the game might not really account for the lost minutes. Stringent cautioning, though, has elevated the average minutes of action in a Premier League game from 48 in 2022-23 to 55 last edition. But that has not eliminated the evils altogether. The new law, the football world believes, would reduce the theatrics and keep the ball longer. But implementation would not be as straightforward as the wording of the rule. It could be lost in referee's interpretation and has the scope to stir scandals. Besides, if history offers lessons, goalkeepers, the alley cats of the game, would adapt and discover fresh means to "chew the clock."

## Ahmedabad first urban centre of focus on climate budget

On February 25, with the approval of the budget for financial year 2025-26, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) became India's first urban local body to include a separate climate chapter as part of its main budget.

Titled "sustainable and climate budget", the chapter has earmarked over a third of AMC's total budget of ₹15,502 crore — ₹5,619.58 crore — for climate action. This outlay will be used to implement a net-zero climate resilient city action plan in line with India's net zero target of 2070, officials said. The development raises the question of whether the country's other metro cities need to plan similar proposals — the recent ₹17,000 crore budget presented by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) on February 13 does not have a mention of any dedicated climate component or singular projects. Experts have noted that India's cities, although severely impacted by the climate crisis, have been slow to institutionalise climate change and sustainability in the urban development budget. Cities such as Mumbai, Coimbatore, and Udaipur initially started climate tagging their city budgets and largely cities took up climate action projects as pilots with non-government funding. In fact, Mumbai allocated around 33%

of its capital expenditure for the 2024-25 fiscal in climate-action related projects such as dumpsite restoration, installation of solar panels. However, unlike in Ahmedabad, the Mumbai civic body unveiled the climate budget on world environment day (June 5), to list out "climate relevant" projects planned in the original budget presented in February.

Ahmedabad's plan for 2070, which was prepared in March 2024, estimates a requirement of ₹9,500 crore per year to achieve the net-zero target. AMC is targeting energy savings and renewable energy generation of 310 million units by 2027-28 and mitigating 338,536 tonne carbon dioxide emissions as a result of the actions planned in the budget for the fiscal 2025-26. In addition, AMC will work to attract corporate social responsibility (CSR) and corporate environmental responsibility (CER) funding, officials said. AMC's climate budgeting exercise and the 2070 action plan was supported by the non-profit ICLEI and was funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in line with Ahmedabad's climate pledge at COP26, held in Glasgow in November 2021. In 2023, Ahmedabad became the first city in India to achieve eight out of nine badges from Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM, a global alliance of over 12,500 local governments spanning

144 countries). Thirty Indian cities across population sizes and geographical profiles such as Mumbai, Leh and Coimbatore are part of GCoM. "Ahmedabad's leadership in sustainability and climate is commendable as it is laying down benchmarks for other cities in the global south," Emani Kumar, executive director ICLEI South Asia, said. Experts said the Ahmedabad Climate Resilient City Action Plan (the 2070 plan) maps the existing details of road networks, streetlights, public transport, water supply, sewage network, and solid waste management facilities to identify gaps and augment capacity to cater to future demand. In contrast, most Indian cities — including the million-plus ones — are failing to even institutionalise their master plans and are building large-scale infrastructure projects without thorough planning, leading to the civic mess that is common in Indian cities. Notably, Delhi's master plan is due to be notified by the Union ministry of housing and urban affairs (MoHUA) for more than three years now. The situation is no different in smaller cities, with the government stating that only 219 out of the 500 cities with more than 100,000 population (as per 2011 census) have their master plans notified, as part of a Rajya Sabha reply in December 2024.



# Steps to reclaiming India's cooperative dream

The announcement by Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah, in December, of a target of establishing two lakh Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) within five years reflects the government's commitment to reinvigorating India's cooperative movement. The inauguration of 10,000 newly established Multipurpose Primary Agricultural Credit Societies alongside reforms in bylaws and structural frameworks, signifies a phased and ambitious approach. While this initiative holds immense potential for grassroots empowerment and rural development, it is crucial to critically examine both the historical challenges of cooperatives in India and the safeguards necessary for their successful implementation.

India's cooperative movement has its roots in the early 20th century, which was designed to democratise credit, empower rural populations, and combat exploitative practices by intermediaries. Over time, cooperatives became instrumental in enabling agricultural credit, dairy development, and marketing. However, historical weaknesses have hindered their potential. The first is political interference. Many cooperatives became heavily politicised, often controlled by local elites with vested interests. Instead of serving the marginalised, they perpetuated inequality and corruption. The second is inefficient management. The governance structure of cooperatives has frequently lacked professionalism, leading to poor financial management and unsustainable operations. The third is a dependence on State funds. Cooperatives have traditionally relied on government subsidies, making them financially fragile and incapable of competing with private enterprises.

The fourth is limited inclusivity. Women, Dalits, and other marginalised groups have often been excluded from decision-making roles, undermining the equitable objectives of cooperatives. The fifth is a fragmented approach. Most cooperatives have focused on a narrow set of activities without integrating themselves into broader supply chains, thereby failing to achieve economies of scale or market competitiveness. The promising aspects of the government's initiative, as outlined by Mr. Shah, attempts to address some of these historical shortcomings. The key features of the plan include new model bylaws. The adoption of bylaws allowing cooperatives to operate in territories beyond their traditional core areas is a forward-looking reform. It aligns with the need for modernisation and diversification. The second is phased rollout. Dividing the establishment of PACS into two phases, with significant involvement from the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development or NABARD (32,750 cooperatives), the National Dairy Development Board or NDDB (46,000 dairy cooperatives), and the National Fisheries Development Board or NFDB (5,500 fishery cooperatives), reflects an organised approach. This ensures that resources and expertise are focused on sectors that require immediate attention.

The third is the liquidation of defunct PACS. Introducing standard operating procedures for liquidating non-functional PACS

is a step towards streamlining the cooperative ecosystem. By replacing obsolete cooperatives, the government aims to create opportunities in 15,000 new villages. The fourth is an inclusivity focus. The explicit emphasis on the participation of women, Dalits, and tribal communities is a commendable effort toward fostering social harmony and economic equity. The fifth is integration into global supply chains. The vision of using PACS as conduits for robust forward and backward linkages in global markets addresses a long-standing gap in the cooperative model, namely, market competitiveness and scalability. Challenges and what needs to be addressed. Despite these laudable measures, the initiative's success will depend on how effectively certain challenges are addressed: The first is avoiding political interference. There must be strong checks and balances in place to prevent political capture of the new PACS. Clear guidelines on governance and accountability are imperative.

The second is capacity building and professional management. Providing training to PACS members on modern management practices and ensuring financial literacy is essential to improve operational efficiency. The third is a sustainable financial model. Over-reliance on subsidies must be curtailed. PACS should be guided toward self-sufficiency through income-generating activities and effective revenue models. The fourth is in ensuring inclusivity. While inclusivity is a stated goal, achieving it will require sustained efforts to empower marginalised groups. Quotas for women, Dalits, and other vulnerable sections in leadership roles must be mandated and monitored. The fifth is technological integration. The new PACS must leverage digital tools for accounting, credit disbursement, and market access. Issuing micro-ATMs and RuPay Kisan Credit Cards is a positive start, but comprehensive digital infrastructure is needed. The sixth is an effective liquidation process. Liquidating defunct cooperatives will require robust mechanisms to ensure fairness and efficiency. Mismanagement during this process could lead to legal disputes or financial losses. The seventh is monitoring and evaluation. The government must establish independent monitoring agencies to periodically assess the progress and impact of the new PACS. The goal of long-term success. The government's ambitious plan for creating PACS can become a watershed moment in rural development if the following measures are taken.

First, having a data-driven approach. Identifying areas where PACS are most needed through comprehensive surveys can optimise resource allocation and avoid duplication of efforts. Second, grassroots participation. Involving local communities in decision-making and planning will foster a sense of ownership and accountability among beneficiaries.

Third, collaboration with the private sector. Public-private partnerships can provide access to modern technology and global markets, enhancing the competitiveness of cooperatives. Fourth, policy consistency. Long-term success depends on consistency in policy implementation across different



States. Cooperation between central and state governments is crucial.

Fifth, focus on value addition. PACS should not merely focus on credit. They must venture into value-added services such as food processing, cold storage, and export facilitation to boost farmer incomes. The government's initiative to establish two lakh PACS is a bold and visionary step toward revitalising the cooperative sector. If executed thoughtfully, it has the potential to transform rural economies, enhance agricultural productivity, and empower marginalised communities. However, historical challenges remind us that such ambitious programmes require meticulous planning, robust govern-

ance frameworks, and sustained political will. India's cooperative movement stands at a crossroads. By learning from past failures and integrating modern practices, the new PACS can emerge as pillars of prosperity, bridging the gap between rural aspirations and global opportunities.

The vision of empowering farmers, women, and weaker sections through cooperatives must translate into tangible outcomes, setting a precedent for inclusive and sustainable development. A.M. Jose is Professor and Head, Amity School of Economics, Amity University Haryana. Jos Chathukulam is Director, Centre for Rural Management, Kottayam, Kerala

## Tech giants line up with their best at Mobile World Congress 2025. Here's what to expect

Hyderabad: Tech giants have lined up some of their best and most groundbreaking technology at the ongoing Mobile World Congress 2025, one of the world's largest and most influential technology and telecommunications events, in Spain's Barcelona.

The three-day event, which began on March 3, has already seen China's Xiaomi and Finnish company HMD giving a glimpse of their new smartphones. Many others including Google, Samsung, LG, Qualcomm, Lenovo, Nvidia, AMD, Meta, and Sony, are set to unveil their latest products.

The topics of this year's MWC are Generative AI, smart cities, 5G IoT, security and eSIM. According to MWC 2025, quantum computing, extended reality and artificial intelligence are transformative technologies that will redefine the future of the groundbreaking technology era. Meanwhile, Union Minister for Communications Jyotiraditya Scindia will unveil the curtain raiser of India Mobile Congress 2025 and inaugurate the 'Bharat Pavilion' at the MWC. "India is rapidly evolving into a global technology hub, and our engagement with international partners at events like the Mobile World Congress is vital for accelerating innovation and strengthening digital infrastructure," Scindia said. The Minister is also expected to address several key sessions, in-

cluding 'Global Tech Governance: Rising to the Challenge' and 'Balancing Innovation and Regulation: Global Perspectives on Telecom Policy.'

Xiaomi launched its series 15 and 15 Ultra, which focus on AI-powered features, image capturing and stunning performance at the conclave. It also unveiled Xiaomi Pad 7, Xiaomi Pad 7 Pro, Xiaomi Buds 5 Pro, Xiaomi Buds 5 Pro (Wi-Fi), Xiaomi Watch S4, Xiaomi Electric Scooter 5 Max, and Xiaomi Smart Band 9 Pro. Xiaomi 15: The device comes with a 5240mAh battery plus 90W HyperCharge and 50W wireless HyperCharge. The smartphone offers a 6.36-inch CrystalRes AMOLED display, Low Blue Light and Snapdragon 8 Elite. The main camera with a 50MP resolution consists of focal lengths: 23mm, 28mm and 35mm and a Leica Summilux optical lens. Xiaomi 15 comes in shades of Black, White, Green and Liquid Silver. Xiaomi 15 ultra: The device comes with a 5410mAh battery plus 90W, along with fast 80W wireless HyperCharge, better drop resistance and an integrated 2000mAh battery for extended usability. The smartphone offers a WQHD+ 6.73-inch AMOLED display, for sharper and more detailed visuals on the device, ultrasonic fingerprint sensor, Snapdragon 8 Elite and Micro Quad Curved Display.



# WHO's new traditional medicine module includes Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani: Explained

To try and put Indian systems of medicine on the world map and provide them with a uniform, standardised language, the Union government, in October 2023, had asked for Ayurveda and related systems of traditional medicine to be included in the 11th revision of the World Health Organization's (WHO) International Classification of Diseases (ICD), as the second module of a supplementary chapter on traditional medicine conditions. As per the WHO, the ICD serves to record and report health and health-related conditions globally. It ensures interoperability of digital health data, and their comparability. It contains diseases, disorders, health conditions and much more. After a year's work on this front by the Indian government, the WHO has now introduced a new module dedicated to traditional medicine conditions in its 2025 update to the International Classification of Diseases, according to the Union Health Ministry. This step will aid in the systematic tracking and global integration of traditional systems of healthcare practices related to Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani.

How did this come about?

"This update follows the successful year-long testing [process] and deliberations after the launch of ICD-11 TM-2 (on January 10, 2024, in Delhi) for Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani systems of medicine for country implementation testing. It culminated in the deliberations held at the WHO meeting at the National Institute of Health in Malaysia in November 2024. The ICD-11 TM 2 module is now officially released on the ICD-11 Blue Browser of WHO," said the Health Ministry. The inclusion of traditional medicine in WHO's internationally recognised health framework ensures that Indian health systems of Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani are now officially documented and categorised in ICD-11, alongside conventional medical conditions. Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary, Ministry of Ayush, stated, "The release of the ICD-11 update 2025 represents a significant step towards global integration of traditional medicine, specifically Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani. By allowing dual coding and improving data collection, this update fosters evidence-based policymaking, enhances patient care, and supports the inclusion of traditional medicine in national healthcare strategies, promoting holistic and inclusive healthcare worldwide. This update also marks a pivotal moment for traditional medicine, paving the way for its global integration and empowering evidence-based integrative healthcare policies that embrace holistic well-being."

According to the WHO, while traditional medicine (TM) is an area of healthcare in many countries, its diagnosis is currently not, or poorly documented and reported. Aggregated and international comparable data on TM encounters in terms of form, frequency, effectiveness, safety, quality, outcome and cost therefore, is not available. The TM Chapter will help to respond to growing demands for more and better regulation and integration of TM in mainstream health care and Health Information Systems. Efforts to effectively regulate Traditional Medicine as an integral part of the health system requires standardised and evidence-based information, the WHO's website states. "With the new updates, the ICD-11 offers more ease of use, improved interoperability and accuracy,

which will benefit national health systems and the people they serve," said Robert Jakob, Team Leader, Classifications and Terminologies Unit, WHO.

Does traditional medicine get a fillip with this move?

The Health Ministry said that traditional medicine has long been an essential component of healthcare, particularly in Asia, Africa, and other regions where indigenous practices complement modern medical approaches. The introduction of the 'Traditional Medicine Conditions' module in ICD-11 is a major step toward acknowledging the vital role of Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani in the modern healthcare landscape. This move aligns with WHO's mission to promote universal health coverage and sustainable development goals, recognizing the therapeutic potential of these systems alongside contemporary medical treatments, the Ministry said. By formally categorising these systems, WHO is facilitating a structured way for researchers, policymakers, and healthcare providers to systematically track and assess the impact of traditional medicine in health systems worldwide. In India Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani are centuries-old systems of healthcare that have been accessed and used by millions of people.



"The traditional medicine module in ICD-11 is designed to capture morbidity data, rather than mortality and will help governments and healthcare institutions assess the frequency, quality, and cost-effectiveness of traditional medicine interventions.

This evidence-based approach will allow policymakers to make informed decisions about the integration of traditional medicine services into national health frame-

works," said the Ministry. The WHO however, makes it clear that the Traditional Medicine Chapter is "neither judging nor endorsing the scientific validity of any Traditional Medicine practice or the efficacy of any Traditional Medicine intervention". As a tool for counting and comparing Traditional Medicine conditions the Traditional Medicine Chapter of ICD-11 "can provide the means for doing research and evaluation to establish efficacy of Traditional Medicine," it states.

## Disability rights activists welcome SC deadline to NMC on MBBS admission; big boost to inclusivity

The Supreme Court in its recent judgment has directed the National Medical Commission (NMC) to revise its guidelines on eligibility conditions for admission to MBBS course for people with disability and report back on March 3. The direction has come after the Court in a case found the Commission's eligibility conditions that candidates with disabilities must have "both hands intact, with intact sensation and sufficient strength" for admission to MBBS course arbitrary and antithetical to the Constitution.

The Bench was hearing the case of a candidate who suffered from 50% locomotor disability and 20% speech and language disability who aspired to be a medical professional. The candidate had cleared the NEET with flying colours. However, an Assessment Board had found him ineligible to be a doctor due to his hand disability. The Punjab and Haryana High Court had also rejected his plea for relief.

Earlier too, the Supreme Court in Om Rathod judgement had directed NMC to revise the guidelines before the NEET 2025 counselling. This case law study was recently published in the Indian Journal of Medical Ethics. In the paper titled "Assessment for inclusion: Promoting equity and justice in Disability Assessment Boards in India", corresponding author Satendra Singh noted that the judgment emphasizes assessing abilities through opportunities like simulation labs and clinical accommodations rather than focusing solely on disability. Highlighting the case of a successful medical aspirant with 88% mobility disability, the paper states that



in his case the Court directed an independent functional competency assessment conducted by a doctor with a disability. The paper further notes that the judgment is a watershed moment in the history of inclusive medicine in India. The paper adds that not only has the medical regulator been directed to revise the guidelines for admission of students with disabilities in the MBBS course, but the Court has, for the first time, recognised lived experience as a form of expertise. Additionally, the Enabling Units (mandated by the University Grants Commission) at medical schools — similar to disability resource/service providers in the USA — will serve as points of contact for applicants with disabilities seeking clinical accommodations.

As per the judgment, students must be informed about the enabling units and equal opportunity cells through the information booklet for new MBBS students, the college website, and the equal opportunity policy. Furthermore, the NEET application portal must include details about the accessibility compliance of various colleges to help prospective students with disabilities make informed decisions. Explaining the need for healthcare providers with a disability, the paper said that the one of the most impactful aspects of being a healthcare provider with a disability is the level of comfort patients may feel when asking questions about their health issues. "This sense of shared humanity can help patients feel less vulnerable and more willing to ask for support.



# Can India lead the AI race?

As the US-led Open AI model and China's DeepSeek compete to reshape the digital landscape and attain supremacy over the AI bandwagon, they are likely to influence the future of international relations, governance and strategic alliances which will shape the discourse of contemporary geopolitics. In the 20th century, power, military might and economic influence determined the contours of international relations and shaped the global order. However, as we move further into the 21st century, the rapid advancement of technology, particularly in fields like AI, digital infrastructure and biotechnology, has begun to emerge as a defining force in shaping the future. Notwithstanding the crucial discussions around regulatory frameworks and safety measures, the recently held AI action summit in Paris emphasised leveraging AI's vast potential with a spirit of optimism, rather than succumbing to fear or apprehension. A key item on the agenda was ensuring AI's inclusivity, with particular emphasis on the Global South, an area where India is emerging as a leading voice.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who co-chaired the summit, underscored India's vision for AI, which stressed inclusivity, transparency and accessibility. His call to "develop open-source systems that enhance trust and transparency," "ensure access to the Global South," and "democratise technology and create people-centric applications" reflects India's stance on AI governance. By advocating for an open and responsible AI ecosystem, India sought to present itself as a leader of the developing world, balancing innovation with ethical considerations. India is also pushing for inclusive AI governance to bridge the gap between the countries and working towards making a Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), supported by OECD, the nodal partnership for global cooperation on AI.

However, the global AI race is largely dominated by two contrasting approaches between the US and China. The US, represented at the summit by Vice President JD Vance, emphasised its commitment to maintaining AI leadership through deregulation, private sector-led innovation and economic productivity. Vance's remarks made it clear that the Donald Trump administration views excessive AI regulation as a threat to growth and national security, arguing that AI should remain "free from ideological bias" while enhancing workforce productivity. The US government has even backed a \$500-billion AI infrastructure initiative, Stargate, to ensure its continued dominance in the field. Simultaneously, it refused to sign the global AI pact, emphasising its concerns about inclusive and sustainable AI. On the other hand, China's DeepSeek-R1 has disrupted the global AI industry, proving that advanced AI models can be developed at a significantly lower cost than previously believed. With an investment of less than \$6 million for the "official training" of the model, DeepSeek managed to rival industry giants like OpenAI and Google. President Trump himself described DeepSeek's emergence as a "wake-up call" for the US AI industry, reinforcing the urgency of AI competition between the two technological superpowers.

Where should Global South seek leadership — align with the West, led by the US, or turn to the East, led by China?

This raises an important question: In an

AI-driven world, where should the Global South seek leadership? Is it more prudent to align with the West, led by the US, which is at the forefront of AI and related sectors like semiconductor design and advanced algorithms? Or is it better to turn to the East, led by China, which has proven its ability to innovate with limited resources and produce AI solutions, some of which are even open-source? Alternatively, could India, focusing on rule-making and regulation while striving to develop its own products, emerge as a key player? After the success of the DeepSeek AI platform, Indian social media has been flooded with just one question — why cannot India do the same? What is holding back technological innovation in India? To answer this, it's crucial to understand where India stands and whether it can prove its mettle in AI. India's AI mission, launched in March 2024, with Rs 10,371 crore is experiencing rapid expansion, which began with an initial deployment of 10,000 GPUs. Recently, IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw revealed that the initiative, driven by the India AI Compute Facility, has secured nearly 19,000 GPUs significantly surpassing initial projections. These GPUs are being procured by the central government under the India AI Mission, which was sanctioned Rs 2,000 crore for 2025-26 (a fifth of the scheme's total outlay of Rs 10,370 crore). In a report released by Nasscom, India's AI market is expected to touch \$17 billion by 2027. With an expected launch within the next 4 to 8 months, India's AI framework rests on four pillars: it aims to support linguistic and cultural diversity, the establishment of AI safety institutions under a unique hub and spoke model, to accelerate AI research, the government is offering computing power at a 42



per cent discount, and inviting proposals for AI model development from researchers and startups. However, several challenges hinder India from developing cutting-edge technologies like AI, despite it having the largest young workforce population and a large pool of engineers. Finance and investment are crucial catalysts within the AI ecosystem, as they play a pivotal role in advancing other essential components such as research, infrastructure and talent development. For example, India's share of GDP (0.6%) in research and development is abysmal compared to countries like the US (3.4%), China (2.4%) and Israel (5.7%). There is an urgent need to invest in research and create an ecosystem, enabled not only by the government but also by the private sector. Further, there is a lack of collaboration between academia and industry. A sustainable research ecosystem

with long-term investment is the need of the hour to foster innovation. AI demands immense computational power and specialised infrastructure, which can be cost-prohibitive for individual entities. Strategic partnerships can help mitigate this challenge by sharing infrastructure costs, creating economies of scale and improving access to critical resources such as GPUs, data centres and cloud computing services, an area where India lags. The US has already capped the sale of advanced chips to countries like India and we lag in AI and chips manufacturing. As India's immediate neighbour, China has taken a major lead and aspires to be the global leader in an AI-driven world. Whether India will play its role and bridge the gap with its frugality is something only time will tell, as New Delhi is set to host the next AI summit.

## A guide to dodging Trump's tariffs

In 1881 American customs officials stopped a suspicious shipment of sugar, believing its colour had been altered. Under the prevailing tariff code, the darker the colour, the lower the grade and the lighter the levy. A chemical test confirmed the officials were correct. The case went all the way to America's Supreme Court, which determined that the importer could in fact alter merchandise so as to lower the duty rate, and therefore had done nothing wrong.

Not a week goes by without new threats from Donald Trump to slap new duties on imports into America. Wide-ranging tariffs risk becoming "existential" for companies, says Edward Steiner of Sandler, Travis & Rosenberg, a law firm. For many, relocating production to America—Mr Trump's desired outcome—remains prohibitively expensive. Companies are therefore likely to explore more creative approaches instead.

Those hoping to dust off their playbooks from Mr Trump's first term will probably be disappointed. Exemptions from duties, such as the one that Apple, maker of the iPhone, was granted in 2019, may be harder to get this time; Mr Trump has promised "no exceptions". Likewise, relocating production from China, on whose goods Mr Trump has imposed an additional 10% tariff, to places such as South-East Asia may not do much to shield firms from duties, particularly if Mr Trump follows through with his threat of applying reciprocal levies. Companies could

move operations to Thailand or Malaysia but end up having the same conversations in 18 months, says Dave Townsend of Dorsey & Whitney, another law firm.

Some bosses may look instead to clever workarounds. Start with "tariff engineering", which includes tweaking products to change their official classification, as the sugar manufacturer did. Duties can vary significantly even when merchandise appears similar, and "therein lies the opportunity," notes Lawrence Friedman of Barnes, Richardson & Colburn, one more law firm.

Companies may take inspiration from Converse, a footwear brand that over a decade ago altered the design of various models of its Chuck Taylor All Star shoes, which are imported from countries such as Vietnam, to incur lower duties. By adding a layer of felt on about half the insole Converse was able to reclassify the canvas sneakers as slippers, which face a tariff of about 6%, compared with as much as 48% for other footwear. Apparel manufacturers such as Columbia Sportswear have similarly added pockets below the waist on shirts, t-shirts and blouses to move them into a product category for which tariffs are lower.

Another form of tariff engineering involves fiddling with where a product ostensibly comes from. Consider the cable harnesses in Hyundai's cars, made up of wires, plastic coverings and connectors. American customs officials have deemed these to be

made in South Korea. Yet although the raw material is manufactured there, most of the production process happens in China, with the finished harness then sent back to South Korea for testing and packaging. Designing supply chains so that just enough production happens in a location that benefits from lower tariffs is cheaper than relocating manufacturing in its entirety, and allows firms to be more nimble when new levies come in.

If none of this is possible, then another option is to seek to reduce the amount of the tariff to be paid. The "first-sale" provision, created by a court ruling in 1988, allows importers to value goods based on the price charged by the manufacturer, rather than the higher ones charged by middlemen along the way. To preserve cash, companies can also delay the payment of duties. In a note sent to clients this month, Maersk, a shipping giant, advised using "bonded warehouses" that allow companies to store goods without paying duties until they are sold, as well as "temporary import bonds" for goods that are set to be re-exported.

Of course, Mr Trump may eventually stop these manoeuvres, too. In 2008 America's customs agency proposed scrapping the first-sale rule, though lawyers fended off the threat. Still, even if some loopholes are closed, companies are bound to find others. Ultimately, says a trade lawyer, "people want stuff, and they'll get it one way or another." Expect plenty of ingenuity in the years ahead.



# Gautam Adani U.S. indictment: How are summons issued under the Hague Convention?

The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) informed a New York court on February 18, 2025, that it has sought assistance from the Indian government under the Hague Service Convention—formally known as the Convention on the Service Abroad of Judicial and Extrajudicial Documents in Civil or Commercial Matters, 1965—to serve summons on billionaire Gautam Adani and his nephew Sagar Adani in a securities and wire fraud case. The Adanis were recently charged by the U.S. Department of Justice and the SEC in criminal and civil cases for allegedly bribing Indian government officials over \$250 million to advance the Adani Group's solar projects.

What did the SEC say?

The SEC informed the court that it had invoked Article 5(a) of the Convention to request India's Ministry of Law and Justice to facilitate the service of summons on the defendants. It further stated that it is exploring alternative service methods permitted under Rule 4(f) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, which governs civil litigation in U.S. federal courts. On February 10, 2025, the Trump administration paused enforcement of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA)—one of the laws under which the Adanis have been charged—for 180 days. The FCPA prohibits U.S. entities and individuals from bribing foreign governments, political parties, or officials to secure business. As per the executive order, the attorney general must review "all existing FCPA investigations or enforcement actions" and take steps "to restore proper bounds on FCPA enforcement". However, the SEC's latest court filing suggests that the order does not apply retroactively. As a result, the Agency's investigation into the Adanis is likely to continue unless the law is amended. Following his visit to Washington last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told journalists that his meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump did not include discussions on the Adani case, as it was a "personal matter".

How does the Hague Service Convention operate?

With the rise in cross-border litigation, the need for an effective and reliable mechanism to serve judicial and extrajudicial documents on parties residing in foreign jurisdictions became imperative. As a result, countries adopted the Convention at the Hague Conference on Private International Law in 1965. Building on the 1905 and 1954 Hague Conventions on Civil Procedure, this multilateral treaty ensures that defendants sued in foreign jurisdictions receive timely and actual notice of legal proceedings while also facilitating proof of service. Eighty four states, including India and the U.S., are parties to the Convention. Its procedures apply only when both the sending and receiving countries are signatories. Each member state must also designate a central authority to process requests and facilitate the service of documents from other signatory states. Signatory states can select the modes of transmission that apply within their jurisdiction. Under the Convention, the primary mode of service is through designated central authorities. However, alternative channels are also available, including postal service, diplomatic and consular channels,

direct communication between judicial officers in both states, direct contact between an interested party and judicial authorities in the receiving state, and direct communication between government authorities.

How is service effectuated on defendants in India?

India acceded to the Convention on November 23, 2006, with certain reservations, expressly opposing all alternative service methods under Article 10. It prohibits the service of judicial documents through diplomatic or consular channels, except when the recipient is a national of the requesting country. For instance, a U.S. court cannot serve documents in India through U.S. diplomatic or consular channels, unless the recipient is a U.S. national residing in India. Additionally, all service requests must be in English or accompanied by an English translation. As a result, valid service can only be executed through the Ministry of Law and Justice, India's designated central authority. The Law Ministry is permitted to reject a service request but must specify the reasons for such refusal. For instance, under Article 13, a request can be denied if the state believes its sovereignty or security would be compromised. However, a state cannot reject a service request solely because it claims exclusive jurisdiction over the subject matter under its domestic law. Similarly, under Article 29, a request cannot be refused simply because the state's internal law does not recognise a right of action. If the central authority raises no objections, it proceeds with serving the defendant. The service is then treated as a summons issued by an Indian court under Section 29(c) of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908. Once completed, the central authority issues an acknowledgement to the requesting party. The entire process typically takes six to eight months.

What do judicial precedents say?

There is ongoing debate over whether service through alternative channels such as social media and email is precluded by India's reservation under Article 10 of the Convention. This controversy arises from conflicting judicial interpretations regarding the scope of the reservation. In *Federal Trade Commission v. PCCare247 Inc.* (2013), a U.S. district court ruled that service of process in India through Facebook and email is permissible. The court reasoned that these methods do not fall within the purview of Article 10 and that India has not explicitly objected to them. However, in *Punjab National Bank (International) Ltd. v. Boris Shipping Ltd. & Ors.* (2019), the England and Wales High Court (Queen's Bench Division) overturned a lower court ruling that had allowed the service of summons through alternative methods on defendants residing in India. The court held that such service was invalid as it did not adhere to the procedure prescribed by India under the Convention. It emphasised that deviations from this mandated process are impermissible unless exceptional circumstances are demonstrated. To circumvent delays associated with the issuance of summons through the Law Ministry, parties often waive the Convention's provisions, opting for contractually defined terms of service instead. In *Rockefeller Technology Investments v.*



*Changzhou SinoType Technology Company* (2020), the Supreme Court of California ruled that even if a signatory state has expressly objected to Article 10 of the Convention, service may still be deemed valid if the parties have explicitly agreed to an alternative method in their contract.

Can a default verdict be rendered?

A default judgment may be issued under the Convention if a foreign government refuses to cooperate in serving summons on a defendant residing within its jurisdiction. However, Article 15 prescribes specific conditions that must be met before such a judgment can be rendered: (a) the document must have been transmitted through one of the methods outlined in the Convention; (b) at least six months must have elapsed since the transmission, with the court determining

this period to be reasonable in the given case; and (c) no certificate of service has been received despite all reasonable efforts to obtain it through the competent authorities of the recipient state. Notably, India has expressly declared that its courts may issue a default judgment in cross-border disputes even if no certificate of service or delivery has been received, provided that all conditions under Article 15 are met. Recently, in *Duong v. DDG BIM Services LLC* (2023), American plaintiffs sought permission to serve Indian defendants via email, citing difficulties in effectuating service through India's central authority as prescribed by the Convention. Judge Kathryn Kimball Mizelle underscored that Article 15 functions as a "safety valve," allowing default judgment to be entered if "India's central authority fails to hold up its end of the bargain."

## Asteroid YR4 spares Earth, 1.7 percent impact peril to moon

Hyderabad: The city-leveling asteroid 2024 YR4, which was hurtling towards Earth from outer space with 3.2 percent chances of impact, has been downgraded by NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Agency) to 0.004 percent and is expected to safely pass Earth in 2032. However, there is still a chance of the asteroid YR 4 to impact the moon on December 22, 2032. That probability is currently at 1.7 percent.

"When first discovered, asteroid 2024 YR4 had a very small, but notable chance of impacting our planet in 2032. As observations of the asteroid continued to be submitted to the Minor Planet Center, experts at NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory's (JPL's) Center for Near-Earth Object Studies were able to calculate more precise models of the asteroid's trajectory and now have found there is no significant potential for this asteroid to impact our planet for the next century. The latest observations have further reduced the uncertainty of its future trajectory, and the range of possible locations the asteroid could be on Dec. 22, 2032, has moved farther away from the Earth," NASA in a statement said.

There still remains a very small chance for asteroid 2024 YR4 to impact the Moon



on Dec. 22, 2032. That probability is currently 1.7 percent. NASA will continue to observe asteroid 2024 YR4 with observatories funded by its Planetary Defense Coordination Office, and NASA's James Webb Space Telescope will observe the asteroid in March to further gain insights about its size for scientific purposes, NASA added. Earlier, scientists worldwide had dubbed asteroid YR 4 as a 'city killer' due to its estimated size that ranged between 40 meters and 90 meters. On its impact with Earth, the asteroid would have released energy ranging from 8 to 15 megatons of TNT. In comparison, the atomic bombs dropped in Hiroshima released about 0.015 megatons. This means, asteroid YR4 was 500 times more powerful.