

Ola Electric goes for second round of job cuts, to lay off over 1,000 employees this time

New Delhi: Ola Electric Mobility is reportedly laying off more than 1,000 employees and contract workers in its second round of job cuts within months. The decision came as the company, backed by SoftBank Group Corporation, is working to reduce its growing losses. The latest layoffs are happening across various departments, including procurement, fulfilment, customer relations and charging infrastructure, according to reports on Monday. This is the second round of layoffs in less than five months. In November, the company had laid off around 500 employees. The current layoffs account for more than a quarter of Ola's total workforce, which stood at 4,000 at the end of March 2024. The layoffs also include contract workers, who are not counted in the company's public employee disclosures. The report also revealed that as part of a restructuring effort, Ola Electric is automating parts of its customer relations operations. The company is also letting go of front-end sales, service, and

warehouse staff at its showrooms and service centres as it revises its logistics and delivery strategy to cut costs. The plans for layoffs may evolve depending on business requirements, the reports mentioned. The EV company was yet to issue a statement on the latest round of layoffs. Ola Electric, which went public last August, has faced several challenges. The company reported a 50 per cent increase in losses for the December quarter (Q3) and has faced scrutiny from India's market regulator and consumer protection authorities in recent months. Additionally, shares of Ola Electric have dropped over 60 per cent from their peak following the company's IPO debut. In a recent update, Ola Electric reported selling over 25,000 units of its electric scooters in February, capturing a 28 per cent market share.

However, according to the data from the government's VAHAN portal, only one out of three Ola Electric scooters sold last month



was officially registered. The company had informed investors that its vehicle registrations in February would be impacted as it

renegotiates terms with two of its vendors to reduce costs and improve operational efficiencies.

Hyderabad's growing health concern: Everyday noise could lead to permanent deafness



Hyderabad: The city's constant hum, the rumble of traffic, blare of the sirens, constant drone from the ear buds and the roar of the construction sites, our ears are under siege all through the day, making us prime targets of gradual but irreversible hearing loss. While there is very little awareness about Noise-Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL), it is quietly spreading among the younger demographic of individuals aged in their 30s and 40s. This sound stealing medical condition is silently spreading among young people across South and Western parts of India, especially in Hyderabad, Pune, Mumbai and Bengaluru, where noise pollution is relatively high, ENT surgeons from the city said. "We do not even bat an eyelid to

the everyday noise that surrounds us in a city. But it has the potential to cause irreversible hearing loss. We wear earpieces and listen to music all the time or talk to people for hours. Protect your hearing before it's too late, as we witness such cases in Hyderabad," warns senior ENT surgeon Dr. Ashok Prudviraj from Medicoover Hospitals. A few days ago, Dr Ashok was visited by a 42-year-old tech professional from Hyderabad, who lost his hearing due to such everyday habits. The patient never imagined that getting exposed to the city noise, long hours of phone calls on ear pieces, and the hum of the bikes during weekend bike rides would cause irreversible hearing loss, Dr Ashok said. The NIHL is one of the most preventable forms of hearing loss, yet it's on the

rise due to excessive headphone use, industrial noise, and unchecked exposure to loud environments. Studies indicate that men in their 30s and 40s are most affected due to occupational exposure and lifestyle choices, while elderly populations in urban areas suffer from long-term noise damage. Yet, many

dismiss hearing loss as a minor inconvenience, until conversations become difficult and social interactions suffer, he said. Simple changes like reducing headphone volume, using noise protection in loud environments, and scheduling regular hearing tests can help preserve hearing, he advises.

Hitec City Railway station redevelopment works underway at brisk pace

Hyderabad: The works related to redevelopment of the Hitec City Railway Station, being taken up by the Railway Ministry, is underway at a brisk pace. As on date, about 72 per cent of the development works, including entry ramps and Foot Over Bridge etc, has been completed.

The facilities for train travellers planned at the redeveloped Hitec City station, being taken-up as part of the 'Naya Bharat Naya Station' initiative of Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS) of Railway Ministry, include removing unwanted structures, improved lighting, better-circulating area, upgraded parking space, Divyangjan-friendly infrastructure, environment-friendly building using green energy, etc. South Central Railway (SCR) authorities said the envisaged transformation of the Hitech City railway station was in good shape. Upon completion, the station will boast a modern facade, an improved circulating area and advanced passenger amenities. The station is being devel-



oped with modern architecture and world-class facilities and will serve as the city centre with a focus on long-term planning. Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has virtually laid the foundation for railway stations across the country, including 21 railway stations across Telangana. Railway officials said that in the first phase, the foundation stone has been laid for 21 stations in Telangana, 15 in Andhra Pradesh, 13 in Maharashtra, and one station in Karnataka at a combined cost of nearly Rs 2,079.29 crore.

Kerala from cricket's whipping boys to Ranji Finalists? The untold story of a 50-over revolution

As a schoolboy, when I visited grandparents in Kerala, there was a running joke provoked by my love for cricket. Relatives would tell me with much merriment that cricket was a game played by royalty and madmen — “usually the same people,” they added — and berate me for not playing football or volleyball. Most relatives were converted in the 1980s, when television brought cricket into their homes. Like the mathematician G.H. Hardy who said that even if he lay dying he would still want to hear the cricket scores, my grandmother expressed just such a wish. That was startling. She had become a fan of Ravi Shastri, which was as dramatic a turnaround as you could imagine. Perhaps television played the key role in spreading the game in one of India's few regions where traditionally cricket was looked down upon. But long before that, Kerala's contribution to cricket had been well established. A Kerala player and later secretary of the association, K.V. Kelappan Thampuran, had invented the 50-over game in 1951. This was the Pooja All-India tournament, a decade before the Midlands Knock-out Cup was played in England and 12 years before the Gillette Cup there.

Practical reason Kelappan is seldom given credit for his innovation even in India. He invented the popular format — which led to the World Cup and the current Champions Trophy — for a very practical reason. He wanted to run an all-India tournament in Tripunithra, a small town in Kochi, but there was not much time for the existing formats (three-day and two-day). It also meant “long breaks from family and work,” in the words of Vishnu Kumar who has written about the tournament's origins. Today, as Kerala plays the final of the Ranji Trophy for the first time ever, it is easy to forget how low down the pecking order their cricket had once been. Kerala were the whipping boys of the South Zone. Occasionally when they came close to upsetting rivals, the fact that they didn't know how to handle the situation allowed the opposition to regroup. Nothing succeeds like failure. It meant that players from the region were never in the national reckoning no matter what they did although any success would have been, by definition, against superior teams. Among their best-known batters was Balan Pandit, whose 262 not out against Andhra was the highest individual score till Sreekumar Nair made an unbeaten 306 against Services in 2017. In the mid-80s, skipper K. Jayaram scored four centuries in five Ranji matches, but didn't get to play in the Duleep Trophy.

Before the fast bowlers Tinu Yohanan and S. Sreesanth played for India, Kerala fans had to be content with those who had a parental connection with the State, like Ajay Jadeja or Robin Uthappa (whose mothers were from Kerala). Or Sunil Valson and K.P. Bhaskar who were born elsewhere. Currently the talented Sanju Samson is in and out of India's white ball teams. “This is Kerala's 1983 moment,” leg spinner Ananthapadmanabhan said after Kerala's entry into the final. It was under his captaincy that Kerala first qualified for the knockout thirty years ago.

National call-up?

Will the successes of the two finalists lead to a national call-up for some leading performers? Vidarbha's Yash Rathod, 24,

has made 933 runs this season with five centuries. Akshay Wadkar, 30, is in the Top Ten with 674 runs. Among Kerala's batters, Salman Nizar, 27, has 607 runs, and Mohammed Azharuddeen, 30, has 601. Vidarbha's left arm spinner Harsh Dube, 22, heads the wicket-taking list with 66 while Kerala veteran Jalaj Saxena is their leading bowler with 38. I bring up the statistics merely to point out that for long India's international cricket has run on parallel lines with the domestic, not meeting at all till the cricket board's recent order that all internationals turn out in the Ranji Trophy. This, following a disastrous tour of Australia. How many of the finalists will find themselves in the national reckoning at a time when performances in the IPL seem to carry more weight will be watched with interest. It is a sobering thought that India's most successful Test batter.



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.

Aakash Educational Services Limited Launches Aakash Invictus – The Ultimate Game-Changer JEE Preparation Program for Aspiring Engineers

Hyderabad :Aakash Educational Services Limited (AESL), the national leader in test preparatory services, proudly announces the launch of Aakash Invictus, a groundbreaking and first-of-its-kind Advanced program for JEE preparation designed for the best and brightest engineering aspirants. This elite, high-intensity, personalized, AI driven and result-oriented initiative is engineered to enable students preparing specifically for IITs or reputed Universities abroad.

Aakash Invictus brings together around 500 best JEE Faculty, offering unparalleled mentorship backed by a track record of success in guiding over one lakh students to IITs. The curriculum is cutting-edge and meticulously designed for ambitious students aiming for top IIT ranks. The program features integrated phygital learning and exclusive study resources, ensuring precision-focused, AI-enabled, and adaptive preparation for JEE Advanced. The rigorous program includes a comprehensive revision and testing module that emphasizes targeted preparation during the final stages before the JEE (Advanced) exam. Students will benefit from

specialized curriculum, doubt-clearing sessions and a meticulously crafted test series aimed at maximizing their performance. Aakash Invictus will have small batches so as to give more personalized attention to students. Mr. Deepak Mehrotra, MD & CEO of Aakash Educational Services Limited, emphasized the program's significance, stating, "Aakash Invictus is not just a coaching program; it is a transformational journey for students aiming to secure top IIT ranks.

This program brings together top-notch faculty with decades of experience, cutting-edge teaching methodologies and personalized, AI and tech-driven learning. Over the years, our educators have successfully mentored millions of students to secure admissions in top IITs. The study material has been completely revamped, covering the entire curriculum and developed by some of the best experts in the industry. We firmly believe this is the best—if you can create better material, we will award you and welcome you to our team." He further added, "This programme, which started a few months ago has already attracted 2500+ top students. Built on three key pillars – innova-



tive pedagogy and courseware, expert faculty and advanced AI tools – Aakash Invictus will set new benchmarks in JEE preparation.

All these brand-new features are backed by the credibility, trust, and technical expertise of Aakash."

GHMC Cracks Down on Unauthorized Construction: Show Cause Notice Issued to Praneeth Pranav knightwoods (Venkata Praneeth Developers)



Hyderabad: In a decisive move to uphold urban regulations and protect the interests of local farmers and landowners, the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) has issued a Show Cause Notice to Praneeth Pranav knightwoods (M/s Venkata Praneeth Developers.) This action follows complaints from affected landowners who claim to have been cheated by the developers during the construction of unauthorized buildings in Patancheru. Landlords and farmers from the Patancheru region raised alarms regarding the illegal construction activities undertaken by Venkata Praneeth Developers. The GHMC responded to these concerns by conducting inspections, which confirmed the presence of significant deviations from approved plans and regulations. - Notice No: 1715/TPS/Cir-22/SLPZ/GHMC/2025 - Date of Issue: January 17, 2025

1. Encroachment of Nala and Buffer Zones: The developers have encroached 3

meters into the nala and an additional 9 meters into the nala buffer zone. Such actions not only violate urban planning laws but also threaten public safety and drainage systems, affecting the entire community.

2. Regulatory Breach: The Show Cause Notice was served under Sections 451(1) & 461(1) of the GHMC Act, 1955, detailing violations in several survey numbers: 351, 347, 466/P, 346, 350, 352, 467, 348, 349, 145, 344/P, and 468.

3. Inadequate Buffers: During inspections by GHMC officials and the irrigation department, it was discovered that the distance maintained from the nala was only 12 meters, whereas the minimum requirement for construction is 24 meters. Despite receiving the Show Cause Notice, M/s Venkata Praneeth Developers failed to respond adequately, raising serious concerns about their intent and commitment to regulatory compliance. On March 1, 2025, GHMC issued a Speaking Order referencing the pre-

vious notice, reiterating the necessity for legal adherence and immediate action. The GHMC has mandated that M/s Venkata Praneeth Developers halt all ongoing con-

struction activities immediately. They are required to provide a written justification for their practices within seven (7) days of receiving the Show Cause Notice.

Over 17,000 inter students skip first-year exam in Telangana

Hyderabad: The first day of the intermediate public examinations on Wednesday saw over 17,000 first-year students skipping the second language paper – I. While a total of 5,14,184 students registered for the examination, 4,96,899 appeared. Barring two malpractice cases, one each in Hanamkonda and Warangal districts, the examination commenced smoothly in 1,532 centres across the State. Some students in Hyderabad complained about inadequate facilities, including lack of a wall clock in the examination halls.

A parent whose ward appeared for the exam in a private junior college in ECIL lamented that the centre neither arranged a wall clock nor allowed normal watches to be worn by students. However, the Telangana Board of Intermediate Education (TG BIE) officials said a bell was rung every half-hour to inform students about the remaining time during the examination. While the TG BIE, which is conducting the exams, issued instructions in the hall tickets that the last reporting time at the centre is 8.45 am, this rule was relaxed and students were given five minutes grace time to enter centres. This



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time, QR code embedded with centre location has been integrated into hall tickets, enabling students to easily navigate to their respective centres.

Meanwhile, post the examination, traffic at several places in the city crawled as the students headed to their respective homes, alongside movement of a large number of vehicles. The traffic particularly from Kukatpally Y-Junction to JNTU-Hyderabad moved bumper to bumper for some time due to heavy rush.

Why the south of India is no longer impervious to the saffron march

Trajectories of north and south Indian history have moved at different levels. Unlike north India, where history is often a recollection of invasions and wars, massacres and destruction, the south's has been more about accommodation, assimilation and affirmation. As recounted by historian Romila Thapar in her landmark work, *History of Early India*, "The Arabs settled permanently in the coastal regions of the west and the south from about the eighth and ninth centuries. They were welcomed, given land for trading stations and left free to practise their religion, as had been the convention with Christians earlier in south India....Among the more interesting aspects of Arab settlements along the west coast is that each group adopted some of the customary law, and even some forms of worship, from the local community with whom they had the closest contact." It is in stark contrast to what happened in north India with the invasion of Sindh by Mohammed bin Qasim in 712 CE, and later the raids of Mahmud of Ghazni. The dichotomy continues to this day. For instance, while north India has been awash with resurgent Hindutva since the time of the Ayodhya dispute, and the consequent othering of fellow citizens of other faiths, large tracts of south India have consistently resisted the march of Hindutva forces. In the general elections last summer, the Bharatiya Janata Party failed to gain even one seat in Tamil Nadu, and won one seat in Kerala. 'A real force'

But the limited electoral success does not necessarily mean that the south is impervious to the saffron march. Arguing that Hindutva is a real force which needs to be contended within theoretical and empirical terms, journalist and writer Nissim Mannathukkaren and several other writers including Christophe Jaffrelot, T.T. Sreekumar, Anil M. Varughese, J. Devika and others examine the rise of Hindu nationalism in Kerala in a new book, *Hindu Nationalism in South India* (Routledge). Placing Kerala in the context of south India, several essays examine the rise of Hindutva in relation to the State's history, caste, culture, post-truth, ideology, gender, politics and the Indian national space. "Hindu nationalism appears 'more confident, proud, brazen and belligerent than ever before'," Mannathukkaren writes in the Introduction, quoting Edward Anderson and Arkotong Longkumer. But the expansion is not just electoral, it is also socio-cultural, he says. That is why despite the lack of comparable electoral success in Kerala and south India, "it is vital to map the tectonic changes that are happening at a discursive level across India," he writes. Mannathukkaren explains how despite the absence of seats on the electoral charts, the BJP's vote share has been on the upswing in Kerala, and to a lesser extent in Tamil Nadu.

"An electoral analysis of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the BJP in Kerala shows that they increased the vote share from 6.31% in 2009 to 10.83% in 2014, and further to 15.20% in 2019. While the increase in votes has not been enough to win any seats, the changes are very important considering that the Hindu population is only around 55% in the State," he notes. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP won one seat in Kerala with actor-turned-politician



Suresh Gopi winning from Thrissur, while the Congress-led United Democratic Front bagged 18 of 20 Lok Sabha seats. In Telangana, the BJP won four parliamentary seats in 2019. In the 2023 Assembly Elections, it increased its vote share from 6.9% (2018) to 13.90%, its total votes from 14.43 lakh to 32.51 lakh and its seats from one to eight. Effectively, every seventh voter had bought the BJP's narrative of Hindu nationalism. The saffron gains in the south are real, and could in the foreseeable future, be tangible too.

The most significant saffron gains have been in Karnataka where the BJP made an electoral breakthrough as early as 1991. According to Mannathukkaren, "South India as a whole cannot be generalised for there are regional variations among States, such as the significant advancement of Hindutva in Karnataka. But crucially, there are variations even within States (thus, there are frontiers within States); for example, in coastal Karnataka, the BJP has won all three seats since 2000. Unique demographic and socio-cultural factors gave rise to a virulent Hindutva much before many other places." But Kerala has drawn a lot of attention as it is perceived as a Left stronghold. Explains Mannathukkaren, "Arguably, no State in India in recent times has drawn the ire of Hindutva groups as much as Kerala. This has been amplified by traditional media as well as social media networks doing the bidding for the Hindutva dispensation. Thus, the Prime Minister compares Kerala with Somalia (in terms of development), prominent television channels refer to the State as 'Pakistan', WhatsApp forwards and Facebook posts talk of Kerala's 'killing fields' (of Hindutva activists) and its 'jihadi terror' factories...." A socio-cultural change is taking hold, as Jaffrelot points out in his essay: "It happens through a couple of processes: firstly, the denigration of secularism, religious figures wielding state power, new laws targeting conversion, a ban on beef, the Hinduisation of street/city names, the rewrit-

ing of textbooks, etc., which give legitimacy to Hindu nationalism, and secondly, the previously-covert-but now-visible forms of discrimination against religious minorities." While the rise of Hindutva politics has touched almost every part of the country, its roots go back all the way to the time of Jawaharlal Nehru. As Jaffrelot notes, "Nehru fought against all forms of communalism (whether Hindu, Muslim or Sikh), not against

religion per se...He never intended to separate politics and religion....Nehru outlined his views on the subject in 1961, when he said, 'We talk about a secular state in India. It is perhaps not very easy even to find a good word in Hindi for 'secular.' Some people think it means something opposed to religion. That obviously is not correct. What it means is that it is a state which honours all faiths equally and gives them equal opportunities.'

Why is Central TB Division pushing an untested AI tool for screening?

Even as time is running out to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi's goal of "eliminating" TB by 2025, the Health Ministry appears to be moving at glacial speed and is largely disinterested. A report submitted by the Health Technology Assessment of India (HTAI) committee in February 2024 on two indigenously developed solutions to screen people with presumptive and subclinical TB using AI-assisted chest X-ray interpretation was posted on the HTAI website only on December 6, 2024. The two indigenously developed solutions are qXR from the Bengaluru-based Qure.ai and Genki from Pune's DeepTek.

HTA assessment of a new technology or tool for cost-effectiveness and efficacy in terms of sensitivity and specificity is not mandatory. However, the Central TB Division (CTD) waits for the HTA report and approval by the Medical Technology Assessment Board (MTAB) chaired by Niti Aayog and involves stakeholders including itself before programmatic implementation of any new tool, technology or treatment regimen using novel drugs for TB. For instance, TrueNat for TB diagnosis was validated by ICMR's National Institute of Research in Tuberculosis (NIRT), Chennai before it was assessed by the HTA before it was included in the TB programme. Similarly, the BPaLM/

BPaL regimen for MDR-TB treatment was tested in a phase 3/4 trial by NIRT and then assessed by HTA before being included in the TB programme by the Central TB Division.

Surprisingly, despite the assessment and approval of the two AI tools by the HTA and MTAB, respectively, the Central TB Division has not included them for programmatic implementation. However, even in the absence of an HTA assessment, the CTD has "recommended for programmatic introduction" a similar AI tool — DeepCXR — developed by the Institute for Plasma Research, Gandhinagar. An ICMR expert committee had approved the AI tool for "use under the national TB programme".

Worse, CTD failed to officially communicate to the States that it was recommending the use of the DeepCXR tool in the TB programme. Instead, CTD informed the States in end-January this year to "consider utilising" the DeepCXR tool only when the States reached out to CTD seeking AI solutions to analyse chest X-ray images. And the 100-day TB elimination campaign began on December 7, 2024. As per CTD, the DeepCXR technology is available for free for use in the national TB programme. As per a January-February 2020 review paper in the journal *Neurology India*.

Why are PwDs worried about DPDP rules? | Explained

With the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) looking to wrap up public consultations on the draft Rules for the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 by March 5, disability rights activists are trying to get a key provision of the Act amended or dropped, pointing out that it infantilises Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), negates their decision-making capabilities, and comes from a misunderstood notion of how guardianship works for PwDs.

What does this provision state?

Section 9(1), in clubbing children with PwDs, has mandated that even in cases of adult PwDs who have legal guardians, consent for use of any personal data must be obtained from the guardian concerned. While government officials have said that the draft Rules have tried to address the issue by limiting the number of disabilities the provision would apply to, activists and experts maintain that there remain significant challenges in its implementation.

What do the draft Rules say?

The Union government has said that it brought the DPDP Act, 2023 to govern the processing of digital personal data in a way that “recognises both the right of individuals to protect their personal data and the need to process such personal data for lawful purposes and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto”. Section 9(1) of the Act says, “The Data Fiduciary shall, before processing any personal data of a child or a person with disability who has a lawful guardian obtain verifiable consent of the parent of such child or the lawful guardian, as the case may be, in such manner as may be prescribed.” The Act’s language defines data fiduciaries as those parties processing the personal data and data principals as the users whose data is being collected. But in Section 2(j)(ii), for PwDs, the Act has included “lawful guardian” within the meaning of data principal. In the draft Rules notified by the MeitY on January 3 this year, the government has proceeded to set out the rules that will govern the Act. In these Rules, Rule 10 deals with the governing of Section 9(1) of the Act. Rule 10(2) says, “A Data Fiduciary, while obtaining verifiable consent from an individual identifying herself as the lawful guardian of a person with disability, shall observe due diligence to verify that such guardian is appointed by a court of law, a designated authority or a local level committee, under the law applicable to guardianship.” In the next sub-section, the Rules provide for considering guardianship under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPWD Act) and the National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999 (NT Act). It also goes on to define PwDs, for whom the consent clause of Section 9(1) would apply to, as: “(i) an individual who has long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with barriers, hinders her full and effective participation in society equally with others and who, despite being provided adequate and appropriate support, is unable to take legally binding decisions; And (ii) an individual who is suffering from any of the conditions relat-

ing to autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation or a combination of any two or more of such conditions and includes an individual suffering from severe multiple disability.” But while the Rule on how to take the consent of the parents of children contains detailed explanations in the form of illustrations that highlight different scenarios and how the consent procedure would work in each, there is no similar illustrations presented for the sub-section that deals with taking consent of the guardian of a person with disability. This has led disability rights activists and experts alike to question how the consent clause would apply to PwDs, details of procedures for different disabilities and degrees of severity, and whether it would apply uniformly to guardians appointed under different laws.

How do guardianships for PwDs work?

The legal guardianship for PwDs, while not mandatory, is governed by two laws in India — the RPWD Act, 2016 and the NT Act, 1999 — both of which mandate different roles for the guardians appointed under it for adult PwDs. The NT Act’s guardianship clauses apply to people who are “diagnosed with conditions related to autism, cerebral palsy, intellectual disability (previously categorised as mental retardation), or any combined occurrence of two or more of these conditions”. It provides for full guardianship of the PwD. In contrast, the RPWD Act’s guardianship clauses apply to people “experiencing long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which, when interacting with various barriers, hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”. This provides for a “limited guardianship”, which allows for support in making specific legal decisions when the individual’s capacity is deemed insufficient. While the NT Act goes against the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) by making “decision-making capacity” a metric for guardianship without adequately defining it, the RPWD Act, drafted to keep up with the UNCRPD, frames guard-

ianship as support to PwDs in exercising their own decision-making rights.

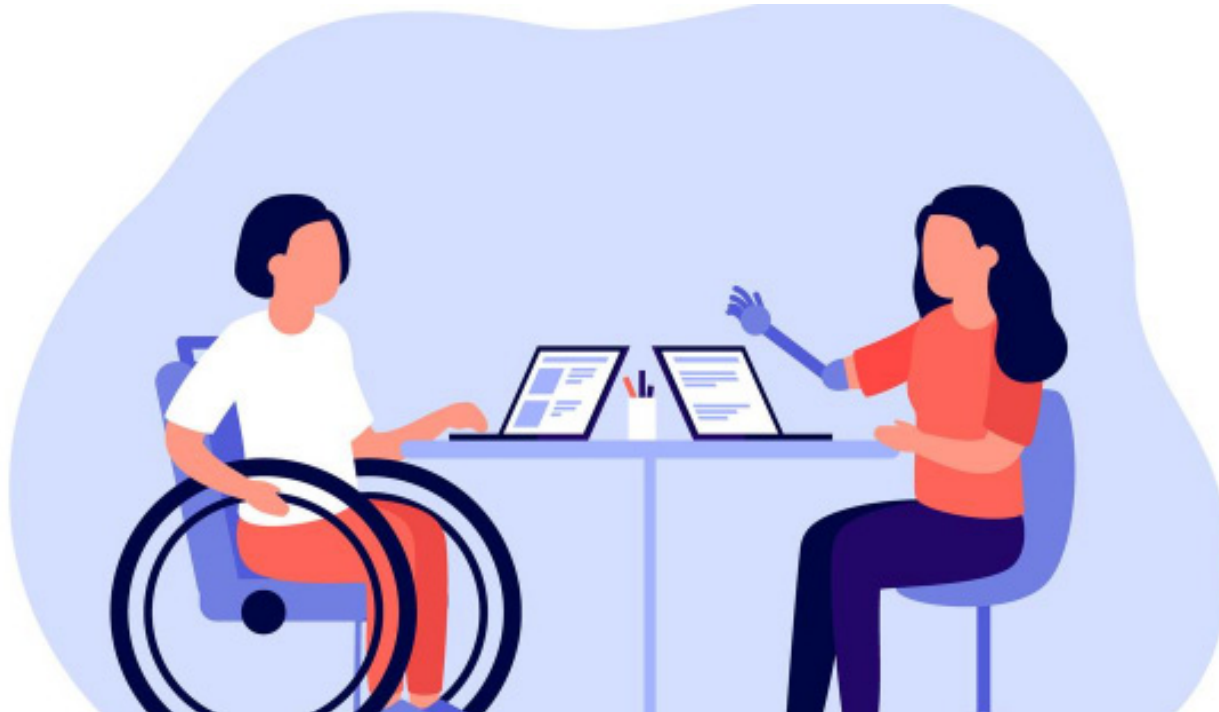
Where does the conflict arise?

A small survey among 91 PwDs by policy thinktank PACTA and Saksham Disability has shown that about 27.4% of them had legal guardians. Amongst those respondents who knew which law their guardianship was governed by, most said theirs were under the RPWD Act’s provision for “limited guardianship”. But despite this, the practicalities of guardianship are different, a report by Saksham and PACTA noted, adding that most of the PwDs with guardians maintained that their legal guardian ends up managing all their affairs. This report, released last month, noted that while the Act and the draft Rules are sound “in theory” if the guardianship is under the RPWD Act, the realities of how this guardianship works would mean that “a guardian is likely to deprive the autonomy and personhood of the individual”. On the other hand, in cases of guardians appointed under the NT Act, this would be in “direct conflict” with the autonomy of persons with disabilities under the UNCRPD, the report argued. The report noted that a plain reading of Section 9(1) of the DPDP Act “appears to presume” that just because a PwD might have a legal guardian, this in itself would be indicative of their “inability to take decisions in the digital sphere”. In addition, it said the law does not consider intersectionality of gender and disability. It cites a situation where a PwD woman may not be able to buy sanitary napkins from an online platform because it may now require their guardian’s consent for them to be able to access the platform itself. Nipun Malhotra, of the Nipman Foundation, who is leading efforts to lobby the government on these provisions, has said that Section 9(1) of the DPDP Act, 2023 itself has caused enough chaos on how it would apply, to whom, and under what circumstances. As for the government’s attempts to address the issue with the law by limiting the definition of PwDs in the draft Rules, Mr. Malhotra told

The Hindu, “Instead of simplifying how it would apply, the definitions have further complicated the issue.” Citing one example of the definition, he explained that “physical impairment” has been included. “But there is no provision for people with just physical disability to have legal guardians. This will only confuse people more.”

What are the concerns being raised?

Given the way the consent clause has been structured for PwDs in the DPDP Act, 2023 and the draft Rules, some of the principal concerns that have emerged include those of what legal obligations would the guardian of a PwD face; how the consent clause can be implemented in cases where guardianship law is in dissonance with the UNCRPD; and whether the legal guardian can opt out of consenting on behalf of the user with respect to specific platforms. Another issue highlighted by Saksham in their report has been that of concerns among PwDs about what the fate of their personal data will be. For instance, the rights body has posited that to comply with Section 9(1) of the Act, any data fiduciary would have to ask at least two questions: (i) Whether the user has a disability? (ii) Whether the user had a legal guardian. In cases where the answer to the first question is yes but the second is not, the platform will still have data on the person’s disability with no purpose to process it. Further, Saksham has questioned that if the definition of data principal includes the legal guardian of a PwD, would that then mean that they must take on the full legal responsibility and face penal consequences under the Act? It has been argued that if this is the case, the legal guardian may, at times, be acting in their own interest, instead of the PwD they are caring for. Moreover, experts working in the disability sector have pointed out that beyond all of this, the primary barrier to PwDs’ digital rights remains that of inaccessible platforms and applications. According to a 2023 accessibility evaluation conducted by the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy of the 10 most used apps,



The future of sustainability: rethinking education and career pathways in India

Recently, I participated in a panel discussion at the Azim Premji University in Bengaluru as part of the Wipro Earthian Awards. This gathering brought together participants from diverse backgrounds — students and educators from remote villages, tier-2 and tier-3 cities, and major urban centers — each with their perspectives and experiences in environmental stewardship. The panel discussion centered on a crucial yet often overlooked aspect: how sustainability can evolve from an academic subject to a viable and fulfilling career pathway. One question stood out to me: A teacher asked, “As a parent, would you advise your child to pursue a career in sustainability?” Another teacher raised concerns about why Environmental Science is not taught as a hands-on subject in schools. A third wondered how teachers can stay updated with advancements in the field. These questions revealed an underlying disconnect between sustainability as an evolving field and how it is perceived and taught in schools across India. Sustainability: an evolving field The hesitation around sustainability as a career choice is reflective of a larger issue. There is a misconception that careers in sustainability are limited or financially unviable.

India, like much of the world, is in the midst of a climate crisis. From extreme heat waves and erratic monsoons to pollution and depleting resources, environmental challenges are no longer distant threats—they are here and affecting us daily.

Yet, while sectors such as Finance, Technology, and Engineering are often seen as the primary career paths, Sustainability is an evolving field that requires expertise from multiple disciplines. Whether one comes from a background in Economics, Law, Engineering, Social Sciences, or even the Arts, there is a place for diverse skill sets in Sustainability. Industries are rapidly shifting towards green energy, sustainable manufacturing, and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) reporting, creating a demand for professionals who can integrate sustainability principles into various domains. Governments, corporations, and research institutions are investing heavily in solutions for climate change adaptation, energy transition, circular economy, and nature-based solutions. If parents and educators continue to view sustainability as a secondary option, students may hesitate to explore its vast potential. India must recognise and nurture sustainability as a mainstream career choice to build the skilled workforce necessary to address the climate crisis and drive innovation for a more resilient future. Sustainability is turning into a multidisciplinary, future-ready field and so thinking about building a career in sustainability is increasingly viable. Reforms in teaching at school level A recurring theme in our discussion was the way Environmental Science is taught in schools. Currently, it is often reduced to textbook definitions, rote learning, and annual environment-themed projects. But Environmental Science is not just a subject—it is a way of engaging with the world around us.

Science should be experiential, and Environmental Science education must move beyond the classroom. Schools must integrate some real-world applications. With the advent of cheaper IOT-based sensors, it is cost-effective to set up key instruments

such as weather stations, and monitoring air and water quality instruments for students on practical teaching. Additionally, students can be engaged in project-based learning in waste management, afforestation, and biodiversity conservation. Many students in rural and semi-urban areas are already living close to environmental challenges. Making them active participants in local environmental and sustainability efforts would not only enhance learning but also empower them to be problem-solvers in their communities. Some countries leading in climate action have already incorporated such experiential learning models. For example, the nature school concept in Finland’s environmental education includes field studies and problem-solving activities based on local issues. The question is, can we take inspiration and adapt similar models and fine-tune our students and the Indian wisdom to blend into our education to revitalise environmental and sustainability education in India? Need for teachers to upskill One of the most critical gaps highlighted during our discussion was the lack of avenues for teachers to stay updated with new developments in sustainability. The strong concern highlighted was if the teachers are not updated, how can they teach their students effectively? Unlike subjects like math or history, sustainability is a dynamic field—it evolves with scientific discoveries, technological innovations, and policy changes. How do we ensure our teachers are equipped with the latest knowledge? The answer probably lies in continuous learning programs. Universities, research institutions, and governmental bodies must collaborate to create upskilling programs for educators. Regular workshops, online courses, and interactive platforms can help teachers stay informed. Additionally, partnerships with sustainability professionals — scientists, urban planners, climate policy experts — can bring fresh insights into classrooms and bridge the gap between research and teaching.

A national-level initiative to train teachers in sustainability education could have a transformative impact, ensuring that students across India receive relevant and forward-thinking education in this crucial field. Shift in perception about sustainability Beyond schools, the general perception of sustainability in India also needs a shift. Sustainability is often seen as an elite concern — something that urban policymakers, environmental NGOs, or global institutions discuss, but not an immediate priority for everyday citizens. This could not be further from the truth. In reality, the most affected by environmental degradation are those with the least resources to cope. Farmers dealing with unpredictable rainfall, urban dwellers battling rising air pollution, and coastal communities facing sea-level rise — these are real, urgent challenges. Making sustainability a household concern requires mainstreaming it in our conversations, media, and governance. Public awareness campaigns, storytelling through films and digital media, and community-based sustainability initiatives can help change this perception. The government’s emphasis on solar energy, electric vehicles, and sustainable infrastructure is a step in the right direction, but these policies must be accompanied by grassroots



awareness and education. The panel discussion reinforced one key takeaway: All of us have a role to play in taking sustainability beyond textbooks and into our everyday lives. Schools, teachers, parents, policymakers, and industry leaders must work together to reshape sustainability education in India. A well-informed young generation that sees sustainability not just as an academic subject but as a way of thinking

and problem-solving will be crucial in building a resilient future. The moment to act is now, and the classroom is just the beginning. By making sustainability education hands-on, supporting teachers in continuous learning, and changing national perceptions about careers in the field, we can ensure that students across India — whether from remote villages or metropolitan cities — are equipped to be the climate leaders of tomorrow.

NRI couple donate Rs 10 crore to Indo-American Cancer Hospital



Hyderabad: An NRI couple from the United States, Dr Raghavendra Rao and Kalyani, have donated Rs 10 crore to establish Indo-American Cancer Research Organisation (IACRO) under Basavatarakam Indo-American Cancer Hospital and Research Institute (BIACH&RI).

As a part of the initiative, on the occasion of Shivaratri on Wednesday, Dr Rao and Kalyani donated the first instalment of Rs 5 crore by handing over a cheque to the senior management of BIACH&RI, in the presence of its chairman and actor Balakrishna. In addition to providing state-of-the-art cancer

treatment facilities at subsidised rates for poor families, the BIACH&RI had recently decided to increase its focus on advanced cancer research. As a part of this initiative, the hospital has decided to establish an ultra-modern research facility IACRO to allow scientists and researchers to take up advanced cutting-edge research on cancer. Speaking on the occasion, Dr Raghavendra Rao hoped that the new cancer research centre at BIACH&RI will bring new hope to lakhs of cancer patients in the country. Senior oncologists and cancer researchers were present.

Why is there so much gold in west Africa?

Militaries that have taken power in Africa's Sahel region – notably Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger – have put pressure on western mining firms for a fairer distribution of revenue from the lucrative mining sector. Gold is one of the resources at the heart of these tensions. West Africa has been a renowned gold mining hub for centuries, dating back to the ancient Ghana empire, which earned its reputation as the “Land of Gold” because of its abundant reserves and thriving trade networks. The region remains a global leader in gold production. As of 2024, west Africa contributed approximately 10.8% of the world's total gold output. But why is there so much gold in this region? The Conversation Africa asked geologist Raymond Kazapoe to explain.

How is gold formed?

The simple answer here is that we are not certain. However, scientists have some ideas. Gold, like all elements, formed through high energy reactions that occurred in various cosmic and space environments some 13 billion years ago, when the universe started to form. However, gold deposits – or the concentration of gold in large volumes within rock formations – are believed to occur through various processes, explained by two theories. The first theory – described by geologist Richard J. Goldfarb – argues that large amounts of gold were deposited in certain areas when continents were expanding and changing shape, around 3 billion years ago. This happened when smaller landmasses, or islands, collided and stuck to larger continents, a process called accretionary tectonics. During these collisions, mineral-rich fluids moved through the Earth's crust, depositing gold in certain areas. A newer, complementary theory by planetary scientist Andrew Tomkins explains the formation of some much younger gold deposits during the Phanerozoic period (approximately 650 million years ago). It suggests that as the Earth's oceans became richer in oxygen during the Phanerozoic period, gold got trapped within another mineral known as pyrite (often called fool's gold) as microscopic particles. Later, geological processes – like continental growth (accretion) and heat or pressure changes (metamorphism) released this gold – forming deposits that could be mined.

Where in west Africa is gold found and what are its sources?

Most gold production and reserves in west Africa are found within the west African craton. This is one of the world's oldest geological formations, consisting of ancient, continental crust that has remained largely unchanged for billions of years. The craton underlies much of west Africa, spanning parts of Mali, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Senegal and Mauritania. In fact, most west African countries that have significant gold deposits have close to 50% of their landmass on the craton. Notably, between 35% and 45% of Ghana, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire's territory sits on it – which is why these areas receive so much attention from gold prospectors. Gold deposits were formed within west Africa's craton rocks during a major tectonic event, known as the Eburnean Orogeny, 2.2 billion to 2.08 billion years ago. This event was accompanied by the temperature, pressure and tectonic conditions which promote gold mineralisation events. Most of the gold resources in the west African craton are found within ancient



geological formations formed by volcanic and tectonic processes about 2.3 billion to 2.05 billion years ago. These are known as the Rhyacian Birimian granitoid-greenstone belts. These gold-bearing belts in Ghana and Mali are by far the most endowed when compared with other countries in the region. Ghana and Mali currently, cumulatively account for over 57% of the combined past production and resources of the entire west Africa sub-region. Ghana is thought to be home to 1,000 metric tonnes of gold. The country produces 90 metric tonnes each year – or 7% of global production. Gold production in Mali reached around 67.7 tonnes in 2023. Mali has an estimated 800 tons of gold deposits. By comparison, the world's two largest gold producers are China (which mined approximately 370 metric tonnes of gold in 2023) and Australia (which had an output of around 310 metric tonnes in 2023).

What are some of the modern exploration tools used to find gold?

Gold was traditionally found by panning in riverbeds, where miners swirled sediment in water to separate the heavy gold particles, or by digging shallow pits to extract gold-rich ores. Over time, methods have evolved to include geochemical exploration techniques, advanced geophysical surveys, and chemical extraction techniques, like cyanide leaching. Geological mapping techniques are always evolving, and at the moment, there is a lot of interest in combining remote sensing data with cutting-edge data analytics methods, like machine learning. By combining these two methods, geologists can get around some of the problems caused by traditional methods, like the reliance on subjective judgement to create reliable maps and the need to spend money prospecting in areas with low chances of success. In recent years, deep learning computer techniques have made significant progress. They examine various geological data-sets to reduce uncertainty and increase the chances of finding gold mineralisation through advanced artificial intelligence techniques. These methods have proved highly beneficial in identifying specific features and discovering new mineral deposits when applied to remote sensing data. Another method, which I've researched and which could serve as a complementary gold exploration tool, is the use of stable isotopes. Stable isotopes are

elements – like carbon, hydrogen and oxygen – that do not decay over time. Some are responsible for helping to carry gold, in fluids, through rocks to form the deposits. As the gold-bearing fluids interact with the rocks, they transfer the stable isotopes to the rocks, thereby imbuing them with their unique signature. The thinking here is to identify the signature and then use it as a proxy for finding gold, since gold itself is hard to identify

directly. Advancements in analytical techniques have reduced the cost, volume, and time involved. This makes it a viable alternative to geochemical approaches – the most widely used and relatively efficient method. Raymond Kazapoe obtained his PhD in mineral exploration from the Pan African University at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. This article is republished from The Conversation.

Quadric IT showcases cutting-edge AI and sustainability innovations at BioAsia 2025



Hyderabad: Quadric IT, a pioneer in AI-driven and sustainable technology solutions, is making waves at BioAsia with a lineup of groundbreaking innovations. Among these, the Reusable Smart AI-Based Notebook, co-invented by Suman Balabommu, Kesari Sai Krishna Sabniveesu, and Raghu Ram Thatavarthy, is set to revolutionize the way notes are taken in meetings. This AI-powered reusable notebook functions like a traditional notebook but offers 100 reuses per page. Handwritten content can be seamlessly converted into digital format using the RenoteAI app, which also enables cloud storage and AI-generated prompts for instant knowledge retrieval. Users can simply wipe the pages with a wet cloth or tissue to erase and re-

use, dramatically reducing paper consumption. “The goal is to merge sustainability with AI-powered efficiency, ensuring that businesses and individuals alike can reduce waste while enhancing productivity,” said Kesari Sabniveesu, Co-Founder of Quadric IT. Quadric IT's Reusable Smart AI-Based Notebook Beyond the Reusable Smart Notebook, Quadric IT is presenting a range of AI and data-driven solutions tailored for Bio and Pharma industries. These innovations aim to streamline operations, enhance decision-making, and contribute to a greener future. With a strong focus on AI, ERP, data tools, and sustainability, Quadric IT continues to push the boundaries of technological advancements.

Boilers Bill 2024: Most colonial features retained, states get more freedom

Another colonial-era legislation is set to bite the dust as Parliament is seeking to push the Boilers (Amendment) Bill, 2024 in the second part of the Budget session. Passed by Rajya Sabha in the Winter session, the Boilers Bill, 2024 will replace the Boilers Act of 1923. The Bill is aimed at regulating industrial boilers and ensuring uniformity in operations. Seeking to ensure safety of life and property from the danger of boiler explosions, the Bill details standards of construction and maximum pressure specifications, as well as the registration and periodic inspection of all boilers, said Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal. Opposition MPs questioned the environmental, security and sustainability concerns in the proposed legislation; however, all the amendments suggested by them were defeated in Parliament via voice vote in.

Offering a reason as to why the Centre has not majorly tweaked the 1923 Act, Mr. Paresh Haribhakti, Managing Director, TCR Advanced Engineering, said, "For small, medium and large-scale boilers, applying the same rules changes the dynamics of compliance. I think that this has been done to balance this aspect."

What are the proposed changes in The Boilers Bill, 2024?

As a subject on the concurrent list, boilers fall under the ambit of both the Centre and the State governments. Defining boilers as a pressure vessel in which steam is generated by application of heat, the Bill excludes locomotive boilers, pressure vessels under the control of the Army, Navy or Air Force and sterilizer vessels under hundred litres. It also excludes boilers with a capacity less than twenty-five litres, operating at a temperature below 100 degrees Centigrade. The colonial act involves three key aspects: the Central Boilers Board, Inspection and offences. The Centre is empowered to constitute a Central Boilers Board headed by the Central Department's Secretary and comprising of members from the Centre, Bureau of Indian Standards, boiler manufacturers, engineering consultancy agencies, and users, all nominated by the Centre. An equal number of representatives from each State — senior technical officers involved in inspection of boilers — will also be nominated to the Board. This board can regulate design, manufacture, erection and use of boiler and boiler components to protect people and property from boiler explosions. It can also make rules regarding registration and inspection of boilers, and establish criteria for competent and inspecting authorities. The rules framed by the Board must be laid in both Houses of Parliament when in session. A team of experts from the National Sugar Institute (the Central institute for research in sugar technology) inspected the Mysugar Mill, for a first-hand assessment of the on-going overhauling works of boiler and other machinery, in Mandya on June 14, 2016. A team of experts from the National Sugar Institute (the Central institute for research in sugar technology) inspected the Mysugar Mill, for a first-hand assessment of the on-going overhauling works of boiler and other machinery, in Mandya on June 14, 2016.

The State government has the power to appointment inspectors (Chief and Deputy) — public servants who meet the criteria prescribed by the Central Govern-



ment. These officials are tasked with inspecting boilers during erection, manufacture, repair, and/or alteration. They can register boilers, certify owners, and authorise structural alterations and additions as well as the renewal of boiler certifications. Withdrawal or revocation of certification also falls under the scope of the Chief Inspector's powers. Appeals to any revocation or refusal of grant or registration are first raised with the Chief Inspector and then the Central government. These decisions are final and cannot be challenged in any court. Inspection and certification of boilers and boiler components can also be done by an institution recognised by the State government known as an 'inspecting authority'. This authority has to submit a report on its inspection to the Chief Inspector for approval. For grant of certification to welders of boilers and its components, the government can also authorise a 'competent authority'. This authority can approve repairs or modifications and renew certificates. "By providing access to a third-party, it will probably ease the doing of the business. Guidelines for manufacturing remain the same. Any competent person who is doing inspection based on the certified agency should work as per the predefined rules. Certification by third-party is also based on certain standards set by the CBB. The idea is to expedite and to improve overall efficiency," says Mr. Haribhakti. Provisions relating to accidents and penalties in the Bill, an accident is defined as an explosion of boiler or boiler components or an uncontrolled release of water or steam and has to be reported within 24 hours. Describing what is categorised as an accident, Mr. Haribhakti says, "A power boiler has typically about 500 kilometer tubings inside the boiler. When heat is provided inside the boiler, the tubes outside act as a barrier. Any tube failure which occurs inside the boiler will only hamper production and not harm life (of a person) as it occurs in a closed system. However, in small boilers, when a tube leak/rupture occurs, it increases the pressure, leading to explosion. This is a

concern." He adds, "In India, overall, accidents have reduced in boilers and we are following quite a reasonable model of inspection."

Karnataka: A portion of the boiler collapses after a fire accident in Nandi cooperative sugar factory in Babaleswar in Vijayapura district. Special arrangement The Bill has retained stringent penalties and imprisonment for certain offences. Unsanctioned structural alteration, addition or renewal, failure to report an accident, rendering a safety valve inoperative and allowing a person to enter boiler without disconnecting the pipe connection may attract a two-year imprisonment along with a fine upto ₹1 lakh. The penalties, fines and costs can be utilised in any manner as prescribed by the State Government. Sanction by the Chief Inspector is mandatory to prosecute any offences committed in violation of the act. The major change to the old Act is that State gov-

ernments have been allowed to exempt any area of the Act, which has raised safety concerns. "Giving autonomy to the State government or keeping it centralized should not come in the way of safety. No State would want to compromise on safety," says Mr. Haribhakti. He adds that freedom to States in boilers brings more flexibility in operations. Apart from this, other changes include further elaboration of the powers and duties of the Central Boilers Board, inspectors and State governments and hike in penalties to match current conditions. Despite the fact that changes are limited, Mr. Haribhakti says that the Bill's intent is to promote digitisation and use of advanced technology. Batting for more risk analysis in boilers, he adds, "India should focus on risk-related inspection. There should be a risk measurement agency which finds out what the risk is in running the boiler than the risk of its remaining life. This risk mitigation helps in extending plant life and ensures better safety."

Kerala to set up Emerging Technology Hub

Kerala proposes to set up an emerging technology hub to facilitate the journey of companies during this wave of gen next emerging technologies, said Rathan U. Kelkar, Secretary, Department of Electronics and IT, Kerala.

He was talking at a session "Technology and Kerala Opportunity" at the two-day Invest Kerala Global Summit here on Saturday. Mr. Kelkar cited the proposed emerging technology hub to be implemented by the Kerala Startup Mission at an investment of around ₹300 crore as one of the examples of how the State government is facilitating growth during the era of emerging technologies. It will primarily focus on five areas — space, health, renewable energy, agri-

culture and digital media. We are looking at developing capabilities for enabling people to absorb these technologies by creating a pool of trained people across the State with the help of the State digital parks. We have created the right ecosystem in across 100 technical institutions, which will train people on gen next technologies along with the Information and Communication Technology Academy of Kerala through industrial participation, said Mr. Kelkar. So, the government has understood the ecosystem and is trying to fill in the gaps and putting in place the right policies in place so that the industry can leverage that. One thing that Kerala does extremely well is to ensure that policies and structures are put in place for leveraging advanced technologies.