

## Union minister backs Hyderabad Metro expansion, promises support for Musi project

HYDERABAD: Union Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Tuesday said that the Central government would participate in the Hyderabad Metro Phase-II expansion project. He said that as per Metro policy, a joint venture should be set up with a 50:50 Centre-state share.

"In Hyderabad, so far the Metro has been run by L&T and the state government as a joint venture project. In future, the state and Central governments will take up the expansion project in PPP mode," he explained.

Addressing a regional meeting of Urban Development ministers from southern and western states, Khattar said: "I congratulate [Telangana Chief Minister] Revanth Reddy for removing the hurdles to the Hyderabad Metro expansion project. The Centre will fully participate in its development."

Highlighting the rapid expansion of modern public transport in the country, he noted that Metro Rail projects now operate in 24 cities, covering 1,100 km, compared to only five cities in 2004-05. He added that India is expected to surpass the US in terms of the size of its Metro network in the next two to three years.

On the Musi Riverfront Development Project, he said: "Musi rejuvenation is a long-standing demand. We can't blame anyone for why it did not happen earlier. Funds can be obtained from the Central government, through investments or from financial institutions like the Asian Development Bank. With these funds, the Musi project will be completed in the coming years."

"Revanth Reddy has sought our cooperation and support. We will help those who work with us. If you take one step, we will take four. There is no need to worry," the Union minister said.

Earlier, Revanth sought the Centre's assistance in completing several game-changing projects, including Musi rejuvenation, Metro Rail expansion, lifting Godavari water to Hyderabad and the Regional Ring Road, to pave the way for robust economic growth in the state. Outlining the government's vision to develop Hyderabad into a global city, he said many projects were pending approval and requested Khattar to ensure their immediate clearance.

He briefed the Union minister on the state's zero-carbon initiatives, including the promotion of electric vehicles and the proposal to introduce 3,000 electric



buses in Hyderabad next year. The Future City project, global investments in the new city and the proposed dry port were also discussed at the meeting.

Reiterating that Telangana was not competing with other states in the coun-

try, he said: "Our competition is with Singapore, Tokyo, and New York. Achieving this requires the cooperation of the Union government."

The chief minister added that the state government will release the

Telangana Rising Vision Document 2047 on December 9. "We are working with the aim of making Telangana a \$1 trillion economy by 2034 and a \$3 trillion economy by 2047. We expect Telangana to contribute 10 per cent of the country's economy," he said.

## Income Tax officials search 15 locations linked to major Hyderabad restaurant chains

HYDERABAD: Income Tax officials conducted searches on Tuesday at prominent restaurant groups, including Pista House and Shadab Hotel (also known as Shah Ghouse), as well as at the residences of the chairman and directors of the Mehfil restaurant chain in Hyderabad.

According to sources, the official teams raided approximately 15 locations. These included the Rajendernagar residence of Mohammed Abdul Mazeed, as well as the residences of its directors within the city. Sources indicated that Pista House, which operates throughout Hyderabad and in other Indian cities, also conducts business in other countries.

The department reportedly suspects significant tax evasion over the past several years. The agency is examining online and physical sales records and franchise operation details.

Simultaneously, the agency con-

ducted searches at the residential premises of the management of two other biryani restaurants — Mehfil and Shah Ghouse — in areas including Tolichowki and Shah Ali Banda.

These actions are in connection with

alleged tax evasion involving discrepancies between filed returns and actual income figures reflected in physical records.

Sources stated that the agency suspects substantial discrepancies between the filed Income Tax returns and the log records that the managements are alleged to have concealed.

It is reported that these three prominent restaurants have committed tax evasion amounting to several crores, based on the differences between their actual sales and filed returns.





## Rachakonda Police issues fog safety advisory for motorists in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: As winter intensifies across the city, the dense fog during early mornings and late nights is posing serious visibility challenges on major roads. In view of the rising risk of accidents, Rachakonda Police Commissioner G Sudheer Babu, has appealed to all motorists to be cautious and strictly follow safety guidelines.

The Commissioner issued a detailed advisory on Tuesday, highlighting the crucial safety measures to prevent road mishaps during foggy conditions.

Accordingly, vehicle drivers were urged to maintain speed road safety limits, use helmets and seatbelts, avoid drunk driving, and refrain from using mobile phones while on the road.

Motorists were also reminded to regularly check brakes, headlights, indicators, tyres, and ensure that all vehicles are equipped with a 'First Aid Kit'.

With fog significantly reducing visibility, the police emphasised the importance of using low-beam lights, keeping a safe distance, avoiding sudden braking, and refraining from overtaking in fog or curve zones.

The commissioner further advised motorists to use defoggers, open windows slightly to prevent fogging, and wear gloves to maintain grip during cold weather.

Additional precautions include avoiding roadside parking at night, using reflective jackets and stickers, placing a reflective triangle warning board when vehicles break down, and ensuring children travel safely, especially in school buses that meet safety standards, officials said.

Commissioner Sudheer Babu also reminded the public about the 'Golden Hour' concept.

"Anyone who rushes an accident victim to the nearest hospital within the first hour can save a life and is eligible for Rs 25,000 under the Central Government's Good Samaritan Scheme," he said.

He appealed to citizens to treat road safety as a shared responsibility.

"If every individual follows these guidelines, road accidents can be significantly reduced. Safe roads are possible only when the government, police, and public work together," Sudheer Babu stressed.

Rachakonda Police authorities said they will continue awareness drives and intensified enforcement to ensure safer travel throughout the winter season.

## Secular logic in Tirumala temple questioned: VHP raises concerns over TTD's darshan policies

Hyderabad: The management practices of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) have come under sharp scrutiny, with questions raised about whether secular logic is

being imposed on sacred Hindu traditions.

The spokesperson questioned the board's authority to conduct lotteries for

tees climb the seven hills to seek the Lord's blessings without bureaucratic hurdles.



tees climb the seven hills to seek the Lord's blessings without bureaucratic hurdles.

On Tuesday, Dr Ravinutala Shashidhar, National Spokesperson of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), posed seven pointed questions to the TTD Board, reflecting the concerns of ordinary devotees ahead of the Vaikuntha Ekadashi festivities.

At the heart of the debate is whether common devotees, who lack online registration, should be permitted to visit Tirumala hill for three days during Vaikuntha Ekadashi. Shashidhar argues that restricting access through digital systems undermines the traditional spirit of pilgrimage, where devo-

tees climb the seven hills to seek the Lord's blessings without bureaucratic hurdles.

Concerns were also raised about the transparency of the online dip selection process. Shashidhar demanded clarity on which Agama Shastras sanction the extension of Mukkti Ekadashi darshans to 10 days, suggesting that the board may be deviating from scriptural traditions.

Another critical issue highlighted was the absence of Jeeyars and chief priests in key decision-making. Accord-

ing to Shashidhar, sidelining religious authorities in favour of administrative logic dilutes the sanctity of temple governance.

He cautioned that if the current trajectory continues, devotees may one day face interviews for darshan, a scenario he described as deeply troubling. "Are these measures truly for the convenience of devotees, or are they distancing the common man from the Lord Venkateswara?" he asked.

The VHP spokesperson demanded that the TTD should ask those coming under protocol darshans, VVIP and VIP privileges, and celebrities not to come, and their access be barred. Only allow ordinary pilgrims to peacefully experience the divine. The TTD board should respond to the anxieties of devotees, or persist with policies of the secular encroachments on sacred practice, he asked.

## Celebrating unity in diversity: Osmania University's Business Management Dept hosts 'Desi Dhamaka'

Hyderabad: The Department of Business Management at Osmania University celebrated its annual day with a grand cultural showcase titled 'Desi Dhamaka' on Tuesday. The event transformed the campus into a vibrant hub of colours, traditions and performances, highlighting the department's commitment to inclusivity, camaraderie and cultural pride.

The celebration was graced by AV Subramanyam, Secretary of KMES, Hyderabad was the chief guest. He was joined by members of the university leadership, including Prof Sree Ramulu,

Dean of the Faculty of Management and Prof Y Jahangir, Head of the Department of Business Management.

The programme provided a platform for both international students and those from Telangana to proudly present their diverse cultural identities. The day's programme included: Traditional attire showcases that celebrated regional and global styles; cultural performances ranging from dance and music to dramatisations of heritage themes and interactive activities designed to build camaraderie and teamwork among students.

The event also witnessed the participation of senior faculty and academic leaders, including Dr. G Vidyasagar Rao, Chairman-BoS; Dr P Venkataiah, Senior Professor; Prof Smitha Sambrani; and Dr. Samunnatha, Vice-Principal. Their encouragement added to the festive spirit and reinforced the department's vision of holistic student development.

In a statement on Tuesday, the Department of Business Management said that Desi Dhamaka is not merely a cultural event but a reaffirmation of Osmania University's ethos of inclusivity, diversity and academic excellence.



# Drop guns: Bandi Sanjay's final ultimatum to Maoists

Hyderabad/Vemulawada: Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar made it clear that Maoism will be eradicated by March 2026 under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi



guns and join main mainstream," he said.

Calling "Urban Naxals are traitors," while speaking to the media on Tuesday, after inaugurating medical equipment at the Vemulawada Area Hospital, Bandi Sanjay accused urban Naxals of exploiting the poor. "Urban Naxals are making Jalsa (merry) in cities, accumulating assets, and enjoying luxuries while innocent people who believe their words are roaming in forests with guns, starving, and losing their lives. They say one thing and do another. Don't be deceived," he said.

Appealing directly to the Maoists, the Union Minister emphasised that the central government is offering Maoists an opportunity to surrender and reintegrate. "There is no point in holding guns and talking. Trust the ballot, not the bullet. If you trust the ballot, you can come to power. If you trust the bullet, you will only take lives," he said. He accused Maoist leader Hidma and his associates of misleading youth, including girls, into abandoning education and joining armed struggle. "What have you achieved with the gun except killing Dalits, tribals, policemen, and BJP lead-

ers? You too have become victims," he said, urging Maoists to abandon violence.

Earlier in the day, Bandi Sanjay handed over medical equipment worth Rs 1.5 crore to the Vemulawada Area Hospital in Sircilla district. The equipment, including ultrasound and ECG machines, was procured with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds from the National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC).

Accompanied by District Collector Garima Agarwal and medical officials, the Minister inspected the hospital facilities, interacted with patients, and assured full support for improving healthcare services. He said similar equipment worth Rs 5 crore has been provided to hospitals in Huzurabad, Husnabad, and Jammikunta.

"The central government is allocating large funds under the National Health Mission. Government hospitals must provide quality services to the poor, especially when private hospitals are unaffordable," he said. Bandi Sanjay also appealed to young doctors to apply for the 89 medical posts recently notified by the Collector.

"If you want your education to be meaningful and your parents' debts to be repaid, serve the poor in government hospitals. Vemulawada is close to Karimnagar. Join and serve the people," he urged.

and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. He warned Maoists not to be deceived by "urban Naxals" who, he alleged, live luxuriously in cities while poor tribals and villagers suffer in forests with guns and no food.

The Union Minister reiterated that Maoists have "only four months" to surrender and join mainstream society. "Drop your guns immediately and join the people's life stream. By March 2026, Maoism will be eliminated. Amit Shah is a leader who keeps his word," he declared. "You have four months left to drop the

## BRS ready to go to Delhi over Telangana cotton crisis, says KTR

Hyderabad: Stating that the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) was ready to go to Delhi along with all political parties to press the Centre on the cotton crisis and broader farm sector issues in Telangana, BRS working president KT Rama Rao on Tuesday asserted that there should be no politics when it comes to farmers. Speaking after submitting a detailed representation to Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) officials in Adilabad along with senior party leaders, he appealed to Union Ministers G Kishan Reddy and Bandi Sanjay Kumar, as well as local BJP MPs and MLAs, to join hands and pressurise the Centre. Slamming the Centre and the State government for betraying cotton farmers, he said the Centre was signing import agreements even as domestic farmers suffered, while the State government was failing to conduct proper crop damage surveys or release promised compensation. Demanding immediate scrapping of the controversial Kapas mobile app, which he called a 'complete disaster', and restore the old direct procurement system at market yards, Rama Rao also wanted the CCI purchase limit to be raised from 7 quintals to at least 13 quintals per acre besides relaxation of the strict 8-12 per cent moisture rule that has slashed farmer realisations by nearly Rs 3,000 per quintal this season, and proper implementation of PM Fasal Bima Yojana apart from Rs 20,000 per acre compensation for rain-damaged crops.



## Hyderabad District wins boys' final at SGF Telangana football tournament

Hyderabad: Hyderabad District defeated Mahabubnagar 1-0 in the boys' final of the 69th SGF Telangana District Level Football Tournament under-17 at Nalgonda.

The winning team was coached by Syed Alamdar Raza of Government High School (Ali Banda).

In the girls' final, Adilabad notched up an identical 1-0 win against Mahabubnagar.



## 13 CCBs to come up at government hospitals in Andhra Pradesh by end of December

VIJAYAWADA: The Andhra Pradesh government is set to operationalise 13 new Critical Care Blocks (CCBs) in major government hospitals by the end of December 2025.

These are part of a larger plan to establish 24 CCBs across the State under the Rs 600 crore Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM). Health Minister Y Satya Kumar Yadav reviewed the progress, and instructed officials to complete all blocks by August 2026.

The initiative aims to strengthen emergency healthcare services, especially in response to challenges faced during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Centre has approved 621 CCBs nationwide to ensure better preparedness for future crises.

In Andhra Pradesh, construction of CCBs is underway in 16 teaching hospitals (excluding Guntur), three district hospitals (Tenali, Anakapalli and Hindupur), and five area hospitals (Narasaraopet, Palakonda, Bhimavaram, Rayachoti and Chirala). Currently, CCBs in Nellore and Ongole are nearing completion. By December, blocks in Kadapa, Kurnool, Tirupati, Hindupur, Anantapur, Anakapalli, Rajamahendravaram, Visakhapatnam, Srikakulam, Vijayawada and Vizianagaram will be ready.

The remaining hospitals, including Tenali, Chirala, Paderu, Eluru, Machilipatnam, Palakonda, Nandyal, Bhimavaram, Narasaraopet, Rayachoti and Kakinada, are scheduled for completion by August



2026.

Each 50-bed CCB will cost Rs 23.75 crore, including equipment. Narasaraopet's 75-bed block will cost Rs 36.35 crore, while Tenali's 100-bed facility is budgeted at Rs 44.50 crore. Around Rs 7 crore per hospital is allocated for medical equipment and machinery. Every CCB includes a 10-bed ICU, a 6-bed step-down mini-ICU, 24 isolation beds, and dedicated wards for dialysis, maternity, and casualty care. These facilities will cater to critical cases such as cardiac emergencies, respiratory issues, poisoning, dialysis and maternal health.

## Paddy procurement in full swing, says Minister Nadendla Manohar



VIJAYAWADA: Civil Supplies Minister Nadendla Manohar has said that paddy procurement across the State is in full swing, with government machinery working round the clock to ensure farmers are paid promptly.

So far, 2.36 lakh metric tonnes of paddy have been procured from 32,793 farmers, marking a 30% increase compared to last year's 1.84 lakh tonnes from 24,025 farmers.

The Minister, along with VC&MD Civil Supplies Corporation Dilli Rao, on Tuesday addressed the media at Vijayawada and stated that around 16,000 staff are engaged in the procurement process, ensuring operations run smoothly. "The State has mobilised 32,000

lorries and tractors to transport paddy efficiently to procurement centres. 6.34 crore gunny bags have been made available, and 50,000 tarpaulins have been supplied to RSKs to protect paddy stocks from weather damage", he added.

The Minister further highlighted that last year the total procurement amount reached Rs 12,000 crore, processed within 48 hours, while this year, the target is Rs 14,000 crore, with a challenge to credit farmers' accounts within 24 hours of delivery.

## Rs 3,135 crore will be released under 'PM Kisan': BJP chief PVN Madhav

VIJAYAWADA: AP BJP chief PVN Madhav has said that the NDA government's farmer welfare initiative will benefit tens of lakhs of farmers across the state. Under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme, a total of Rs 3,135 crore has been allocated, which will be credited to farmers' accounts on Wednesday.

Speaking to the media, Madhav said the scheme will benefit around 48 lakh farmers in the State, with each farmer receiving Rs 7,000, Rs 2,000 from the Centre and Rs 5,000 from the State government.

He added that this assistance comes at a critical time, as farmers suffered losses due to the recent Montha storm, and the coalition government stands fully behind them.

Madhav also noted that last year, the first installment was disbursed, and the upcoming payment represents the second installment. He emphasised that the coalition government is committed to implementing multiple initiatives to support farmers and ensure timely financial assistance.

## Centre cleared key cotton procurement issues: Minister K Atchannaidu

VIJAYAWADA: Cotton farmers in AP have received a major boost with the Centre responding positively to proposals submitted by the State to resolve procurement hurdles.

Agriculture Minister K Atchannaidu said the Centre has already approved three of the six issues raised, and implementation is underway, helping streamline procurement and improving purchase centre operations. In the wake of the Montha Cyclone and the resulting rise in moisture levels, the State requested the Centre to



permit simultaneous operation of L1, L2 and L3 ginning mills, allow proportional procurement of cotton with 12–18% moisture, and purchase rain-affected or discoloured produce at fair prices. Union Textile Minister G Giriraj Singh reacted favourably and final decisions are expected soon. Atchannaidu said the State will monitor the process. For 2025–26 Kharif, cotton cultivation is estimated at 5.39 lakh hectares with an output of 8 lakh MT. The State set MSP procurement norms, formed district committees and designated 11 markets and 64 ginning mills.





# Towards a less poor and more equal country

In March, World Inequality Lab, a global research centre focused on inequality and public policies, published a working paper titled, 'Income and Wealth Inequality in India, 1922-2023: The Rise of the Billionaire Raj'. The authors — Nitin Kumar Bharti, Lucas Chancel, Thomas Piketty, and Anmol Somanchi — combined data from national income accounts, wealth aggregates, tax tabulations, rich lists, and surveys on income, consumption, and wealth to present their results. Income and wealth inequality first, let's look at income inequality. By 2022-23, the report states, 22.6% of India's national income went to just the top 1% in the country, the highest in the last 100 years. And just the top 0.1% of the population earned nearly 10% of the national income in India. The share of the top 1% in the national income is among the highest in the world.

In terms of wealth inequality, the share of the top 1% in wealth was 40.1% in 2022-23, the highest level since 1961. The share of wealth among the top 10% increased from 45% in 1961 to 65% in 2022-23. Conversely, the share of the bottom 50% and middle 40% in wealth declined. In short, the rich got richer and the poor got poorer in wealth. "About 10,000 individuals out of 92 million Indian adults own an average of ₹22.6 billion in wealth, 16,763 times the average Indian," the report states. India's wealth inequality is not as extreme as Brazil and South Africa where the top 10% hold 85.6% and 79.7% of the national wealth, respectively. However, its wealth concentration increased threefold between 1961 and 2023. Additionally, as India's income inequality is among the highest in the world, even higher than South Africa, Brazil and the U.S., it will only add to the wealth inequality. The report says between 2014-15 and 2022-23 "the rise of top-end inequality has been particularly pronounced in terms of wealth concentration". It states that "the 'Billionaire Raj' headed by India's modern bourgeoisie is now more unequal than the British Raj headed by the colonialist forces." Inequality undermines both growth and reduction of poverty.

Between 1960 and 1980, inequality was dropping. The pattern of growth and its objectives ensured that outcome. However, inequality began increasing with the beginnings of liberalisation in the 1980s, and faster after the 1991 economic reforms in India.

The dynamics of income and wealth inequality are interwoven with the dynamics of economic growth and human development. India's average income adjusted for inflation and purchasing power differentials were on a par with China and Vietnam until 1975. In the next quarter century, incomes in China and Vietnam increased by 35-50% compared to incomes in India. Post-2000, China's income started to grow at an astonishing rate and became 2.5 times India's income. However, growth in China has been broad-based compared to growth in India. In 2022, the share of the top 1% in income in India was nearly 50% higher than that of China. The Chinese economy has been maintaining a higher growth rate over the years with a moderate growth in economic inequality while India's growth has been moderate coupled with extreme growth in economic inequality.



That is why India is a "poor and very unequal country". Here, we would like to emphasise that the twin objectives of high economic growth and reduction of inequality can only be achieved with improvements in human development and poverty reduction. This is what China and Vietnam achieved. Additionally, improvements in human development should precede economic growth if economic growth is to be sustained in the long run. At the national level, the States that sustained high growth over three decades (over 7% GSDP per year) were relatively advanced in human development. These include Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka in the south; Maharashtra and Gujarat in the west; and Punjab and Delhi in the north. States that are relatively backward in the Human Development Index ranking in-

clude Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan. These States were only able to register a growth rate of less than 5% per annum post-liberalisation.

Human development The Human Development Report (HDR) 2023-2024 ranked India 134 out of 193 countries. India is now the fifth largest economy but it still ranks lower than Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and Bangladesh in human development. Its economic growth has not translated into growth in human development. The poor should not have to wait for the benefits of economic growth to trickle down; human development should be given priority in promoting inclusive growth. In the absence of improvement in human development, enhancement of capability and functioning, and poverty reduction, the growth pro-

cess cannot be inclusive and will only add to inequality. Economic growth therefore does not need to be at a higher pedestal in terms of policy objectives. As per the HDR 2023-2024, India's score comes down by 31.1% if we account for economic inequality. The extent of economic inequality is such that it cannot be overcome by the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, which provides a few kilograms of free foodgrains to about 81.35 crore beneficiaries. Sops without jobs cannot be the basis for sustained and inclusive growth. As the paper says, "It is unclear how long such inequality levels can sustain without major social and political upheaval". Santosh Mehrotra is a Research Fellow at The IZA Institute of Labour Economics, Bonn; Rakesh Ranjan Kumar is a Senior Research Fellow at the International Institute for Migration and Development, Kerala

## Xantham, guar gum in yoghurt, biscuits may raise diabetes risk: Study

New Delhi: Love to binge on ultra-processed foods like cake, biscuits, bread, yoghurt, and ice creams? Beware, these foods rich in emulsifiers like xantham and guar gum may raise your risk of diabetes, finds a study. Emulsifiers, the most commonly used additives, are often added to processed and packaged foods to make them look more appealing, boost their taste and texture as well as increase shelf life.

The study appearing in The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology linked emulsifiers including mono- and diglycerides of fatty acids, carrageenans, modified starches, lecithins, phosphates, celluloses, gums, and pectins to the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. Previously emulsifiers have been linked to cancers of the breast

and prostate. Researchers from France's INRAE — National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment studied the relationships between the dietary intakes of emulsifiers, assessed over a follow-up period of 14 years, and the risk of developing type 2 diabetes in a large study including 104,139 adults between 2009 and 2023.

They diagnosed about 1,056 cases of diabetes as a result of chronic exposure to some emulsifiers. These were carrageenans (3 per cent increased risk per increment of 100 mg per day); tripotassium phosphate (15 per cent increased risk per increment of 500 mg per day); mono- and diacetyl tartaric acid esters of mono- and diglycerides of fatty acids (4 per cent in-

creased risk per increment of 100 mg per day); sodium citrate (4 per cent increased risk per increment of 500 mg per day); guar gum (11 per cent increased risk per increment of 500 mg per day); gum arabic (3 per cent increased risk per increment of 1,000 mg per day) and xanthan gum (8 per cent increased risk per increment of 500 mg per day).

"These findings are issued from a single observational study for the moment, and cannot be used on their own to establish a causal relationship. They need to be replicated in other epidemiological studies worldwide and supplemented with toxicological and interventional experimental studies, to further inform the mechanisms linking these food additive emulsifiers and the onset of type 2 diabetes."



# Lakshya Sen and Priyanshu Rajawat hold the key to India's Thomas Cup defense

It wasn't necessarily the 'India-effect', but most Thomas Cup teams at this 2024 edition, are hitting badminton's team World Cup starting April 27, with bolstered second and third singles players. India, the defending champions, after a gloriously dreamy title march from 2022, though, might have laid down the chuckling blueprint for success that's possible only from the quality of depth that India possessed in the form of Kidambi Srikanth and HS Prannoy in nicking the MS2 and MS3 rubbers two summers ago.

Though Prannoy as India's No 1 is likely to be rotated and Srikanth will likely get alternated too, this Thomas Cup is the sternest test of big-screen temperament for designated Nos 2 and 3, Lakshya Sen and Priyanshu Rajawat. Now that India has totally bought into the significance of team events, and is fielding a full-fledged challenge, the pair of under24s in Sen and Rajawat, have their task cut out. Even in the 2022 edition, the MS1, Sen, had a wretched run right upto the finals owing to illness. Though he was masterly against Thomas Cup perennials Indonesia, beating Anthony Ginting to take the opening point, and effectively shock the white & red brigade out of their wits, pushing them on the defensive, in the finals. Lakshya Sen will face Indonesian Jonatan Christie in the semifinals. (BAI) Lakshya Sen will face Indonesian Jonatan Christie in the semifinals. (BAI) Sen might find a regular MS2 shift a little more arduous, because playing the third match of a tie is the apogee of team events. Make – or – break, do – or – die, must-win, and worse, C A N N O T – L O S E in bold, underlined. Should he be promoted to MS1, it's the difficulty of the opponent that's a straightforward challenge, and greater adrenaline for the potential of an upset. He doesn't always win, far from it, but he sure has the temperament for a Goliath-gnawing tussle.

But MS2 tends to pair up similarly mid-dling ranked talents in No 8 – 20 range, and Sen, though he has the game to take on the best, is susceptible to lapses of concentration against such players. He will need to put in the consistency-shift at MS2. It's not particularly glorified – he's expected to not lose, and won't be revered for winning overtly either, unless he goes 6 played – 6 won like Srikanth did last time around, though Prannoy was pushed into the dramatic deciders. Just going out there, and doing the basics right, can test Sen's flair and flamboyance in this anchoring role.

Sen had a decent run at the All England, and his confidence should be high. He's a big occasion player and Thomas Cup and Commonwealth Games titles are proof enough. But can he rev himself up for the near-mundane matchups, with an unfancied second men's doubles and a non-Prannoy, not entirely dependable MS3 to follow – is the pivot and pivotal question. While Dhruv Kapila and MR Arjun start as underdogs in most WD2 matchups, Srikanth's brittle leadup results in pressure games, can see the team try giving Priyanshu Rajawat a go. As such, Srikanth as MS3 is head and shoulders above most counterparts in his classy game, but he will

need a good start to convince himself and the world that his confidence is restored. Parupalli Kashyap as coach is a brilliant shepherd to have in such situations, and has spoken of how team causes are what Srikanth loves these days. But should the need arise, Rajawat will need to step up.

India's Priyanshu Rajawat defeated China's Lan Xi Lei 21-14, 21-13 India's Priyanshu Rajawat defeated China's Lan Xi Lei 21-14, 21-13

For someone dubbed mini SriKi, Rajawat has shown traces of stylish play, but is nowhere close to Srikanth in the achievement metric. The 30-year-old had two impressive titles from Thailand and China by age 23, and could string together excellent runs deep into a tournament, which Rajawat hasn't yet managed. Like Sen, there's enough in Rajawat's game to start a hype-train. But at the Thomas Cup, in whatever chances he gets, he will need to deliver on those expectations. The 'promise', 'potential', 'future hope' semantics stage is over at an event like Thomas Cup, which is about the now and the present.

Rajawat's grittiness hasn't been put to test on the circuit, where the presence of India's Top 3 gives him the leeway to keep learning from the losses, a long rope so to speak. His outrageous talent ought to be backed. Kiran George is a sort of an unknown who can be a surprise element once in a while, and he's mentally sturdier than he lets on. But this is where Sen and Rajawat prove that they deserve to be dubbed replacements to Srikanth, without actually having won his level of titles. Sen will need to snap out of those reveries he disappears into where points are conceded in a bunch. He will be forced to dig deep for greater variety in overhead strokes from the back court. He is defensively sturdy under pressure and you could back him 9 times out of 10 to win the net eyeball confrontations or flank defense sallies. But his finishing attack from the back court – pulling out the big smash after a punishing rally – isn't as well-rounded or power-packed, sophisticated or consistent enough to beat likes of Li Shifeng, Anders Antonsen, Anthony Ginting and Kenta Nishimoto on successive days. At 6-11 down in the third against World No:4 Anders Antonsen, Lakshya Sen was told by coach Vimal Kumar to shut out the 'silly errors'. Lakshya then went onto to win 15 of the last 17 points and book his place in quarterfinals of the All England. (Badminton Association of India) At 6-11 down in the third against World No:4 Anders Antonsen, Lakshya Sen was told by coach Vimal Kumar to shut out the 'silly errors'. Lakshya then went onto to win 15 of the last 17 points and book his place in quarterfinals of the All England. (Badminton Association of India) Sen's mental toughness could be as good as if not better than Saina Nehwal. But he will need to tactically be on point, in this MS2 / MS1 role, extracting wins. In that sense, this Thomas Cup is a bigger responsibility than last time when India could absorb the pressure of his MS1 losses with Srikanth, Prannoy lined up to follow. His purechutzpah beating Ginting in finals will need to be replicated in every tie here. Rajawat is



plain and simple expected to take on the 2-2 tie pressure. Many squads are likely to blood young talent – Alwi Farhan for Indonesia, Magnus Johannesen for Denmark, Chia Hao Lee, Swiss Open winner Chun Yi-Lin of Taipei and Cheuk Yiu Lee (of Hong Kong) who's Top 15 and at India Open, beat Srikanth, Kunlavut, Ginting and Kodai. Perhaps a name to watch out for is Thai Panitchaphon Teeraratkul, age 20, in the MS3 role alongside Kunlavut Vitidsarn. China, Denmark, Indonesia, Thailand still hold the aces, but India re-

mains a very strong contender with its depth, the reliable presence of Satwik-Chirag and the team's strategic nous. But Srikanth and Prannoy are two years older than last time. And you can't shake off the certainty that Lakshya Sen and Priyanshu Rajawat will need to step up this time, and deliver the goods. Sen will need a 6/6 like Srikanth coolly pulled off last time. The Olympics is the ultimate target for both Prannoy and Sen. But it's at the Thomas Cup, that the passing of the baton – of responsibility – will happen.

## The bitter truth about baby formula is 'added sugar'

In 2006, we published a report describing a cohort of 51 children and young adults with Type 2 Diabetes — this was a surprising finding at the time. Little did we know then that a supplement used at six months of age containing added sugar (such as in Cerelac and others produced by Nestle, as detailed in a recent report by the International Baby Food Action Network, IFBAN) could also contribute to obesity and diabetes. Interestingly, prior to the current report, a study conducted in India in 2021 revealed that 28 per cent of baby food products had a "high sugar profile". These revelations are particularly concerning for several reasons.

First, considering the heightened propensity of Indians for developing diabetes and its complications, every effort must be made to avoid any potential triggers from an early age. Introducing sugar-containing feeds at the age of six months is highly detrimental to Indian infants who are already fragile. Damage to organ systems at this stage leaves permanent metabolic scars. How does such baby food harm the tender livers and pancreases of infants? Constant exposure to simple sugars places an additional burden on the pancreas to produce insulin (resulting in "hyperinsulinemia"), leading to its exhaustion. This process also induces resistance to the hormone leptin and in the process contributes to obesity. Both pancreatic exhaustion and excess body fat raise blood

sugar levels and release harmful substances known as "inflammatory cytokines", which can damage the kidneys and heart and lead to hypertension. Additionally, formula-fed infants continuously exposed to a predominantly sweet taste are more likely to develop a preference for such flavours later in their lives.

This has the potential to foster a dependence on sweet intake, perpetuating early organ damage in adolescence and early adulthood. It would be worthwhile to conduct long-term studies on children who have received such products from an early age to assess their risk of developing diabetes and heart disease. Second, there is a notable discrepancy in the treatment of developing countries regarding the presence of excess added sugar in infant formulas. While formulas without added sugar are available in developed countries, those in developing nations, including India, often contain added sugars. This double standard is unjustified and unethical, particularly because some developing countries do not even list the amount of added sugar on product labels. Third, the promotion of sugar-containing infant formulas in India and other developing countries raises concerns. Cerelac, a popular brand with substantial sales is promoted as "supplementary food for babies from 10 to 12 months", despite containing significant amounts of added sugar.



# 'High growth not possible if we don't do our own science, produce own tech': Principal Scientific Advisor Ajay Kumar Sood

India will not be able to achieve 10-12 per cent economic growth, if "we don't do our own science and produce our own technologies," and to that effect, what is needed is a ramp-up on all key science indicators, not just in numbers but in quality as well, said the government's Principal Scientific Advisor, Ajay Kumar Sood. In an interview with The Indian Express, Sood said India had missed the bus on certain critical technologies in the past and must not allow that situation to repeat in areas like artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, clean energy solutions, or semiconductors that are still under development.

"Improving our science and technology output is linked to our economic growth... essential for our goal to become a developed nation by 2047. The kind of economic growth that is required to take us there — 8 or 10 per cent or more — would not be possible without deployment of breakthrough technologies. It is these technologies that will drive economic growth in coming decades. Most of these technologies are still being developed, and there is an opportunity for India to make fundamental contributions in these areas, take leadership, and reap the benefits... A Viksit Bharat will have to be a leader in science. There is no other way," said Sood. He said India had a strong scientific base and good scientific traditions but its contribution had not been commensurate to its size or capabilities, as was evident from the commonly used science indicators. "We must improve on (these commonly used science) indicators... We should be in top three or top five. But I am not a great fan of just increasing the numbers. There has to be quality output... Take the example of publications. India is currently third, I think, in the number of publications. But we have to ask how much of those are appearing in the top one per cent

of the journals," he said. "At the same time, we cannot have a small pool and expect everyone to be making fundamental contributions. So, both numbers and quality have to be improved," he said. Sood, who was with the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, prior to becoming the PSA, is one of India's leading physicists, best known for his work in condensed matter physics overlapping with material science and engineering. As PSA, he advises the government on all matters related to science, and acts as the main interface between the scientific community and the government. Sood said the scientific community needed to be provided the right environment, adequate resources and the right incentives, and the government was trying to address their concerns. He said he was aware of the difficulties being faced by the researchers, particularly with regard to funding delays, and bureaucratic hurdles. "I have a first-hand experience of these difficulties. After all, I have been a researcher myself for 40 years. These complaints (from the scientists) are not without substance. And we have to make sure that these are addressed to their satisfaction. Some of these have been," he said. Underlining the need for industry to become a partner in scientific research, Sood said: "Science and technology have to get tied with business, with economic activity. They have to be integrated with our economic model, our economic vision. There has to be indigenisation of technologies — not existing technologies but new technologies. We need to do new technologies, otherwise we will only be following others. We can never be able to achieve 10-12 per cent economic growth if we don't do our own science and produce our own technologies," he said. Sood said India was in a position to take advantage of existing opportunities in emerging technologies,



but it required very hard work. "Take the example of quantum technologies. A lot of work needs to be done in developing human resources, laboratories etc. But we would like to be there, in the leadership position. Frankly, we are not way behind. We are very much in the race. But we have to work very hard.

It is a similar story in a lot of other areas," he said. "The bottom line is that we must ensure that we are not left behind in terms of these new technologies. In the past, we have missed the bus on some very crucial technologies — supercomputers, for

example. And we have suffered because of that.

We have been at the receiving end of technology denial regimes because of which our nuclear programme faced challenges, our space programme faced challenges," he said. Sood said recent government interventions like the setting up of the National Research Foundation (NRF) were aimed at making some necessary structural changes, like getting universities and colleges involved in scientific research, increasing the scientific base, and attracting private sector funding into science.

## 10 things to know before buying an AC this summer

An intense heatwave has gripped many parts of India. The maximum temperatures have been ranging from 40-46 degree Celsius in many areas. As summer months are getting unbearably hot across the country, it is only obvious that many among our readers are considering buying air conditioners (AC). We are here to help you make the decision of placing your bet on an AC easier. Of course, there are plenty of good options to choose from, but the cooling performance depends on a lot of parameters including the cooling capacity, power rating, air quality, and more. Here are the top 10 things you need to consider before making a decision: 01

Cooling capacity (in tonne); always based on the carpet area. The right capacity of the AC depends on the carpet area you need to cool. For example, a one tonne-AC can cool 120-140 Sq. ft. area, and a one-and-a-half tonne-AC can cool 150-180 Sq. ft. area. Bigger spaces with 180-240 Sq. ft. area will need a two-tonne AC. 02 Energy efficiency; stars matter. Buying an energy-efficient AC is a better

bet in the long run as it will help you save both money and power. Needless to say, the AC must have a star-rated energy efficiency rating (EER), standardised by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE). More stars, better the efficiency and hence, better power saving. If you plan to use the AC for eight to 10 hours on average, it is recommended you go for a 3-star AC, at the very least. 03 Split AC or window AC? While it might look like an aesthetic decision to make, there is more to this choice. Split ACs look more sophisticated, take up less space, and operate more quietly. However, they come at a premium, when compared. Window ACs are cheaper to purchase and cheaper to install and maintain. If you think you will have to move the AC, for instance, if you stay on rent and might have to move, go for Window ACs. 04 Inverter or non-inverter AC? Split ACs now come with and without an inverter. Ones with an inverter will cost you anywhere between Rs 3,000 to 5,000 more, but they offer more uniform cooling and are cheaper to run. On the contrary, a non-in-

verter AC will be cheaper to acquire, however, cooling will not be as efficient, and running cost will be higher, when compared to inverter ACs. Picking an inverter AC is a no brainer, we guess. 05

Brand. Always recommended. Always go for a brand that has been making ACs for a while. This ensures the product has passed the test of time. However, if you come across new sub brands from bigger players, and if the dealer recommends it, you are good to go. Whether you buy from a retail store or an online marketplace, the dealer will take care of the initial installation. Do keep the warranty card safe, and register the product online, if needed.

06 Service network. ACs require servicing at least once a year to maintain optimal performance. Getting a branded AC makes ensuring service easier. This will also help you secure spare parts in case of minor issues. 07 Cooling speed. Different ACs offer different cooling speeds, and this varies from location to location as well. In a city, where the average temperature is above 45 degrees in the summer, you

might need an AC that offers faster cooling, and it is also important to get an AC that offers different cooling speeds, which can help control the temperature in a granular manner. 08 Air quality

Most modern ACs come with an integrated air filter, and depending on the brand, the functionality differs. If you live in a place like Delhi NCR, where the Air Quality Index is perennially poor, choose an AC that has strong air filtering capabilities. If you live in Kerala, you may save the extra bucks. 09 Multipurpose AC. ACs are no longer just used for cooling. In winter, they double up as heating devices. Again, not every AC can offer both cooling and heating capabilities, you need to choose based on your location. 10 Smart AC. If you're used to all your devices being 'smart', Smart ACs are on offer. It offers more insights on cooling and power usage, and these can be controlled using voice commands or using a smartphone. Some of the smart ACs also have self-diagnostic capabilities, which makes it easy to repair if something goes wrong.



# New shoe sizing system proposed for Indians: What is 'Bha' and the need for it?

A pan-India survey on the feet sizes of Indians was recently carried out as part of a larger project for developing an Indian sizing system for footwear. Proposed to be named 'Bha' ( ? ) to represent Bharat, it could form the basis for manufacturing footwear in India. Upon its implementation, Bha will replace the existing UK/European and the US sizing systems. Initially, the hypothesis was that at least five footwear sizing systems would be required for Indians to be inclusive of various ethnicities. Prior to the survey, it was thought that people from northeast India, on average, had smaller feet sizes compared to the rest of India.

A survey was conducted between December 2021 and March 2022, covering 1,01,880 people across 79 locations in five geographical zones. 3D foot scanning machines were deployed for understanding the size, dimensions and structure of an average Indian foot. 3D foot scanners were used to obtain the dimensions, size and structure of over one lakh Indian users. 3D foot scanners were used to obtain the dimensions, size and structure of over one lakh Indian users. (Photo via CLRI) Overall, Indians' feet were found to be wider than that of Europeans or Americans. Due to the narrow footwear available under the UK/European/US sizing systems, Indians have been wearing footwear which are a size bigger than required. Many Indians were found to be wearing extra-long, ill-fitted and tight footwear. In the case of high-heeled women's footwear, wearing a bigger size was both inconvenient and a cause for potential injuries.

For men, shoelaces were tightened much more than ideal to ensure the shoes were not loose fitting. This affected the normal flow of blood for the wearer. By wearing footwear not designed according to their feet's specifications, Indians have been vulnerable to injuries, shoe bites and compromised foot health – especially among elderly women and diabetics. A statistical analysis of the massive data obtained from the survey concluded that a single shoe sizing system could be applied for Indians.

Why was the need for an Indian shoe sizing system felt?

The British introduced UK sizes in India before Indian independence. According to it, an average Indian woman wears footwear sizes between 4 and 6, and the average man between 5 and 11. Since there existed no data on the feet structure, size, dimensions of Indians, developing an Indian system had been difficult and was never undertaken. With an Indian user now owning an average of 1.5 footwears each and India being the world's most populated country, it is one of the world's biggest markets and manufacturers of shoes. Industry stakeholders also said that an estimated 50 per cent of the footwear ordered online were rejected by customers. With Bha, both the users and the footwear manufacturers could benefit.

What are the survey's recommendations?

Bha proposes eight footwear sizes: I – infants (0 to 1 year), II – babies (1 to 3

years), III – small children (4 to 6 years), IV – children (7 to 11 years), V – girls (12 to 13 years), VI – boys (12 to 14 years), VII – Women (14 years and above) and VIII – Men (15 years and above). For commercial purposes, initially manufacturing of footwears ranging in sizes III – VIII would be sufficient. Footwear manufactured as per Bha could give nearly 85 per cent of the country's population the right fitting and better comfort. The biggest advantage of adopting Bha would be that footwear manufacturers would need to develop only eight sizes as against the present 10 sizes (English system) and seven sizes (European system). In addition, half-sizes would not be needed. The shoe last size will have an additional 5mm foot length. The Bha system will also be wider at its girth than the footwear currently available commercially.

What is the current status of Bha?

The Chennai-based Council of Scientific and Industrial Research–Central Leather Research Institute (CSIR–CLRI) conducted the survey. It submitted its recommendations to the Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), which comes under the Union Ministry of Commerce. The DPIIT has forwarded them to the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), which is the Indian authority to implement this sizing system, for approval. Since Bha will completely overhaul the existing sizing systems, the departments have suggested that footwear manufactured as per Bha size standards should be given to users for trial, testing and feedback. Bha is expected to be implemented sometime in 2025.



## What is the significance of Earth Day?

Earth DayA drone view of a large-scale land art piece by local artists Sand In Your Eye of a girl holding the Earth for Earth Day in Hebden Bridge, Britain April 19, 2024. REUTERS/Molly DarlingtonEvery year, April 22 is observed as Earth Day, an international event celebrated around the world to pledge support for environmental protection. The year 2024 marks the 54th anniversary of the annual celebrations. In a post on X (formerly known as Twitter), UN Secretary-General António Guterres said: "On #EarthDay, we must stand for our planet. A planet threatened by climate change, by pollution, by biodiversity loss. A planet that needs to be rescued. So we must unite. And we must mobilize all our efforts for #ClimateAction." Here is a look at the significance of Earth Day and what this year's theme is.

Why is Earth Day important?

Earth Day was first observed in 1970 when 20 million took to the streets to protest against environmental degradation. The event was triggered by the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill and other issues such as smog and polluted rivers. For over the next half century, Earth Day continued to play

an important role in environmental activism. The landmark Paris Agreement, which brings almost 200 countries together to set a common target to reduce global greenhouse emissions, was signed on Earth Day 2016. In 2009, the United Nations designated Earth Day as International Mother Earth Day. According to earthday.org, Earth Day aims to "build the world's largest environmental movement to drive transformative change for people and the planet." The movement's mission is "to diversify, educate and activate the environmental movement worldwide." Earth Day is celebrated to remind each of us that the Earth and its ecosystems provide us with life and sustenance. This day also recognises a collective responsibility, as called for in the 1992 Rio Declaration, to promote harmony with nature and the Earth to achieve a just balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations of humanity. Earth Day also provides an opportunity to raise public awareness around the world of the challenges regarding the well-being of the planet and all the life it supports. What is the theme of Earth Day 2024?



This year, the theme is 'Planet vs. Plastics'. The theme highlights the threat plastics pose to the planet and human health. It calls for an end to all plastic waste by demanding a 60% reduction in the production of plastics by the year 2040. Plastic poses a grave threat to human health as it breaks down into microplastic, releasing toxic chemicals into food and water sources and circulating through the air humans breathe. "Plastic production now has grown to more than 380 million tons per year. More plastic has been produced in the last ten years than in the entire 20th century, and the industry plans to grow explosively for the indefinite future," according to earthday.org.