

## Sekhar Kammula inaugurates Hyderabad's largest art showcase Hyd Art 2025

Hyderabad: The largest curated art showcase in Hyderabad – Hyd Art 2025 was inaugurated by the film director Sekhar Kammula at EON Hyderabad, By Navanaami, Narsingi.

Open until December 21, the show unfolds as a vibrant three-day celebration of art and culture, bringing together a richly curated spectrum of creativity and expression under one roof.

Featuring over 200 artists, galleries, and artworks from across India, the show presents a rich blend of masterworks, contemporary art, emerging talent, folk traditions, curated galleries, workshops, and conversations.

Curated by Annapurna Madipadiga in collaboration with Hasan, Hyd Art 2025 builds a rich, multi-dimensional narrative of Indian art by placing historic, contemporary, and experimental expressions side by side.

The show includes Keerthanam – A Tribute to Telugu Legends, an exclusive showcase honouring the works of revered yesteryear Telugu artists, and also a vibrant curation of three generations of Mithila artists, tracing the lineage, evolution, and contemporary expressions of this celebrated art form.



## Liquor sales touch Rs.112 crore in erstwhile Adilabad during panchayat polls

Adilabad: The Excise and Prohibition department in the erstwhile Adilabad district recorded a sharp spurt in liquor sales, coinciding with the recently held three-phase Gram Panchayat elections.

Excise and Prohibition officials said the region, comprising four districts, registered liquor sales worth Rs.112.74 crore between December 5 and 19, marking an increase of about 40 percent over normal sales for a fortnight. Officials attributed the surge to polling in 1,020 villages conducted between December 11 and 17.

According to officials, Mancherial district topped the chart with liquor sales valued at Rs.39.90 crore during the period, while Kumram Bheem Asifabad district remained at the bottom with sales worth Rs.16.96 crore. Nirmal district recorded liquor sales worth Rs.32.80 crore, while Adilabad district accounted for sales valued at Rs.23.08 crore.

Mancherial district registered sales of 40,507 cases of Indian Made Foreign



Liquor and 31,046 cases of beer during the two-week period. Nirmal district recorded sales of 33,595 cases of liquor and 27,082 cases of beer. Adilabad district witnessed sales of 31,535 cases of liquor and 7,405 cases of beer, while Kumram Bheem Asifabad district re-

corded sales of 21,442 cases of liquor and 8,874 cases of beer.

Rural areas abuzz with local body electioneering also saw the mushrooming of belt shops or unauthorised liquor outlets. These belt shops, where liquor is sold openly at prices higher than the

maximum retail price, fleece consumers by charging at least 20 percent more than the MRP. Tipplers often rely on these outlets instead of travelling to authorised wine shops operating in towns and mandal centres.

Candidates reportedly attempted to appease voters by offering liquor. Those in the fray are said to have hosted parties for electors by purchasing liquor from belt shops, believing that alcohol acts as an effective influencer and improves a contestant's prospects in the polls.

Sales of liquor in erstwhile Adilabad from December 5 to 19

Mancherial: 73 shops and 16 bars sold 40,507 IMFL cases and 31,046 beer cases, generating Rs.39.90 crore in sales. Nirmal: 47 shops and eight bars sold 33,595 IMFL cases and 27,082 beer cases, with sales valued at Rs.32.80 crore. Adilabad: 40 shops and 11 bars sold 31,535 IMFL cases and 7,405 beer cases, accounting for Rs.23.08 crore in sales.



## KTR dares Revanth Reddy to make defected MLAs resign, face bypolls

Hyderabad: Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) working president K. T. Rama Rao on Friday challenged Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to prove his claims of approval of people in Panchayat elections by making the 10 defected BRS MLAs resign and seek a fresh mandate.

Addressing a victory meeting of newly-elected BRS Sarpanches in Sircilla, KTR threw an open challenge to the Chief Minister to test his "66% support" claim in the court of the people.

The BRS leader mocked the Chief Minister's contradictory statements made during a press conference in Hyderabad on Thursday.

"The CM claimed Congress won 66 per cent in local polls and called it a blessing for his government. Yet, within five minutes, he took a U-turn, stating local polls are fought on local issues and caste, not government performance. Chief Minister, if you truly believe the people are with you, accept my challenge: Make those 10 MLAs you 'bought like cattle' resign. Let us go for the by-elections. The people will decide who has the real strength and who has the real percentage," KTR said.

Taking a dig at the "moral bankruptcy" of the defected legislators, KTR expressed dismay over the conduct of senior leaders like Kadiyam Srihari and Pocharam Srinivas Reddy. "It is pathetic to see leaders who served as Ministers and Speakers stooping so low for 'blade-of-grass' positions. They proudly announced joining Congress in front of Rahul Gandhi, yet shamelessly lied before the Speaker, claiming they are still with BRS. Clinging to power like bats, their political credibility is completely ruined," he remarked. KTR further lamented that even the Speaker's office is being pressured by the CM to ignore concrete evidence and shield the defectors.



## Telangana Rythu Sangham Holds Protest Against Removal of Mahatma Gandhi's Name from MGNREGS

Hyderabad: A protest meeting was held at Raj Bahadur Gaur Hall, Makdham Bhavan, under the auspices of the Telangana State Rythu Sangham, opposing the removal of Mahatma Gandhi's name from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). Speakers at the meeting strongly condemned the move, terming it unjust and an affront to the legacy of the Father of the Nation.

Addressing the gathering, Syed Aziz Pasha, former MP of the Communist Party of India (CPI), recalled that world-renowned poet Rabindranath Tagore had bestowed the title "Mahatma" upon Gandhiji in recognition of his unparalleled service to humanity. He described Mahatma Gandhi as one of the greatest leaders in the world who played a decisive role in securing India's freedom and independence.

Pasha also cited remarks by the last Viceroy of India, Lord Mountbatten, who had acknowledged that the deployment of 60,000 soldiers failed to contain communal violence between Hindus and Muslims in Punjab, whereas Mahatma Gandhi alone succeeded in diffusing tensions in United Bengal, preventing even a single communal murder. He emphasised that Mahatma Gandhi commands respect not only in India

but across the globe as a people's leader and the Father of the Nation. Removing his name from a crucial scheme aimed at eliminating rural poverty, he said, was unjust and must be opposed by the masses.

CPI MLC Nellikanti Satyam termed the decision an act of "extreme arrogance" by the ruling party and demanded that the move be withdrawn immediately.

Presiding over the meeting, Pashya Padma of the All India Kisan Sabha alleged that the RSS, which he accused of glorifying Nathuram Godse, has historically harboured hostility towards Mahatma Gandhi. He said the removal of Gandhi's name from the scheme reflects the ideological influence of the RSS on the BJP government. Drawing a contrast, Padma noted that while Gandhiji envisioned Gram Swaraj or village self-rule, the RSS-BJP leadership promotes corporate self-rule, which, he claimed, explains the move to erase Gandhi's name.

The meeting was also addressed by Kanthiah and Madhav Reddy, leaders of the agricultural labour union, who echoed the demand for restoring Mahatma Gandhi's name to the employment guarantee scheme and called for continued resistance against policies affecting rural workers and farmers.

## Auto Driver Detained for Displaying Lawrence Bishnoi's Photo on Auto

In a swift action, Nizamabad Traffic Police detained an auto-rickshaw driver for displaying the photo of notorious gangster Lawrence Bishnoi on his vehicle and sharing the same image on social media platforms.

Police said such acts send a wrong message to the public and can disturb peace and law and order in the city.

The auto driver has been identified as Sai Krishna, a resident of Adapalli.

According to police officials:

The accused fixed Lawrence Bishnoi's photograph on his auto-rickshaw

He was seen moving around the city with the image displayed

The same photograph was later posted on social media

The act raised serious concerns among authorities.

Upon receiving information, traffic police immediately intercepted the auto and took the driver into custody along with the vehicle.

Police action taken:

Auto-rickshaw seized temporarily

Gangster's photo removed from the vehicle

Driver issued a strict warning

Preventive action taken to avoid further incidents

The driver was later released after

counseling and warning.

Speaking on the incident, ACP Mastan Ali advised youth to stay away from glorifying criminals.

He said:

Gangsters harm society and the nation

Promoting such figures is unacceptable

Youth should draw inspiration from freedom fighters and positive role models

He warned that such acts will not be tolerated in the future.



# Telangana Government Opens Applications for CM's Overseas Scholarship 2025

Hyderabad: The Government of Telangana, through the Minorities Welfare Department, has issued a notification inviting online applications for the Chief Minister's Overseas Scholarship Scheme (CMOSS) – Fall Season 2025. The scheme aims to provide financial assistance to eligible minority students pursuing Postgraduate and Doctoral (Ph.D.) courses in



foreign universities.

According to the official notification dated 18 December 2025, minority students who have secured admissions during the period 1 July 2025 to 31 December 2025 are eligible to apply under this scheme. Applications will be accepted online through the Telangana e-PASS portal.

The online application process will commence from 20 December 2025 and the last date to submit applications is 19 January 2026 by 5:00 PM. Submission of hard copies and required documents at the concerned District Minorities Welfare Offices must be completed by 20 February 2026.

Also Read: 'Bodes ill for democratic process': Tharoor flags attacks on media amid violence in Bangladesh

Under the scheme, selected candidates will be sanctioned a scholarship amount of up to ₹20 lakh, along with a one-way air ticket fare up to ₹60,000 or actual fare, whichever is less.

Eligible students pursuing higher education in foreign universities located in countries such as USA, UK, Australia, Canada, Singapore, Germany, South Korea, Japan, France, and New Zealand can apply.

The department has clarified that certificate verification will be carried out in due course, and strict action will be initiated against applicants found submitting false or fictitious documents.

Detailed information regarding eligibility criteria, selection procedure, mandatory requirements, and the list of eligible countries is available on the official website:



# HYDRA Cracks Down on Encroachment, Secures Prime Land in Nizampet

Hyderabad: The Hyderabad Disaster Response and Asset Protection Agency (HYDRA) on Friday protected 13 acres of government land in Nizampet village of Bachupally mandal in Medchal–Malkajgiri district, preventing further encroachment on property valued at approximately Rs 1,300 crore.

The action was taken following a request from Bachupally mandal revenue officials, who alerted HYDRA about illegal encroachments on government land located in Survey Numbers 186, 191, and 334. The officials reported that portions of the land had already been encroached upon and urged immediate steps to safeguard the remaining area by erecting fencing.

Acting on the directions of HYDRA Commissioner A.V. Ranganath, HYDRA officials, along with

revenue authorities, conducted a field-level inspection of the site. During the inspection, it was confirmed that nearly four acres of government land in Survey Number 334 had already been encroached upon, with permanent residential structures constructed there.

Without disturbing the existing residences, HYDRA removed temporary sheds that had come up on the remaining government land and secured the balance 13 acres by installing fencing around the entire area. HYDRA boards were also erected to clearly mark the land as government property and deter future encroachments.

The operation is part of HYDRA's ongoing efforts to protect public assets and prevent illegal occupation of valuable government land in and around Hyderabad.

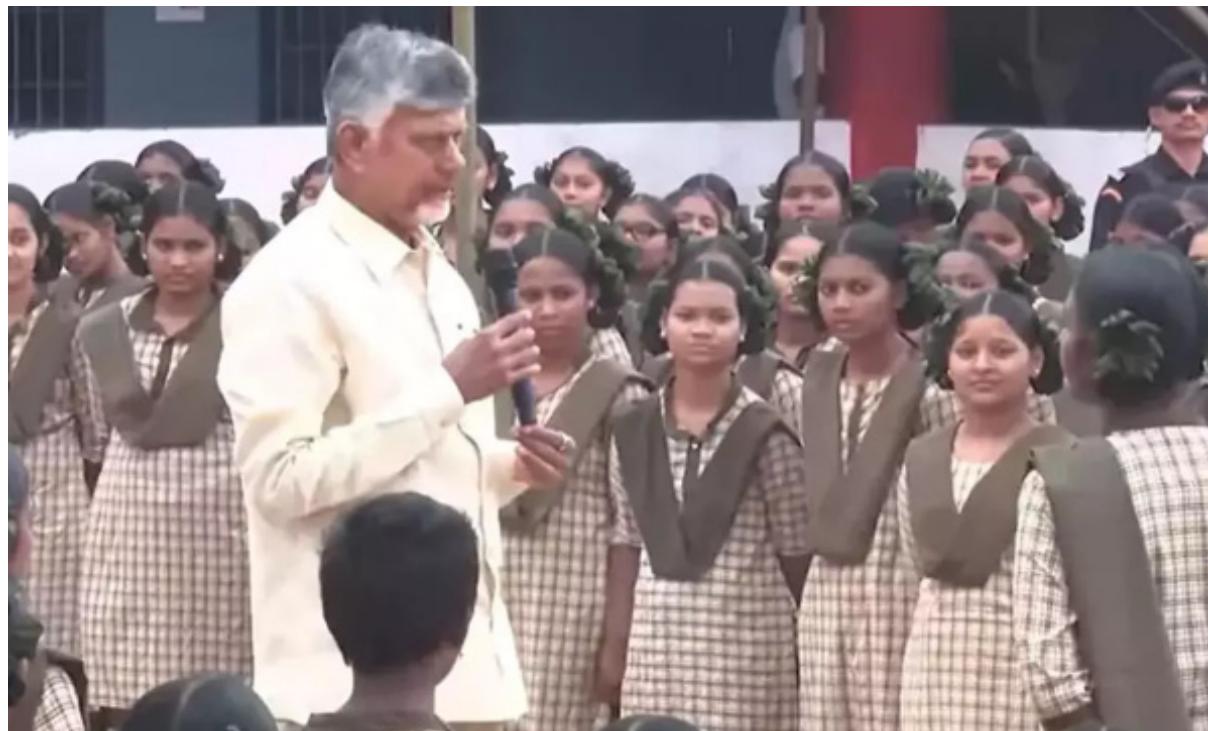
# Telangana Real Estate Sector Under Pressure Amid Falling Transactions

Telangana's real estate sector has witnessed a sharp downturn, with land buying and selling hitting a major slump and triggering serious concerns over the state's revenue outlook. Critics attribute the decline to what they describe as ineffective and inconsistent policies of the A. Revanth Reddy-led Congress government.

The combined impact of the so-called "Hydra effect" and the absence of a clear government policy on the construction sector has severely affected real estate as well as allied industries. After showing steady growth since the formation of Telangana, real estate returns have dramatically reversed over the past two years under Congress rule.

The slowdown is not limited to urban centres alone. Rural Telangana has also been badly hit, with even agricultural lands struggling to find buyers. This

has led to a sharp fall in land registrations across the state, directly impacting stamp and registration revenues—one of Telangana's key sources of income. According to the latest data from the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), despite the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, stamp and registration revenues stood at 52% in 2020–21. During the second wave in 2021–22, the state achieved 98% of its targeted registration revenue. However, after A. Revanth Reddy took charge as Chief Minister, collections fell sharply to just 46% in the 2024–25 financial year. For the current financial year, the government set a target of ₹19,087.26 crore under stamps and registrations. By November 2025, collections had reached only ₹9,911.26 crore, accounting for just 51.93% of the annual target, reflecting the continuing slowdown in property transactions.



## CM Chandrababu commends 'Mustabu' programme at school visit in Anakapalle

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's Anakapalle district tour is underway, with one of his notable stops being the Tallapalem Social Welfare Residential School. During his visit, the Chief Minister interacted with students and inspected the newly established 'Mustabu Corner', a grooming initiative introduced at the school. Following the inspection, Naidu praised the Alluri district collector for launching a commendable programme and noted the innovative approach brought forward through the Mustabu initiative. He ac-

knowledged the efforts of Minister Nara Lokesh and other officials in implementing beneficial programmes for the community, asserting his commitment to ensuring a bright future for all children in the region.

During the session, student Guna Srivalli spoke to the Chief Minister, expressing her enthusiasm for the Mustabu programme as an excellent initiative that promotes cleanliness. She also shared her ambition to become the principal of a social welfare school in the future.

## Nimmala dismisses objections over Nallamala Sagar

New Delhi: Water resources minister Nimmala Ramanaidu on Friday said there was no justification for objections if the downstream state sought to utilise surplus Godavari waters that would otherwise flow into the Bay of Bengal.

He asserted that, in accordance with natural principles, Andhra Pradesh had a legitimate right as the downstream state to use such waters and called for immediate approvals for proposed projects, including the Polavaram–Nallamala Sagar linkage.

The minister, along with Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, met Union Jal Shakti minister C R Patil here and discussed pending approvals and release of funds for irrigation projects in the state. He said representations were made seeking immediate financial assistance for projects approved as part of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act commitments and for convening a high-level meeting to resolve pending issues.

Stressing that water security was a critical concern for Andhra Pradesh, Ramanaidu urged the Centre to take a positive view keeping in mind the state's irrigation and drinking water needs. He said stronger Centre–state coordination was essential and sought project-wise water allocations in line with the norms of the Godavari and Vamsadhara river management boards to ensure timely completion.



Referring to disputes over Godavari water utilisation, the minister said the state had no intention of politicising the issue and that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu believed in the welfare of Telugu people in both states. He suggested that internal political factors in Telangana may have contributed to the dispute and noted that Andhra Pradesh had never objected to projects such as Kaleshwaram and Sitarama Sagar constructed by Telangana. He pointed out that 1.53 lakh tmc ft of Godavari floodwaters had gone waste into the sea over the past 50 years, including 20,000 tmc ft in the last five years alone, and argued that fears of Telangana turning into a desert were unfounded.

# Youth and women to get empowered through skill devpt centre

Visakhapatnam: With an aim to strengthen inclusive growth and community development, Adani Gangavaram Port inaugurated a skill development centre at Gangavaram.

The centre was launched as part of the port's corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

Designed to provide structured training programmes, the centre aids in providing practical exposure to help youth and women in local communities gain industry-relevant skills and enhance livelihood opportunities.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by the officials from the port and Adani Foundation along with village leaders, community representatives, trainers,



and enthusiastic students.

Their presence reaffirmed the Adani Group's strong commitment towards inclusive growth and community development.

The new facility will offer structured training, practical exposure, and continuous support to trainees, aligning with the Skill India Mission and the Group's vision of nation-building.

The centre focuses on creating employable talent while fostering inclusive growth and sustainable development in the region.

Speaking on the occasion the port management said that the Adani Skill Development Centre is a catalyst for empowering women and youth by providing industry-relevant skills that build confidence, enable financial independence and support sustainable livelihoods.

The foundation is committed towards skill training initiatives that foster empowerment and long-term socio-economic growth.

## MGIT hosts Alumni Reunion "Reminiscence 2025" in Hyderabad

Hyderabad, Dec 20

Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Technology (MGIT) hosted its Alumni Reunion Meet, "Reminiscence – 2025," on Saturday, bringing together alumni from various graduating batches in a warm and nostalgic atmosphere.

G Chandramohan Reddy, Principal, MGIT, greeted the alumni and highlighted the institute's steady growth, academic progress, and future vision. The reunion was marked by a spirit of camaraderie and nostalgia, as alumni reconnected with peers, faculty members, and revisited cherished memories of their student life.



## Seminar, exhibition mark 'Nat'l Energy Conservation Week'

Visakhapatnam: Marking the 'National Energy Conservation Week', Waltair Division of East Coast Railway organised several events such as a seminar, an exhibition and a host of awareness campaigns.

As part of the weeklong observance, the division conducted extensive awareness campaigns, including display of banners, posters, stickers, and rallies featuring energy-saving slogans at various railway stations and locations.

These initiatives were taken up under the guidance of Divisional Railway Manager of Waltair Lalit Bohra.

An exhibition at the DRM office showcased innovative energy conservation techniques adopted by the division, such as automated lighting for offices and residences, solar-powered streetlights, energy-efficient BLDC fans, remote-sensing lighting systems,

LED lights and inverter-type air conditioning systems.

In his address, Lalit Bohra urged officials to explore innovative uses of abundant natural resources like solar and wind energy.

Emphasising sustainable practices, he advocated moving beyond conventional solar panels toward cost-effective solutions like timer-equipped LED lights and called for collective efforts to reduce energy consumption and optimise resources.

The seminar was attended by K Rama Rao, ADRM (Operations), MSN Murthy, senior divisional electrical engineer (General), and other officers and supervisors. Murthy gave a detailed PowerPoint presentation on energy conservation, covering renewable and non-renewable sources, cost efficiencies, eco-friendly measures and energy-efficient fittings implemented across Waltair Division.

## MVGRCE hosts workshop on mental health

Vizianagaram: The Women Empowerment Cell of Maharaj Vijayaram Gajapathi Raj College of Engineering (MVGRCE), WEC-MVGR, organised a workshop on 'thriving, not just surviving: youth mental health in modern times' on Friday.

Gladys Evangeline Raghupatrani, experienced counselling psychologist, currently working at Sainik School, Korukonda, attended as a resource person. Addressing the gathering, the resource person, Gladys Evangeline Raghupatrani explained the practical ways of handling stress and how to stay focused



on a particular work.

She highlighted techniques to be adopted for better time management, practicing mindfulness and developing a positive approach toward challenges and motivated students to apply tech-

niques taught at the workshop. She underlined the need to prioritise mental well-being.

Y M C Sekhar, principal of the institution highlighted the importance of maintaining a balanced mindset rather than mag-

nifying problems. He emphasised that many individuals hesitate to share their feelings, which often lead to emotional distress and explained how excessive use of mobile phones reduced social interactions.

## Lokesh vows justice to harassed cadre

Rajamahendravaram: TDP national general secretary and minister for IT and HRD Nara Lokesh on Friday assured justice to those who were harassed during the previous YSRCP government, asserting that no one who misused the law or acted illegally would be spared. He said the party had not forgotten the injustices faced by its leaders and workers and that action would be taken strictly within the framework of the law.

Addressing a meeting of TDP workers at the Cherukuri Convention Hall here, Lokesh recalled that the present MLA Adireddy Vasu and his father Apparao were harassed and jailed by foisting false cases during the previous regime.



He said former MLA Adireddy Bhavani was also targeted and trolled on the floor of the Assembly. Lokesh recalled that even his mother, Bhuvaneswari, was subjected to inhuman humiliation, and described the arrest of TDP national president N Chandrababu Naidu, who spent 53 days in Rajamahendravaram jail, as unjust.

He said the support extended by party workers in Rajamahendravaram during that period would always be remembered.

Lokesh also addressed internal party issues, referring to dissatisfaction expressed by some leaders against Rajamahendravaram City MLA Adireddy Srinivas. He said staying away from party activities out of anger was not appropriate and advised leaders to directly question the MLA if they disagreed with his approach. Any mistakes, he said, should be pointed out within the party and efforts made collectively to correct them.

Stating that Mangalagiri and Rajamahendravaram were among the TDP's strongest constituencies,

The minister credited the sacrifices of party workers for the alliance securing 164 Assembly seats. Expressing confidence in the party's future, he said the TDP, founded by the late N T Rama Rao, would remain strong for another hundred years, adding that those who once claimed they would wipe out the TDP had disappeared without a trace. As part of the programme, Lokesh felicitated key party workers and received representations from several activists.

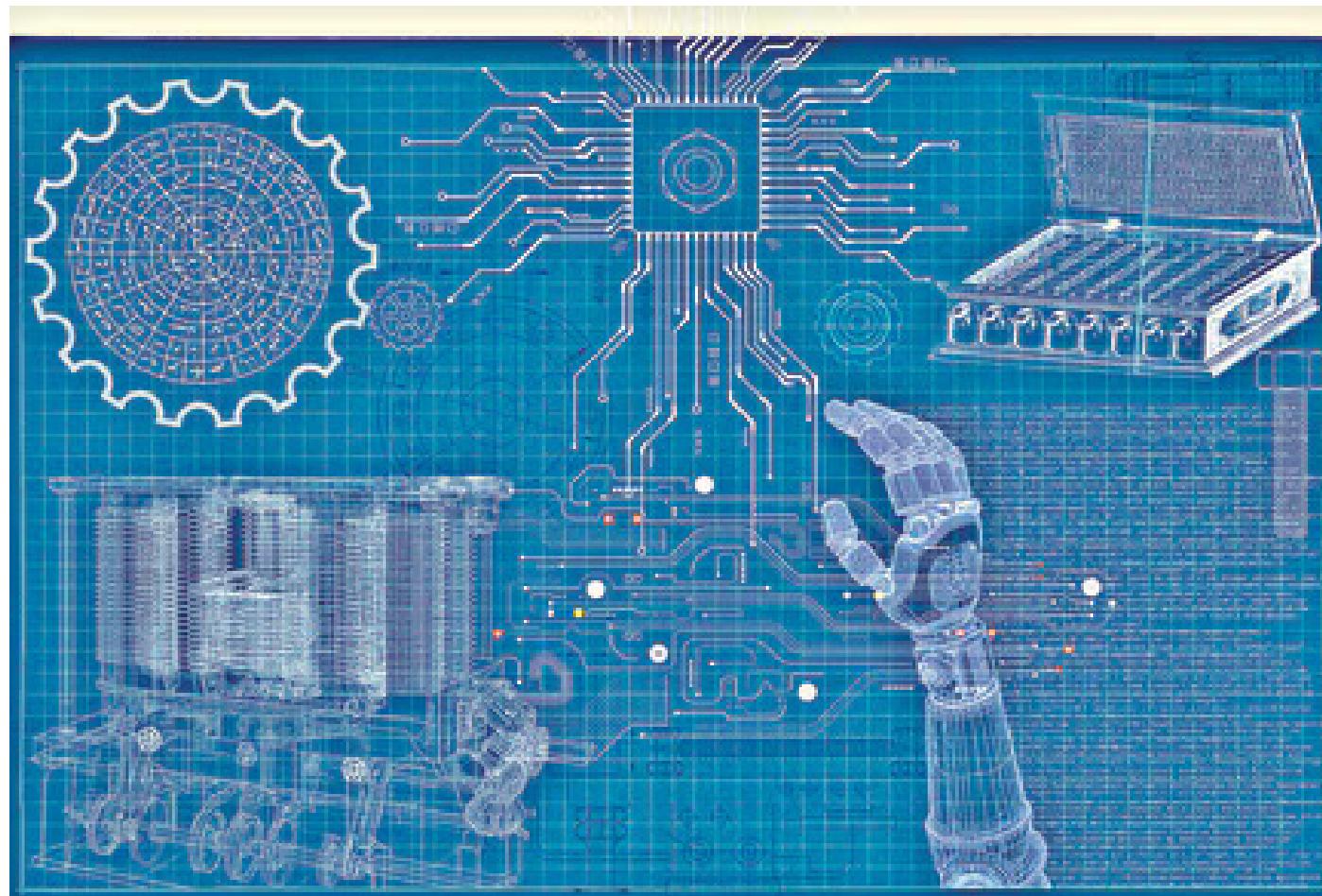
# We've been trying to chat with machines for centuries. See what came before AI

All those years ago, an Arabic astrology wheel was built in an early attempt at automated chat. Then, in 17th-century Europe, a "mathematical cabinet" was built in an attempt to automate poetry, music and coded messages. There was an American robot in the 1930s designed to spit out story ideas for Hollywood. Spell checks, text messaging and autocorrect would follow.

It's an intriguing journey that Dennis Yi Tenen, a scholar and software engineer, traces in his new book, *Literary Theory for Robots: How Computers Learned to Write*. His aim, he says, is to take some of the fear and confusion away from how we view this technology, and offer a reminder that humans have always woven threads of language and technology together, driven by a primal urge to protect and promote intelligence and knowledge. "Language and technology didn't just develop together; language is technology," says Yi Tenen, an associate professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University. "While many animals teach things to their young, only humans are able to do it remotely, for instance, preserving and transmitting our collective know-how across time and space." Can we go too far in this quest? "Of course we can. I find it difficult to use technology in a balanced way in my own life," Yi Tenen says. With AI, of course, the struggle isn't quite the same. It is, potentially, a struggle over the nature of reality, veracity, truth.

Which is why it is even more vital to view this technology accurately and dispassionately as a product of human endeavour, Yi Tenen says, and not as something that is a being by itself. If we view it as an extension of our collective intelligence, we can hold technology makers responsible and accountable, he adds. His book, accordingly, takes a step back, into the historical context of AI. How far back can we trace our efforts to create "intelligent" machines? Take a look.

This device, created in Arabia, was a maze of concentric circles and elaborate charts that bore zodiac signs, letters, symbols and numerical values. Cords zigzagged across the whole. A manual or rulebook of sorts helped soothsayers interpret the readings, particularly in matters of astrology. What's interesting, though, is that some of the circles contained verses from the Quran and other holy texts, "and in manipulating the circles, one could actually kind of have a conversation with the device," Yi Tenen says. "The fact that we're still in Q&A mode with ChatGPT... I thought that was such a cool parallel." The earliest literary bots were shaped like giant cupboards, and operated like a sort of word loom. One of the earliest examples is the Mathematical Organ created by 17th-century polymath Athanasius Kircher. Made of painted wood, this was a box-style chest made up of rows and columns of wooden slats or rods. Attached to each were paper booklets on subjects such as arithmetic, music, geometry, chronology and astrology. In a spooky foreshadowing, Kircher called them "applications". Manipulating these rods and consulting the booklets, which were ar-



ranged in a matrix, could help the user compose poetry and music (of a sort), write encrypted messages, and work out certain kinds of mathematical and astronomical calculations. Kircher sold a version of the device to the young Archduke Charles Joseph of Austria to help with his studies. It sparked several debates, including a public one at a bar between Kircher and the German poet Quirinus Kuhlmann. The latter argued that the path to knowledge should be "tortuous, accessible only to those willing to walk it properly". It wasn't the organ that was intelligent, the poet added; the intelligence lay with Kircher. "Without the box, the young duke remains an idiotic parrot." Essentially, an early instance of the argument that computers are making us lazy and stupid. The Analytical Engine, 1830s It was Kircher's Mathematical Organ that inspired the English mathematician Charles Babbage to create what would go down in history as the world's first computer, in the 1830s. Babbage called it the Analytical Engine, and developed its functions in collaboration with the countess and mathematician Ada Lovelace.

It eventually looked like a weaver's loom. The machine — only partly built by Babbage in his lifetime — had a mill (like the central processing unit), store (like memory storage), reader (input device) and printer (output device). The mill could process calculations with the help of punch cards inserted into the reader. The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations, 1895 By the 19th century, amid the early years of the industrial revolution, templates were emerging: for furniture, machinery, clothing, equipment, and for the arts (literature, film, mu-

sic), journalism, even philosophy. In the arts, templates have always been looked down upon as a poor substitute for missing genius. But, Yi Tenen argues, they have always lain at the heart of how we learn. Could a machine, then, help a not-so-great writer write a great tale? Long before ChatGPT, an outline generator was created by the French writer Georges Polti, in 1895. Titled *The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations*, it listed three dozen predicaments designed to help a struggling playwright. These included supplication, deliverance, vengeance, pursuit, disaster, revolt, rivalry and adultery. Each was explained briefly with examples. For instance, pursuit came with the instructions that the plot should be "held by the fugitive alone; sometimes innocent, always excusable, for the fault — if there was one — appears to be inevitable, ordained; we do not inquire into it or blame it, which would be idle, but sympathetically suffer the consequences with our hero, who whatever he may once have been, is now but a fellow-man in danger". Combining elements from his set of dramatic situations,

hundreds of thousands of stories could take shape. Though rarely acknowledged, such templates were frequently used by writers well into the age of cinema, Yi Tenen says. This machine, built by Los Angeles screenwriter Wycliffe Hill, could produce a complete outline of a story in 20 minutes, its whirring gears drawing background, characters and dramatic situations from a series of tapes housed in its chassis. The robot found no takers (it is unclear why, but expense may have been a factor; it is also possible that the stories weren't very good). But it prompted Hill to write a book titled *Plot Genie* (1935), about a wheel that could be spun to point to seemingly random numbers, which could be referenced against a set of charts, to generate plot requisites (location, character, the beloved, the problem, and so on). As it turns out, Hill wasn't a polymath or early technocrat. He was a scriptwriter who became fixated on decoding the intricacies of what makes a good plot, when his own screenplay was rejected. His aim was to take the effort and uncertainty out of writing.

## AFA former and present commandants get medals

Hyderabad: Air Marshal (retd) B Chandra Sekhar, former Commandant of the Air Force Academy (AFA) in Hyderabad, received the Param Vishisht Seva Medal. Additionally, current AFA Commandant, Air Marshal S Shrinivas has been honoured with the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal for his exceptional services to the

Indian Air Force (IAF), a press release said. On Friday, President Droupadi Murmu conferred 94 Distinguished Service Decorations to the personnel of the Armed Forces and the Indian Coast Guard during the Defence Investiture Ceremony (Phase-2) at Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi.

# The budget is over, let us talk about broader economic policy

It's half a move because it only seems to have embraced the pessimism of the intellect. The 2023-24 Economic Survey is a powerful exhibit of this line of thinking. It is categorical in admitting that India will not enjoy the kind of global tailwinds to growth, which were available to countries such as China a couple of decades ago. A sustained double-digit growth rate – this is what saw the meteoric rise of China's economic power – might not be in the realm of the possible is the unsaid implication. The survey cautioned against what could potentially be destabilising exuberance in the financial markets, unlike the hubris around rallying stock markets by the ruling party's top leadership. It also throws a reality check on whether India can really exploit the China+1 opportunity in global value chains without allowing Chinese investment in India, which poses serious national security challenges. These are all challenges to which there are no easy solutions. The Economic Survey, to be sure, is a purely intellectual exercise. It is the Budget which is supposed to translate economic thoughts into action. How has it done on the other half of the Gramscian dictum, namely, optimism of the will? To be fair, it is difficult for a government to show optimism after losing political capital in an election. A more appropriate task for it would be course correction. How does the budget do on this front? The biggest sign of a course correction in the budget's thinking is an acknowledgement of the fact that there is an employment problem in the Indian economy. This is a very different tune from the narrative the government and the ruling party have been peddling on improving headline employment numbers and entrepreneurship being the solution to the jobs problem in the recent and not-so-recent past. Will the government's approach to the jobs problem work? The intuitive answer is that it is unlikely. Nudges – this is what most of the measures announced in the budget are – are more likely to fix behavioural issues than hard macroeconomic constraints. There is good reason to believe the jobs problem is more in the realm of the latter than the former. The biggest proof of this is the stuttering private investment engine and historically low levels of core inflation. If companies are not willing to undertake investment and markets are not overheated, it is a clear reflection of a demand constrained economy. It is difficult to understand why they would want to hire a lot of new workers. What is the best way to solve this problem? The most obvious answer, namely, the government spending more, is not necessarily the correct one. The government has been running a high fiscal deficit between the pandemic and now and this has clearly not done much to solve the employment or demand problem. Solving the problem requires a deeper engagement with the Indian economy.

The employment-income imbalance in agriculture is the biggest unfinished structural transformation question facing the Indian economy. What has the government done to solve this imbalance over the last ten years? The government's first big



intervention in agriculture was the introduction of direct income transfer via the PM-Kisan scheme before the 2019 elections. It was supposed to be a politically beneficial palliative and has been left like that. There is very little in terms of a structural impact which the scheme would have achieved. There has been a lot of talk about other things such as self-sufficiency in pulses and oilseeds but there is no concomitant fund allocation towards these goals. The second major policy intervention of the government was in trying to push the now-withdrawn farm laws during the pandemic. The claimed benefits of these laws were always questionable and they ended up burning political capital in the wrong place which has made the challenge of pushing critical sustainability reforms in states such as Punjab even more difficult. Would it not have been a better idea to spend the PM-Kisan money – it is about 30% of the total food subsidy spending – on something like expanding the procurement-based PDS system to include crops such as pulses which would have helped the trade balance as well as food consumption bill of poor consumers in the country? Has the government made a serious effort to try and tilt the balance of distribution of surplus value in the farm-to-food plate chain in favour of farmers away from traders?

Manufacturing There is merit in the government's focus on trying to break ground in the manufacturing of high-tech goods such as electronics and microchips. A lot of the China+1 game is confined to these sectors. Their limited employment impact notwithstanding, they are important from a trade balance and strategic insurance point of view. It is good that things are moving in the right direction. Of course, there is a lot of scope for more to be done here. But from a purely employment perspective, there is not much to be achieved here. How many jobs would India create even if all of the world's iPhones were to

be manufactured in India? In a lot of relatively more labour incentive consumer goods categories which are targeted at tapping into export markets of advanced economies, the limited size of India's domestic markets – think of better-quality sneakers for example – is an in-built disincentive for expansion of manufacturing activity. This basically means that the quest to expand manufacturing's employment footprint in India is more a second-order problem linked to the growth of incomes at the bottom of the pyramid and therefore demand for manufacturers rather than breaking some new intellectual ground in setting up a manufacturing policy. More purchasing power for basic consumer goods will mean more demand for their domestic production and this will eventually lead to improvement in quality and value creation which will allow India to increase its foothold in export markets for these commodities. The ongoing discussion about making sure that we adapt well to challenges from technological disruptions such as the impact of AI is clearly important. Difficult as they are to achieve, they will, even in the best-case scenario, ensure that the pace of white-collar service employment stays at its current levels. That is not going to be enough.

The real solution to India's employment challenge lies in a different area of services. India's social services continue to be severely understaffed and underfunded in most parts of the country. Quality perhaps is an even bigger problem than quantity in most areas. Abysmal learning outcomes at the school education level and poor employability of the students from the higher education system are a testament to this problem in education. Health is not a very different story. The net result is the worst of both worlds for the country. It is taking a toll on our human capital in the long term and inflicting a drain of wealth on the poor population which is spending

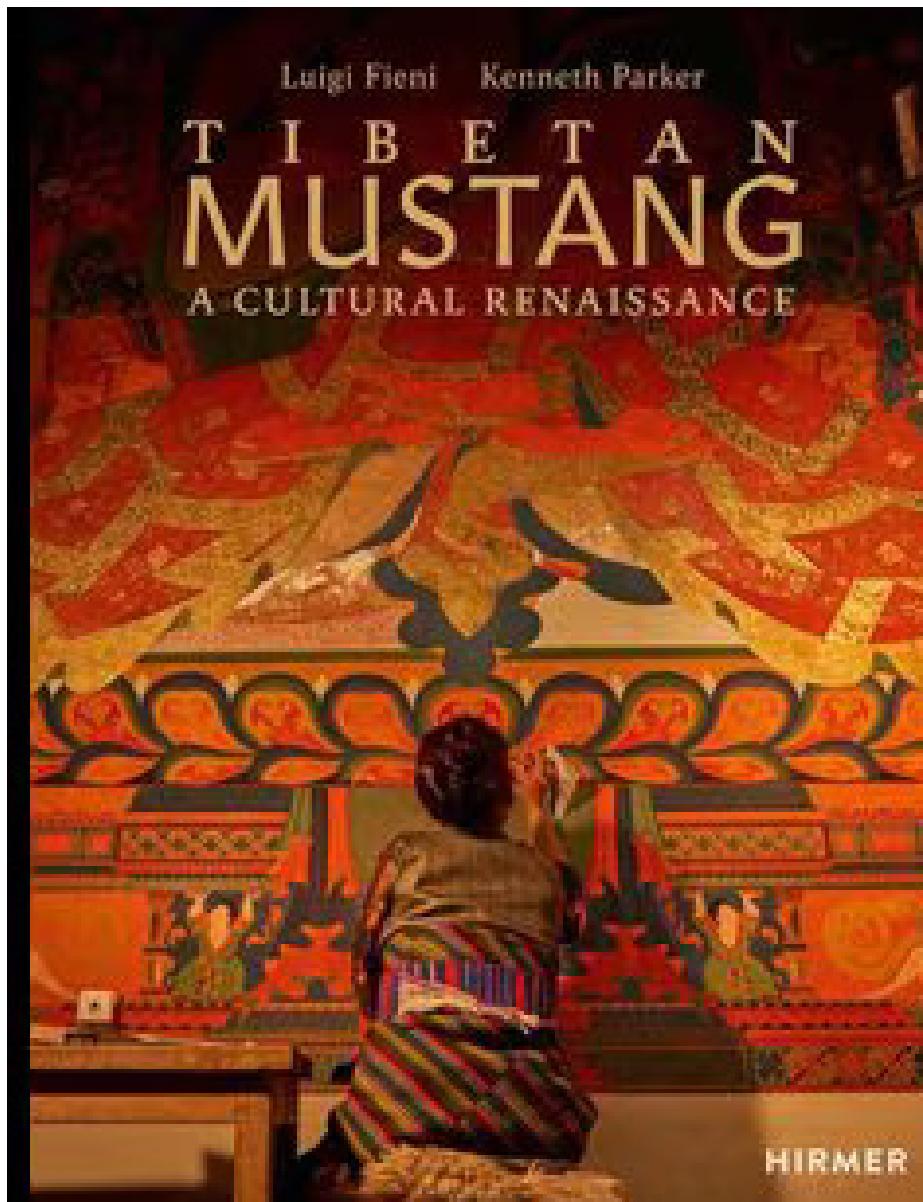
beyond their means to avail these poor-quality services from the private sector. A lot of the private sector activity in these areas can be termed as parasitic in nature which is emaciating our current and future incomes and demand. Once again this is not an easy problem to fix. Sure, the allocation for health and education continues to be much below levels which have been recommended by the government's own policy documents. But just throwing money at it is not going to do the job. Almost every state in the country is witnessing demands for the regularisation of teachers whose qualifications and capabilities are extremely suspect. Political considerations always encourage governments to ignore this problem and bring more and more sub-standard stock to the system. Private operators in health and education also continue to be a big source of political finance across the political spectrum at the local level. Instead of trying to build a consensus on this critical problem, the current government has actually alienated states by trying to force centralization in these sectors. The political controversies around the National Education Policy, governors fighting with state governments over vice-chancellors and NEET are clear examples of this. Would it not have been a better idea for the government to have paid attention to increasing allocations in these sectors and building political consensus to solve quality issues over the last ten years than spending money on one-time asset generation schemes? To be fair, spending money on one-time transfers for political purposes is not a problem confined to just the BJP in this country. Almost all political parties resort to this strategy to boost their political prospects even as critical spending on areas that matter for the future is ignored. In lieu of a conclusion, the overall economic doctrine of the current government is not very different from other political parties.

# Read an excerpt from a photobook on a cultural renaissance in Nepal

In the late 1990s Lo Monthang village, set at an average altitude of 3,850 meters, was disconnected from modern civilization. The village lacked basic forms of communication (e.g. telephone and Internet), and there was no electricity. Three days by horseback were necessary to reach Lo Monthang from the nearest airport, Jomsom, while walking could take nearly a week. To work in such a remote site required very meticulous planning for each season's work. The amount and the selection of needed materials had to be chosen judiciously since it was not possible to purchase additional supplies on site. Besides, because of the lack of telephones, Internet and a feasible way to ship whatever was needed, it was impossible to get anything from Europe or even Nepal before the end of each season.

Since there was no electricity, it was crucial to carry more than an electric generator, enough fuel, and spare parts to provide adequate lighting in the dark worksites throughout the summer. From a technical point of view, it was challenging to have enough power for the professional lights to produce the right color temperature in order to avoid as much as possible metamerism problems in the retouching process. One more challenging task was the transportation of bulky or fragile equipment on site, since the only way to deliver these items was on horseback or by porters. Chemicals, consolidators, generators and light bulbs had to be packed extremely well to prevent damaging or breaking key materials that could not be replaced on site. Practical solutions were devised on site even for the simplest of operations... What would be very easy to buy ready-made in the Western world became a challenge to be made ex-novo in the Himalayan environment.

Material storage during the cold season was a serious concern as well: because of very low temperatures, Himalayan winters could have affected the chemical, physical and mechanical properties of some conservation materials. Thus, the amount of required chemicals had to be carefully estimated in order not to leave any leftovers on site. When it was not possible, a storage system was implemented to protect the chemicals in a warmer environment by wrapping them in several layers of blankets during the cold season. Furthermore, given the extreme temperatures of the winter months, it was possible to run the project only between spring and fall. On August 8, 2018, HH the 42nd Sakya Trizin held the first Monlam Chenmo Puja in Tubchen Monastery after ages of oblivion. Thousands of people gathered from all over Mustang to listen to his teachings and to pray together with their religious leader. For the occasion all scaffolding were dismantled—though Restoration Phase II was still ongoing—and the whole assembly hall was packed with monks and all members of the royal family. There was not a single square centimeter without a praying soul in it. Villagers were all dressed up in their best traditional attires, and an endless procession queued for hours to get a blessing from HH the 42nd Sakya Trizin. Witnessing those moments was like a jump back in time. The sight and the atmosphere in front of my eyes appeared as if they were coming out from a movie trying to depict how a religious ceremony would be held in the 15th century. On August 8, 2018, the Mustang conservation project received the best reward ever conceivable. There were no medals, no garlands or gold. There were just believers. Enlightening a 15th-century monastery once again.



## Digital data protection bill showcases India's commitment to user safety: Centre



New Delhi: Amid the changing landscape where cyber-criminals use novel methods to steal personal data, the Digital

Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023 upholds individuals' rights to safeguard their data, incorporating established prin-

ciples for its protection, the government has said. According to Ministry of Electronics & IT, these principles include obtaining consent for lawful and transparent use of personal data, limiting its use to specified purposes, minimising data collection to necessary levels, ensuring data accuracy and timely updates, restricting storage duration to the required period, implementing robust security measures, and enforcing accountability through penalties for breaches and data adjudication.

The Act also imposes stringent protections on personal data transfers, as exemplified by the Reserve Bank of India's directive under Section 10(2) and Section 18 of the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007, mandating the storage of payment system data within India. These provisions underscore the Act's commitment to robust data protection standards and restrictions on personal data transfers,

which remain in effect under its framework," said the IT Ministry. As the country continues to harness the benefits of digital transformation, maintaining stringent data protection standards will be crucial in fostering trust, resilience, and sustainable growth in its digital economy. The country has emerged as a global leader in the digital landscape, with more than 936 million Internet subscribers. Keeping such a staggering figure in mind, the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) has registered several cases of cybercrimes during the last three years. The Centre has also established the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (14C) to enhance the coordinated response of law enforcement agencies to cybercrimes. The government launched the 'Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting and Management System' to facilitate the immediate reporting of financial frauds and prevent fund siphoning by fraudsters.