



## CM participated in the TPCC extended state executive committee meeting held at Gandhi Bhavan.

“(Mandava Srisailam...Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau...Indian Chronicle...January 8):- The TPCC extended state executive committee meeting was held at Gandhi Bhavan in Hyderabad under the chairmanship of PCC Chief and MLC Mahesh Kumar



Goud. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka, AICC In-charge Meenakshi Natarajan, AICC In-charge Secretary Viswanathan, AICC leader Praveen Chakravarthy, Telangana State Government Whip and Aleru MLA, DCC President Beerla Ailaiah, along with state ministers, MLAs, MPs, MLCs, corporation chairmen, chairmen of affiliated organizations, and DCC presidents attended the meeting as chief guests.

## District level team selection for state level Khokho competitions.

Secunderabad Cantonment. January 8 (Indian Chronicle):-“Under the auspices of Hyderabad District Khokho Association, district level sub junior Khokho selection competition was held at CMR High school in Bowenpally on Thursday. 250 kho kho players from different schools participated. The sports persons who showed merit in district level sub junior competitions were selected for the state level competitions.



Director of CMR schools SK Reddy who attended this program announced the team of Hyderabad district along with the players, he said on this occasion. He said that sports develop leadership qualities and there

will be a bright future in the field of sports as well. Parents are also advised to encourage them. The sportspersons were advised to bring name to the district with good performance at the state level. District Khokho Association President Poshappa Secretary Puli Kishore, District Coach and Pet Prasad, Ravi Naik, Naresh, participated in the program.



Photo caption only:“(Mandava Srisailam...Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau...Indian Chronicle...January 8):- A scene of Kisan Morcha State General Secretary and former Councillor Padamati Jagmohan Reddy welcoming and felicitating ST Morcha State President Ravi Naik with a shawl on his arrival in Bhongir.

## CMRF scheme brings light into the lives of the poor: Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy

“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 8):- Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy stated that the CMRF scheme is a boon for the poor and that it brings light into their lives. On Thursday, at the Bhuvanagiri MLA's camp office, CMRF checks were distributed by local MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy to Barre Hemalatha and Gangaram Sharath Kumar from Indira Nagar, Ward No. 23 of Bhuvanagiri town. They had incurred significant medical expenses for treatment at a private hospital



due to illness and had applied for assistance from the Telangana State Congress People's Government's Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) under the leadership of local former councilor Padigela Renuka Pradeep. On this occasion, MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy said that the Congress People's Government and Chief Minister Enumula Revanth Reddy's relief fund, the CMRF scheme, provides financial security to families who have suffered financially due to unexpected acci-

dents and incurred high medical expenses for treatment in private hospitals. He added that in the Bhuvanagiri constituency, in the last two years, CMRF checks have been sanctioned to everyone who applied. MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy said that the Congress government is working with the aim of preventing poor people from suffering financial losses, strengthening them economically, and providing quality medical services to the poor by increasing the Aarogyasri scheme coverage to Rs. 10 lakhs. Former Municipal Chairman Barre Jahangir, Barre Mahender, Kasaraboyina Sai, Narender, Gopi Babu, Nuvvula Raju Prabhakar, and others participated in this program.



# 16-Year-Old Social Entrepreneur Brings 'Messy Science' Learning to Government School Students in Hyderabad

Hyderabad Classrooms turned into open-air laboratories on January 08, 2026, as 200 students of Zilla Parishad High School, Gachibowli, experienced science beyond textbooks through a large-scale hands-on learning programme conducted by STEP (Science Through Experiments and Projects) — a student-led initiative founded by Anuj Bhatia, a 16-year-old student of the International School of Hyderabad.

The initiative was executed in partnership with the ISHVA Foundation thanks to Hainanti Sarker and the Dr. K.V. Rao Scientific Society, bringing the Society's Mobile Science Van to the government school campus and enabling large-scale experiential learning.

Addressing the students during the session, Anuj Bhatia said, "I realised that science in India is often taught through memorisation rather than experience. With STEP, I wanted to replace the blackboard with 'messy science' —



where students learn by doing, failing, and trying again."

The two-hour programme saw stu-

dents from Classes 9 and 10 rotate through multiple interactive stations designed to simplify complex scientific

concepts using low-cost materials. Key activities included the construction of a DaVinci Bridge to understand gravity and friction, and DNA extraction from bananas, allowing students to visually experience biology in action.

Sharing her thoughts, Ratanaji, Head of the Dr. K.V. Rao Scientific Society and Chief Guest at the event, said, "When science is taken out of the classroom and placed into students' hands, curiosity naturally follows. Initiatives like STEP prove that innovation in education doesn't require expensive infrastructure — only intent and imagination."

Dr. K Ratna, Secretary and Founder Member of the Dr. K.V. Rao Scientific Society, who attended as Guest of Honour, appreciated the student-led approach and encouraged more youth-driven science outreach programmes in public schools.

## Kajaria Tiles Extends Partnership With RCB Women's Team Continues as Principal Sponsor for the 2026 season



Hyderabad Kajaria Ceramics Ltd., India's No.1 tile company, together with Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB), announced today the extension of their partnership, with Kajaria Tiles continuing as the Principal Sponsor of the RCB Women's Team. The renewed association builds on a successful collaboration that began with the inaugural season of the Women's T20 League in 2023.

This renewal underscores Kajaria Tiles' long-term commitment to the growth of women's cricket in India and its strong belief in the Women's T20 League as a transformative platform shaping the future of women's sport.

Beyond brand visibility, Kajaria Tiles aims to make a meaningful contribution to the women's cricket ecosystem by supporting initiatives that encourage grassroots talent, community participation, and wider inclusion in women's sport. Commenting on the renewed partnership, \*Mr. Rishi Kajaria, Managing Director, Kajaria Ceramics Ltd\*, said: "Since the launch of the Women's T20 League, our association with the RCB Women's Team has represented much more than a sponsorship. Women empowerment is a core value at Kajaria, and our women cricketers are true role models, inspiring not just today's generation but every young girl who dreams big. We are proud to continue our support for the RCB Women's Team and be part of their journey in the seasons ahead."

The front-of-jersey sponsorship reflects Kajaria Tiles' belief in excellence, resilience, and leadership, as well as its commitment to providing women athletes with a strong platform on one of the country's biggest sporting stages. Speaking on the association, \*Mr. Rajesh Menon, COO, Royal Challengers Bengaluru\*, said: "Kajaria Tiles has been a valued partner of the RCB Women's Team since the inception of the Women's T20 League. Their continued support has contributed significantly to strengthening the women's game. We are delighted to extend this association and look forward to deepening fan engagement together."

## 10 Years of PhonePe: Celebrating A Decade of Building for Bharat

Hyderabad PhonePe recently marked a decade of innovation, celebrating ten years in India's fintech ecosystem. This milestone represents a decade of driving progress and expanding financial access for millions, transforming the way India transacts and manages money. In the year 2025, PhonePe reached a significant milestone by surpassing 600 million registered users, further cementing its role as a cornerstone of India's digital economy. This year focused on deepening user trust and expanding accessibility through the launch of features such as UPI Circle, which enables delegated payments for trusted contacts, and PhonePe Protect,

a security framework designed to safeguard millions against fraudulent transactions. Reflecting on this journey, Sameer Nigam, Founder & CEO, PhonePe said "The most exciting part of our ten-year journey is that, despite how far we have come, the summit is still not in sight. We don't yet know how high or wide it will be, and that's what makes it exciting. With thousands of passionate, driven people striving every day to be the best in their craft, this journey remains as meaningful and energising as ever." Rahul Chari, Founder & CTO, PhonePe added "I am incredibly proud of what we have built at PhonePe. The goodwill and support from

the industry and the wider ecosystem have been humbling. If there's one lasting lesson from this journey, it's building something people truly believe in, because passion is what turns an idea into impact. Since its inception, PhonePe has consistently redefined the Indian fintech landscape through a series of industry-first innovations aimed at democratizing financial services. From Digital Gold and Mutual Funds to making Insurance and Stock Broking accessible to the masses, the company has evolved from a payments app into a comprehensive financial ecosystem. Key milestones include the launch of PhonePe Business app, giving mer-

chants clarity and control over their payments, and Merchant Lending to empower small businesses, Credit Line on UPI making access to credit seamless, the introduction of Cross-Border UPI and UPI Lite for frictionless transactions, and the 2024 launch of the Indus Appstore, Share.Market and Secured Lending platforms. By relocating its domicile to India in 2022 and continuously expanding into credit and wealth management, PhonePe has moved beyond simple utility to become an integral part of India's financial fabric, ensuring that protection, investment, and credit are rights accessible to every citizen of the country.



# Escorts Kubota Showcases Its Next-Gen Construction Line-up at Excon 2025



Hyderabad Unveils the Kubota U22-6, BLX75K, Hydra 15 Mining and Hydra 72 as part of its commercial, prototype and concept-stage line-up.

Escorts Kubota Limited (EKL), one of India's leading engineering conglomerates in the agricultural and construction equipment space, today unveiled its latest BS V-compliant construction equipment range at Excon 2025. The new line-up reinforces the company's focus on application-specific, high-productivity construction equipment that is designed to reduce the total cost of ownership for customers and meet the evolving requirements of India's fast-growing infrastructure sector. With specialised needs rising across urban development, industrial logistics and mining, the refreshed range aims to deliver higher performance, reliability and operator comfort across diverse job environ-

ments. The company showcased new and upcoming products in concept and development stages, reflecting its continued focus on innovation.

In the earthmoving category, EKL introduced the Kubota U22-6 Mini Excavator as a commercial launch. This 2.2-ton model caters to specific applications between the company's 1.7-ton and 3-ton. With precise digging capability, zero-tail swing, ROPS/FOPS protection and an upgraded hydraulic system, the model is suited for unique applications such as urban construction, basement excavation other confined-area tasks. Its digital interface and operator-friendly controls make it a powerful yet compact solution for sites where manoeuvrability is essential.

EKL showcased the Hydra 15 Mining, a prototype-stage variant designed specifically for mining and quarrying conditions. The model incorporates strengthened safety features, including a lift-jack guard and reinforced front bumper, along with an air-conditioned cabin for operator comfort during long duty cycles. Developed to withstand high-impact operating conditions while ensuring predictable maintenance, the variant offers miners a reliable solution for rugged applications.

The company also showcased the BLX75K Backhoe Loader as a prototype-stage variant for wider regional markets at Excon this year. Powered by a next-generation 74.3 hp Kubota CEV-V engine, the model delivers improved fuel efficiency, multiple work modes and enhanced serviceability. Positioned within the next-generation backhoe loader lineup, the BLX75K reflects the growing integration of Japanese engineering capability into the company's construction equipment portfolio.

At the forefront of the display is the Hydra 72, introduced as a concept-stage pick-and-carry crane engineered for higher-height lifting applications. Its new 72-foot boom marks a significant progression much needed emerging applications and to cater from the earlier 65-foot class and caters to sectors requiring elevated reach for material handling. The crane features a four-part rope-compensated boom, a heavy-duty hydraulic winch with integrated safety like outriggers inbuilt safety brakes, lift cylinder safety valve systems and a reinforced axle and transmission package built for continuous

## Condolence Meeting for Senior Journalist Lakshmana Rao on the 10th: - Federation State Convener Mamidi Somaiah

“Manduva Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 8):- The Telangana Working Journalists Federation state committee has decided to hold a condolence meeting for senior journalist T.K. Lakshmana Rao, who recently passed away due to illness, on the 10th of this month at 10 AM at Tyagaraya Gana Sabha in Chikkadpally, Hyderabad, according to Federation State Convener Mamidi Somaiah. He said that it is necessary to recognize and remember the services rendered by Lakshmana Rao, who worked in several leading newspapers for nearly forty years, to the field of journalism and to journalists. Mamidi Somaiah requested senior journalists, close associates, and friends who worked with Lakshmana Rao in the field of journalism to participate in the condolence meeting on the 10th of this month.



## No Lapses in SADAREM Camps, Ensure Transparency: Addl Collector

“Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, January 8 (Indian Chronicle)“SADAREM Camps Must Be Effectively Utilised Additional District Collector Deepak Tiwari (Local Bodies) has urged persons with disabilities to make full and effective use of the SADAREM diagnostic camps being organised for their benefit.“On Thursday, the Additional Collector paid a surprise visit to the ongoing SADAREM disability assessment camp at the Government Hospital in the district headquarters and reviewed the arrangements and functioning of the camp. Speaking on the occasion, he stressed that adequate measures must be taken to ensure that no inconvenience is caused to persons with disabilities attending the camp. He directed officials to maintain complete transparency in the issuance of SADAREM disability certificates and to ensure that eligible beneficiaries receive their certificates without delay.“He further instructed that essential facilities such as drinking water, shade, and seating arrangements be provided for persons with disabilities and their attendants. Emphasising time-bound services, he said that medical examinations for candidates who had booked slots through Mee Seva centres should be completed strictly within the



scheduled time, without unnecessary delays.“During his visit, the Additional Collector also inspected various departments of the Government Hospital and issued specific instructions to the medical staff. He called for the provision of improved healthcare services to patients visiting the hospital with different ailments, maintenance of adequate stock of essential medicines, strict adherence to cleanliness, and the creation of patient-friendly facilities to prevent any hardship to the public.“Additional officials, including the Assistant Director of Rural Development, the hospital RMO, Section Officer, and medical staff, were present during the inspection.



# Judicial Services Authority & Traffic Police Join Hands to Sensitise Students on Road Safety through Awareness Programme and Rally.



“P.S.ASHOKAN”KARIMNAGAR BUREAU. “On the occasion of the Road Safety Month celebrations, under the theme “Arrive Alive”, an extensive road safety awareness programme and rally was jointly organised by the Mandal Legal Services Authority and the Godavarikhani Traffic Police Department at the Additional District Court, Godavarikhani. The programme aimed at building a future accident-free society and reducing fatalities caused by road accidents by creating legal and traffic awareness among students. The event was graced by Dr. T. Srinivasa Rao, Additional District & Sessions Judge, and M. Ramesh, ACP, Godavarikhani, as chief guests. Key Highlights of the Awareness Programme Addressing the students, the Hon’ble Judge elaborated on: The importance of adhering to traffic rules to prevent road accidents The life-saving role of helmets and seat belts The grave consequences of drunk driving Legal complications arising from minors driving vehicles The Legal Services Authorities also educated students on their legal rights and responsibilities during road accidents, ensuring clarity on lawful conduct and citizen duties. Following the awareness session, the Hon’ble Judge and senior police officials flagged off a road safety rally from the Additional District Court to Gandhi Chowk. Students actively

participated by raising road safety slogans, spreading awareness among the general public. The rally emphasised the need to strictly follow traffic rules to minimise accidents and save precious lives. ACP’s Message to the Youth Addressing the gathering, the ACP highlighted that more young lives are lost daily due to traffic violations such as: Minor driving Rash and negligent driving Triple riding Wrong-route driving Driving under the influence of alcohol He urged students to practice road safety from a young age and to motivate their family members, friends, and relatives to follow traffic rules. He called upon students to become “Road Safety Ambassadors”, contributing meaningfully to social change. Participants The programme witnessed the participation of: Dr. T. Srinivasa Rao, Additional District & Sessions Judge, Godavarikhani I. Surat Raj Singh, Sessions Judge N. Venkata Sachin Reddy, Principal Judge Dhruva Venkatesh, II Additional Judge Rajeshwar Rao, Traffic Inspector Indrasena Reddy, Godavarikhani I Town Inspector Harish Shekhar (SI), Ramaraju, advocates, court staff Students and staff of Sri Chaitanya Maharshi Degree College, along with government officials The programme concluded with a strong resolve to promote road safety awareness and work collectively towards reducing road accident fatalities in the region.

## Happy New Year to MLA Rajasekhar Reddy : Baddam Parushuram Reddy



“K, Sada Nand”Malkajigiri, January 8, Malkajigiri “BRS Malkajigiri Constituency In-Charge Baddam Parushuram Reddy congratulated legislators Marri Raja Shekhar Reddy on Thursday. Vinayak Nagar Division Chief Secretary Darshi Balakrishna Gupta, Barasa Leaders Umesh Kumar, Paper Seenu, Sampath Yadav and others participated in the program.



Today met Sri M. Stephen Ravindra, IPS Commissioner of Civil Supplies, Sri Hanumantu, IAS Director of Civil Supplies and conveyed New Year wishes in Civil Supplies Dept. Sri M.B. Krishna Yadav, TGO, Hyderabad District President, Sri Peraiah, Jt Secretary (Legal Meteorology Dept., ) & Smt. Lakshmi Bhavani, Vice Convenor, (Women’s wing TGO (civil supplies dept) r present.



## Resolve Power Supply Issues Anil's Visit with Electricity Department Officials

“Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, January 8: “Under the leadership of Greater Congress senior leader Nemali Anil Kumar, a Basti Bata (area inspection) program was organized on Thursday in the Mallapur Division in coordination with officials of the Electricity Department. “As residents have been facing persistent problems related to irregular power supply, frequent outages, and low voltage, Nemali Anil Kumar, along with Mallapur Assistant Engineer (AE) Vijaya, visited several bastis and residential colonies to directly assess the ground-level situation. During the visit, local residents brought various electricity-related grievances to the notice of



the officials, including damaged poles, faulty transformers, and delayed maintenance works. “Responding to the concerns, the Electricity Department officials assured the public that all genuine issues would be addressed on priority and that repair and improvement works would be initiated at the earliest. They also stated that necessary inspections would be carried out to ensure uninterrupted and quality power supply in the area. “Nemali Anil Kumar urged the officials to take immediate steps to resolve long-pending issues and emphasized that reliable electricity is essential for daily life, education, and small businesses. He also assured residents that the Congress party would continue to stand with the people until all their problems are resolved. “The program witnessed the participation of Electricity Department officials, Congress leaders, and a large number of local residents, making the initiative impactful and people-centric.

## Rare Surgery Brings Relief to Young Woman Gandhi Hospital Doctors Successfully Perform Mammoplasty

“Indian Chronicle, “ Secunderabad, January 08: “Doctors at Gandhi Hospital, Hyderabad, have successfully performed a rare and challenging surgery on a 21-year-old woman from Bodhan in Nizamabad district, who was diagnosed with an autoimmune disorder (Systemic Lupus Erythematosus on immunosuppressants), restoring her breasts to a normal size. “The young woman had been suffering for the past three years due to abnormal and excessive enlargement of



both breasts, which caused her severe physical and psychological discomfort. After conducting comprehensive medical examinations at Gandhi Hospital, doctors decided to perform surgery to prevent multiple health complications that could arise in the future. “The complex procedure was carried out by a multidisciplinary team led by Professor Dr. K. Sunil Kumar of the Department of General Surgery, with support from Professor Dr. Kiran Madala of the Department of Anaesthesiology. “Considering the patient's young age, the surgical team opted for a mammoplasty procedure that preserved breast aesthetics and body image. By judiciously using the lowest effective dose of steroids, the doctors successfully balanced control of the systemic disease with proper wound healing, ensuring a successful outcome. “The breast size was successfully reduced to an age-appropriate and aesthetically acceptable proportion, and proper shape was restored. Following the surgery, the patient was closely monitored for 20 days due to her underlying condition, and comprehensive medical care was provided to prevent any infections. “Doctors confirmed that the woman has now fully recovered and returned to a normal condition. The patient's family expressed their heartfelt gratitude to the medical team and Gandhi Hospital Superintendent Dr. Vani (Addl. DME) for successfully restoring her health and preventing future complications through this rare surgical intervention.

## Distinguished Civic Leader Felicitated at Suvidya High School.

“P.S.ASHOKAN“KARIMNAGAR BUREAU. “Karimnagar: Under the aegis of the management of Suvidya High School, a ceremonial felicitation was accorded to Burra Ramesh Goud, following his recent election as the Sarpanch of Irukulla village. “In his address to the gathering, Mr. Ramesh Goud underscored the pivotal



role of discipline, perseverance, and integrity in attaining both academic excellence and personal fulfillment. He exhorted students to remain steadfast in their educational pursuits, shun detrimental habits, and cultivate values that earn respect and distinction for their families and the wider community. “As part of the programme, meritorious students were honoured with prizes in recognition of their exemplary achievements during the Mathematics Day celebrations organised by the school. “The event was graced by Mattathil Babu, School Correspondent; Seshu Mani, Academic In-charge; Madhu Kumar, Principal; and Sankari Shekhar, former Director of the Durshed Agricultural Committee, along with members of the teaching faculty and students.

## Inter-State Ganja Racket Busted by Adilabad Police

“Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, January 8 (Indian Chronicle) “Adilabad Rural: The Adilabad district police have busted an inter-state ganja trafficking racket, seizing 5.231 kilograms of dry ganja and arresting four accused, while one key suspect remains absconding. “Addressing a media conference at the AR Headquarters on Thursday, Superintendent of Police Akhil Mahajan said the police are



maintaining round-the-clock surveillance to completely curb the illegal transportation and sale of ganja across the district. “Acting on credible intelligence, police intercepted three two-wheelers near the cremation ground in Indervelli mandal on January 7, and seized the contraband being transported in small quantities to evade detection. The seized ganja is estimated to be worth ₹1.30 lakh. “The arrested accused were identified as Bassi Santosh, Syed Sabir (26), Jawade Shankar (28), and

Sheikh Khaja (54). Another suspect, Atrum Badirao, is currently absconding. “Police officials stated that the gang deliberately adopted the method of transporting ganja in small consignments on two-wheelers to avoid routine checks. Following increased surveillance on suspicious movements over the past few days, Indervelli police gathered precise inputs and conducted a well-timed operation, leading to the arrests. “A detailed investigation is underway to trace the source of the ganja, financial transactions, and the wider supply network, the SP added. “The media interaction was attended by Utnoor Additional SP Kajal Singh, Utnoor CI M. Prasad, SI Sayanna, and other police personnel.



# Explained | The push to bring the private sector into mineral exploration

The story so far: On August 2, Parliament passed the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023, in a bid to attract private sector investment in the exploration of critical and deep-seated minerals in the country. The Bill puts six minerals, including lithium — used in electric vehicle batteries and other energy storage solutions — into a list of “critical and strategic” minerals. The exploration and mining of these six minerals, previously classified as atomic minerals, were restricted to government-owned entities.

How much of its critical and deep-seated minerals does India import?

The Russian invasion of Ukraine over the past year has made it clear more than ever how global supply chains of a range of commodities are vulnerable to shocks leading to a lack of availability and skyrocketing prices. A variety of minerals, besides those used in creating fuel, are crucial to a country's manufacturing, infrastructure, and advancement. Moreover, the clean energy transitions of countries including India, seeking to meet their net-zero emission goals, are contingent on the availability of critical minerals such as lithium, which has also been called ‘white gold’, and others including cobalt, graphite, and rare earth elements (REEs). These are also crucial for the manufacture of semiconductors used in smart electronics; defence and aerospace equipment; telecommunication technologies and so on. A World Bank study suggests that the demand for critical metals such as lithium (Li) and cobalt is expected to rise by nearly 500% by 2050.

The lack of availability of such minerals or the concentration of their extraction or processing in a few geographical locations leads to import dependency, supply chain vulnerabilities, and even disruption of their supplies. For instance, China has majority ownership of cobalt mines in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where 70% of the world's cobalt is mined. China also has by far the largest amount of reserves of Rare Earth Elements (REEs) of any country in the world, followed by Vietnam, Brazil and Russia; it produces of 65% of the world's REEs, which are crucial in making wind turbines, solar panels etc. India, meanwhile, has 6% of the world's rare earth reserves but it only produces 1% of global output. Major economies including the United States, United Kingdom, and European Union in the recent past have moved to secure supply-chain resilience for such minerals and to reduce reliance for their availability on countries like China. This has been done by way of the Mineral Security Partnership (MSP), which India became party to this year. Countries like the U.S., Australia, Japan, and the EU bloc have also created lists of critical minerals based on their specific economic needs and the supply risk of the minerals.

The Ministry of Mines, in June this year, came out with a list of 30 minerals critical to the country's economic development and national security. However, India is highly dependent on imports for a majority of minerals on this list. For instance, as per figures quoted by the Minis-

try, India is 100% import-dependent on countries including China, Russia, Australia, South Africa, and the U.S. for the supply of critical minerals like lithium, cobalt, nickel, niobium, beryllium, and tantalum. In the case of lithium, for instance, India's imports were worth \$22.15 million in 2021-2022. As for the finished product lithium-ion batteries used in electric vehicles, a report by Fortune India notes that India imported 5,486.18 lakh units of lithium-ion batteries, spending \$1,791.35 million. Also for deep-seated minerals like gold, silver, copper, zinc, lead, nickel, cobalt, platinum group elements (PGEs) and diamonds, which are difficult and expensive to explore and mine as compared to surficial or bulk minerals, India depends largely on imports. For instance, in 2022-23, India imported close to 12 lakh tonnes of copper (and its concentrates) worth over Rs. 27,000 crore as per official figures. It imported 32,298.21 tonnes of Nickel worth Rs. 6,549.34 crore.

Why is private sector participation needed for the exploration of critical and deep-seated minerals?

Studies by organisations such as the Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research and the Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CESP) note that India's unique geological and tectonic setting is conducive to hosting potential mineral resources and that its geological history similar to the mining-rich regions of Western Australia and Eastern Africa. However, the primary step to discovering mineral resources and eventually finding economically viable reserves is mineral exploration, which comes in various stages before mining. With each stage of mineral exploration, starting from reconnaissance (preliminary survey to determine mineral resources), followed by prospecting (exploring, locating, or proving mineral deposits), and detailed exploration (estimating of mineral ore and grade), the knowledge of about mineral's availability improves. The stages of exploration are also divided as per the United Nations Framework for Classification of Resources into G4 (Reconnaissance), G3 (Prospecting), G2 (General Exploration), and G1. Notably, it is estimated that India has explored just 10% of its Obvious Geological Potential (OGP), less than 2% of which is mined and the country spends less than 1% of the global mineral exploration budget. Not many significant mineral discoveries have taken place in the country in the last couple of decades and a majority of exploration projects have been carried out by the government agency Geological Survey of India and other PSUs like Mineral Exploration Corporation Limited (MECL), with very little private sector participation. India's mining policy had kept greenfield exploration of minerals out of the purview of private-sector explorers for some years which meant they could only get licences to further prospect and mine resources that had been explored by a government entity. Companies also saw a lack of adequate incentives.

Exploration requires techniques like aerial surveys, geological mapping, and



geochemical analyses and is a highly specialised, time-intensive and monetarily risky operation with less than 1% of explored projects becoming commercially viable mines. Union Minister of Mines Prahlad Joshi pointed out that while Indian PSUs were in a relatively better position to explore surficial and bulk minerals like coal and iron ore, they had not fared well when it came to deep-seated and critical minerals owing to the high expenditure and long duration of risky projects while being under pressure to increase the supply of bulk minerals. He mentioned that the new Bill seeks to bring exploration processes in India at par with that of developed countries by getting private sector capacity into exploration, giving the example of Australia. In Australia and multiple other jurisdictions globally, private mining firms called junior explorers, engage in risk-taking by putting their expertise and limited financials into explorations to find potential mines. Once discovered, these private companies can sell these to bigger mining companies who then develop and run these mines. This helps multiply exploration projects and accelerate the pace of exploration owing to private participation.

Has India's existing mining policy been conducive to private participation?

The MMDR Act 1957, the primary legislation governing mining in the country has been amended several times since its enactment including recently in 2015, 2020, and 2021. A CSEP discussion from June this year notes that India recognised the need for private and foreign investment in the mining sector including mineral exploration back in 1993, amending the Act next year to allow interested parties to apply for mineral concessions through a First Come First Served (FCFS) basis. Later, private companies could also get Prospecting Licences (PL) or Mining Leases (ML), and could even apply for early-stage or greenfield exploration through Reconnaissance Permits (RPs). Holders of RPs or PLs were also given the preferential right to get a PL or ML respectively. This encouraged Private investment in the sector between 1993 and 2011, with companies including Rio Tinto India, Hindustan Zinc, and De Beers India, engaging in exploration projects for diamonds, zinc, copper, and base and bulk metals. A Brookings paper notes, however, that mineral explo-

ration in the country halted almost completely after 2010 as none of the states issued RPs and PLs to any company. In the early 2010s, as the mining industry seemed to be gathering momentum, concerns about favouritism and misuse started coming up in the allocation of 2G spectrum and natural resources like coal blocks and the Supreme Court intervened. The Court ruled in 2012 that the FCFS method of resource allocation was vulnerable to manipulation, favouritism, and misuse, asking the government to adopt a transparent and reasonable method. It noted that an auction which was duly published and fair would be the best method for resource distribution. It also held later that auctions were not the only available method and the test for an efficient method should be that it is “fair, reasonable, non-discriminatory, transparent, non-capricious, unbiased, and without favouritism or nepotism, in pursuit of promoting healthy competition and equitable treatment”.

In 2015, the MMDR Act was amended so that private companies could get either Mining Leases or Composite Licences (CLs) which are prospecting licence-cum-mining leases, through government auctions. However, owing to the usage of the Evidence of Mineral content (EMT) rule to keep the process fair, only projects whose early-stage exploration was already done by the government could be auctioned, meaning the private sector was once again kept out. However, the amendment also allowed private firms to get registered as exploration agencies and get funding for G4 to G1 levels of exploration from the authority called the National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET) with an incentive of 10% of the approved costs reimbursed. However, this also did not attract significant private-sector participation. In all, the NMET approved 118 projects for G4 exploration and just one was carried out by a private agency.

How does the Mines and Minerals Bill 2023 aim to encourage private players?

Firstly, The Bill omits at least six previously mentioned atomic minerals from a list of 12 which cannot be commercially mined. Being on the atomic minerals list, the exploration and mining of these six-lithium, beryllium, niobium, titanium, tantalum, and zirconium, was previously reserved for government entities.



# Torn between protests and judicial reforms, Israel seeks a way forward

, Knesset legislators approved the first Bill in a package of upcoming judicial reforms, nullifying the 'reasonability' clause in a 64-0 vote, after the 56 members of the Opposition boycotted the vote. Leading up to the vote, protests reached a boiling point outside the Knesset, as protest leaders declared that they had blocked all entrances to the Parliament compound and wouldn't allow the vote, a claim immediately denied by the Israel Police. The reasonability clause was legal terminology introduced in its current form to the Israeli Supreme Court by Justice Aharon Barak to strike down administrative decisions deemed beyond the pale in terms of reasonable judgement, even if they did not contradict any written letter of law. A parallel legal clause exists in England and Singapore.

Critics deemed this an aggravated judicial overreach, as judges could thus declare Ministers incapable of decision-making. Two noted critics, Justice Noam Solberg and Justice Alex Stein, currently sit on the Supreme Court. Most of the legal establishment uncompromisingly rejects the legal reform proposals in their current form. After voting, Minister of Finance Bezalel Smotrich issued a statement denouncing the protesters: "This was a violent siege on the Knesset, an attempt to prevent Members of Knesset (MK) from fulfilling their legal right and duty to vote. This was not an expression of democracy; it was our moment of storming Capitol Hill... The Left is not democratic for a long time now, and the Right is attempting to restore democracy to Israel."

After the Bill passed, more angry protesters took to the streets, blocking causeways in Tel Aviv and central junctions countrywide. In Kfar Saba, an angry driver accelerated and ploughed through a group of protesters that was blocking his route, injuring three. In another viral video, a young mother shouted at protesters blocking her car. Moments later, they had shattered her back windshield over her three little children in the backseat.

At night, Israel Medical Association declared a doctor's strike for the next day, citing concerns of political intervention in their work. Labour Court dismissed the concerns as theoretical and issued an order to promptly end the strike. Israel's labour laws stipulate that workers are required to provide a two-week notice prior to exercising their right to strike. The strike, which begun in the morning and stretched on for seven hours, left patients — who had major medical procedures postponed indefinitely after waiting in queue for months — reportedly furious. All major newspapers featured a black front page on Tuesday morning. The small print stated that it was an ad paid for by hi-tech industry leaders. The hardest blow landed with the evening, as Moody's Investors Services issued a special report downgrading Israel's economic forecast from Positive to Stable, citing the reforms as a sign that "Israel's governance has deteriorated". Concerns included risk of a constitutional crisis between the executive and judiciary, and possible security risks due to threats

from pilots to stop reporting for training. Game of cat and mouse

Dr. Yehudah Yifrah, legal correspondent at the Makor Rishon weekly, pointed out that the Bill passed on Monday will probably have no effect on the Supreme Court. In a recent verdict, Chief Justice Esther Hayut invoked the "Test of Narrow Proportionality" in a manner identical to Reasonability. In short, the game of cat and mouse between the judiciary and the executive will continue unhindered. The reason the government began legislating the sweeping reforms with the reasonability clause is because it was deemed negligible. — Chief Justice Barak is on record saying, in an interview with Mr. Yifrah from 2019, that he saw no problem in modifying it. Opposition leader MK Yair Lapid had stated the same from the Knesset podium. However, both voiced uncompromising opposition to any reforms. Justice Minister Yariv Levin and MK Simha Rothman introduced the reform proposals after the January elections. Both have been writing with strong conviction against ever-increasing judicial overreach since its historical moment of conception when, in 1992, Chief Justice Barak declared his "constitutional revolution", implying that Israel had a judiciable constitution even if no official constitution was ever drafted. Mr. Levin's reforms were drafted in cooperation with the Kohelet Policy Forum, whose mission statement supports "individual liberty and free-markets, [and] Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people and representative democracy". Another faction supports reforms out of personal or communal interest. These are the ultra-Orthodox, who view the Supreme Court as a bastion of militant secularism dedicated to destroying their lifestyle. Their immediate concern was the court's prolonged effort to annul their exemption from mandatory conscription. Equally conspicuous are individuals like MK David Amsalem, whose priority is to unshackle legal constraints on extensive cronyism in senior public office. Support for protests

Anti-reform leadership is personified by Shikma Bressler, a particle physicist and member of the 'Black Flags' political activists who organised attempts to topple PM Benjamin Netanyahu's 2020 government. When the reforms appeared, her movement rebranded itself with a dramatic escalation in rhetoric. She tweets regularly about mass no-show ultimatums among fighter pilots and elite tech units, claims which Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesmen say are false. The protests do enjoy widespread support from multiple sectors in Israel. Numerous former security establishment leaders, as well as a majority of the economic and academic establishment, have thrown their weight behind the cause. Ms. Bressler's cohorts are powerful elites who view themselves as high performers supporting the backward, unproductive sectors who support the Netanyahu government. Mr. Netanyahu's voters see them as an extractive elite running an unaccountable deep state. They point to the fact that no anti-reform protester has been prosecuted as proof that they are held to be above the law. Protests escalated rap-



idly, blocking major traffic arteries, train tracks and, briefly, even Israel's only international airport. Slogans decried the "End of Democracy" and "Dictatorship", and weekly "Disruption Day" protests swept up mainstream leftists who genuinely believe that the Supreme Court is the last line of defence for civil liberties they hold dear. 'No compromise'

Some, like Ms. Bressler, are ardent secularists for whom the court embodies a civil religion. Their choice slogans warn of theocracy. And compromise is considered blasphemy. This mindset is one reason that high-profile attempts at compromise have failed, as opposition parliamentarians can't be seen as negotiating catastrophe. The passionate demonstrators firmly believe their efforts will see their names being etched in the annals of history as the saviours of Israeli democracy. However, many

disagree with the protest's ends and means. Assaf Malach is a political philosopher organising academics who support the reforms. This led to a public feud with a leading Israeli sociologist declaring that Mr. Malach was "no longer my brother but my enemy". As the Bill passed, Mr. Malach posted on Facebook about his dissolution with protesters: "The Left is in state of aggressive, violent psychosis... Endangering the IDF and national defence for reasons not remotely connected to any doctrine of conscientious objection on the Left or Right... Doctors abandoning patients... People knowingly and intentionally harming the Israeli economy... Any legitimate fears can't justify this anti-democratic behaviour... Their claims are primarily a rationalisation of anguish over their historical loss of control of selected bastions of power and losing the elections."

## Development underway: X creating feature to sort posts on user profiles

San Francisco: Elon Musk -owned X is working on a new feature that will allow users to sort posts on someone's profile. A screenshot posted by Andrea Conway, a designer at X, suggests that the feature will allow users to sort posts by 'Most recent', 'Most liked', or 'Most engaged with'. "This will be cool," Musk commented.

Conway didn't specify when the feature will roll out publicly, or if it will be limited to X Premium subscribers. Several users expressed their thoughts on Conway's post.

When one user asked, "Sweet!! Still adding comment sorting?", Conway replied: "yep!" In response to another post suggesting that a time frame would be helpful as well, she said: "baby steps bestie".

Last week, the Musk-run company had announced that paid subscribers can choose to hide their checkmarks on accounts. While the checkmark will be hidden on users' profile and posts, the checkmark might still appear in some places and some features could still reveal



that they have an active subscription. Some features might not be available while the checkmark is hidden.

"We will continue to evolve this feature to make it better for you," the social media platform added. Users can access the option to hide the checkmark from the 'Profile customization' section of account settings. Also, Musk had denied a report that claimed that the company planned to launch its own stock trading platform. When a user posted, "JUST IN: Twitter/X is planning to launch its own stock trading platform, per XNewsDaily." Musk denied the report and said, "No work is being done on this to the best of my knowledge."



# The survey of Gyanvapi Mosque: Scientific limitations, Political implications

On August 4, the Supreme Court of India directed the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to conduct a detailed non-invasive survey of the Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh to determine if the mosque was built atop a temple. As the matter has significant political implications, it is important to understand the working principles of the scientific methods used in such surveys, their abilities, and their limitations. Archaeology has, due to the ever-increasing social and legal complexities that it found itself confronting, embraced modern scientific methods, including physics, molecular biology, geology, and anthropology. Archaeological investigations are normally performed in open spaces, along with excavation, where scientists have the option to use both ground and airborne systems to identify and test targets. Non-invasive methods in the present case, since the investigation is being undertaken inside a built structure, and no excavation is permitted, experts — geophysicists in particular — must depend on non-invasive methods of earth-scanning.

The methods routinely used in archaeological prospecting are adapted from those applied in geophysical mapping. They may be active or passive. Active methods inject energy into the ground and measure the response of the buried target at the surface. They include seismic and electromagnetic techniques. Passive methods, such as magnetometry and gravity surveying, simply measure existing physical properties. In both cases, the methods provide an estimate of the ground's material properties, such as density, electrical resistance, and wave velocity. They are then interpreted in terms of the possible nature and geometry of the target. In the case of Gyanvapi, the scientists could be looking for the distinct physical properties of sub-surface material constituting the structure.

Many earth materials could have the same physical property and generate the same response on the surface, leading to ambiguity in interpretation. In response, geophysicists use multiple methods and different physical properties of the earth's materials to arrive at a reasonable characterisation of the target. It is expected of those involved in the survey to have considered this. Media reports have suggested that the ASI will use ground-penetrating radar (GPR) to produce a 3-D model of buried archaeological features. GPR operates by introducing a short radar impulse from a surface antenna and recording both the time and magnitude of return signals reflected by the property contrasts in the subsoil. Significant improvements in instrumentation have allowed large amounts of digital data to be collected along closely spaced parallel paths for detailed analysis and imaging. Fact check round-up | Misinformation on Gyanvapi mosque survey

Because the radar beam spreads out in a cone from the transmitter — similar to a smoke ring — the buried object will reflect part of the beam before the antenna passes directly over it. In such a situation, a part of the signal may bear little relation

to the physical dimensions of the subsurface target and create false images. An important aspect of the geophysical survey is to infer physical parameters from the complex and voluminous data acquired. This requires a good understanding of physical processes and powerful data analyses and modelling programs to generate reliable 3D images. Since the archaeological object under investigation is made of heterogeneous materials with complex geometry, this object is simplified in the form of a representative model with well-defined and finite parameters.

In general, the laws of physics provide the means to compute some data given a computational model. Only in the ideal case does an exact theory exist that prescribes how the data should be transformed in order to reproduce the model. In most cases, including the survey being conducted by ASI, the mathematical framework assumes that infinite and noise-free data will be available.

A point to note However, as the data will always be limited and have measurement errors, it may not be possible to estimate, in a unique and stable manner, the spatial distribution of physical property in the subsurface. As a result, supplementary information needs to be incorporated. This has the potential to produce meaningless results. This is well-recorded in the geo-



physical literature and graduate-level textbooks. Even data from sophisticated lunar penetrating radar systems analysed by different authors and published in different journals, have reported contradictory interpretations.

Despite its inability to reconstruct the images of targets in the best possible manner, geophysical tools have a high success rate in resource exploration. But in the case of a failure or partial success during the exploration of natural resources, the loss is merely financial. On the other hand, a 'temple versus mosque' problem is another

matter entirely, involving emotional and sentimental issues and with long-term societal and political implications. In such cases, nothing should be left to chance. GPR or any other geophysical method has limited abilities, and its findings must be interpreted within these contours. During data analysis, interpreting, and decision-making, experts as well as the people need to bear this in mind. Shyam S. Rai is a former Professor and Chair in the Department of Earth and Climate Science, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Pune, where he continues to serve as an emeritus professor

## India, a marvel that continues to endure

Our nation, a mosaic of religious, ethnic, linguistic and cultural plurality, celebrates its modern rebirth today. This journey has been filled with love and hate, pain and joy, and highs and lows. And yet we march on. Our tryst with destiny continues. In 1947, the western world gave only a little chance for India to survive as a democracy. How would India feed itself? How would a country so diverse remain integrated? How would a largely illiterate population function as a democracy?

The East is awakening What the West failed to realise then was a reawakening of a civilisation with a cultural history that dates back millennia. In the 21st century, as western civilisations decline, an epoch is fading. And in its place the civilisations of the east, finally unshackled from the chains of bondage, are awakening.

The journey of modern India has not been without its ebbs and flows. What the West considered our Achilles heel, i.e., our diversity, has proven to be India's greatest strength. South and west India became the manufacturing hubs of the country, the east its resource repository, and the north its bread basket. The founding fathers of our republic had the foresight to establish a constitutional scheme which harnessed the power of our diversity. Secularism, feder-

alism, universal franchise, and the freedom of speech and religion created a spirit of fairness and justice that accommodated our linguistic, regional, religious divides under the rule of law. Consequently, India engineered the green and white revolutions. We reached the stars and split the atom. We fought wars for moral reasons. Our Constitution continues to endure.

Hurdles to overcome There have been stumbles along the way. Communal majoritarianism has reared its ugly head time and again. We continue to pay the toll for our original sin — the caste system and its poisonous inequities. While great strides have been made since Independence to achieve political, social and economic freedom, true social and economic equality eludes us.

Extreme poverty and a social marginalisation of minorities persist. The potential of the daughters of India remains trapped in the absence of a gender-equal society. The north-east remains distant from our hearts and minds and must be integrated to the mainland in spirit. Attempts to homogenise the Indian identity are gaining ground. But my faith in our ability as a people to overcome these challenges remains steadfast, because at our core we are a just, spiritual and peace-loving

people. We are the children of Buddha and Ashoka, Ambedkar and Gandhi, Thiruvalluvar and Periyar. Democracy and freedom require constant vigil. If and when state power becomes tyrannical, every Indian must possess the courage and will to rise. Our non-violent freedom movement brought down a racist colonial empire by unleashing the innate power that resides in the masses. The Indian polity must always imbibe its national consciousness and spirit with equality, justice and fairness towards each other. We owe this to our forefathers who made the ultimate sacrifice to achieve Independence. Today, as technological advancements usher in knowledge democratisation, we can finally fulfil Babu's dream of achieving Village Swaraj. Imagine the day when every village is self-sustaining, state institutions and infrastructure are capable of unleashing the potential of our demographic dividend, and Indian culture dominates the global zeitgeist. The India of my dreams I dream of an India where no child is born in poverty or goes to sleep hungry. I dream of an India whose universities such as Nalanda are the intellectual centres of the world again. I dream of an India whose cultural, spiritual and economic prowess reignites a race from the West to reach its shores.