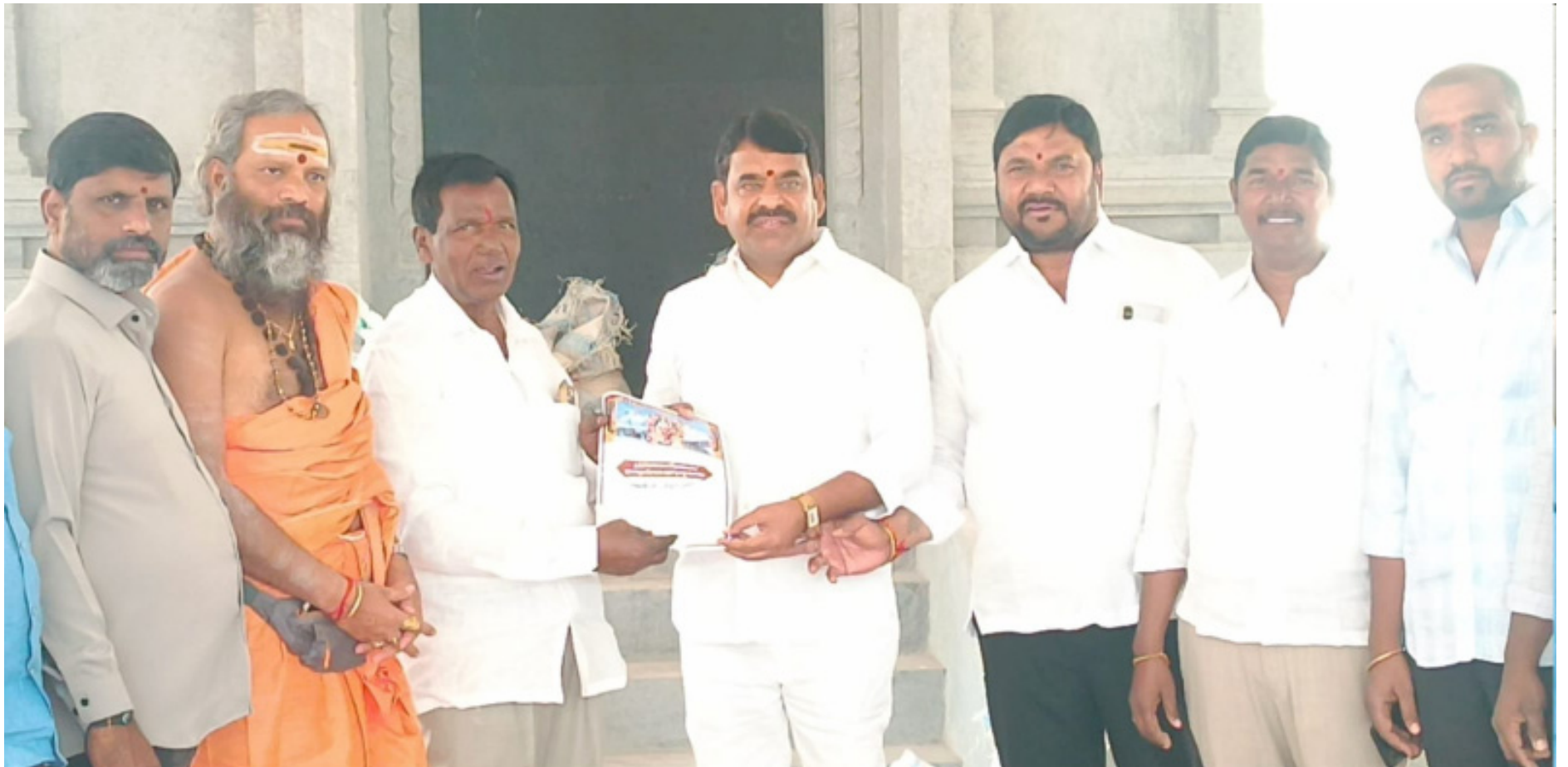


## Singireddy Padma Reddy Donates Rs 2.16 Lakh for Sri Sitaramanjaneya Swamy Temple Reconstruction



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 11, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):““Boduppall: Reconstruction works of the historic Sri Sitaramanjaneya Swamy Temple under the GHMC Boduppall Circle are progressing at a brisk pace. In support of the temple renovation, former Boduppall

Corporator Singireddy Padma Reddy donated ₹2,16,000 towards the construction works. The cheque was handed over to Temple Chairman Bobbala Lakshma Reddy during a brief programme held on the temple premises. Speaking on the occasion, Singireddy Padma Reddy expressed happiness at being part of the reconstruction of one

of Boduppall's oldest temples. She said it was a privilege to contribute to the sacred cause and wished that the blessings of Sri Sitaramanjaneya Swamy be upon all residents. Temple Chairman Bobbala Lakshma Reddy thanked Singireddy Padma Reddy for the generous contribution and stated that the support of donors has been crucial in expediting the reconstruction works. On be-

half of the temple committee, he conveyed gratitude for the financial assistance. Senior Congress leaders Danagalla Yadagiri, Kotta Kiran Goud, Bal Reddy, Satyamurthy Prabhakar Reddy, Keerthan Reddy, Srihari, temple committee members and others were present at the programme.

## Man Reported Missing in Medipally Police Station Limits



““NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 11, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):““A 43-year-old man has been reported missing under the limits of Medipally Police Station. The missing person has been identified as Motupalli Kiran, a resident of West Balaji Hills, Medipally. According to the complaint filed by his father, Motupalli Prapannachari, Kiran is the youngest of three sons. He works as a priest and is married with two children. On February 10, 2026, Kiran performed ???? at a temple in Tarnaka and returned home. At around 12:00 noon, after taking a bath, he informed family members that he would step out briefly and left the house without his mobile phone. However, he did not return home thereafter. Family members searched in nearby areas but were unable to trace him. Following this, a complaint was lodged at Medipally Police Station. A missing case has been registered and investigation is underway. Anyone with information regarding his whereabouts is requested to contact Medipally Police Station immediately.

# Heavy Police Deployment at Polling Stations; 64.32% Turnout Recorded in Kagaznagar

“Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 11, “Municipal elections in Kagaznagar were conducted peacefully on Wednesday. A total of 85 polling stations were set up across 30 wards under the municipal limits, with necessary arrangements made to ensure that voters faced no inconvenience. “District Election Officer and Collector K. Haritha, along with local officials, visited several polling stations to review the polling process and assess the percentage of voter turnout. She issued necessary instructions to officials to ensure smooth conduct of the elections. “The polling process in Kagaznagar proceeded in a calm and orderly atmosphere. Heavy police deployment was arranged at polling stations to prevent any untoward incidents. Continuous surveillance was maintained at all polling centres until the conclusion of voting, ensuring that the elections were completed peacefully and efficiently. “District Superintendent of Police Nitika Panth personally inspected all municipal polling stations in the town from the early hours of the morning. In addition, nine striking force teams and ten route mobile vehicles conducted regular patrols around polling stations and surrounding areas to closely monitor the situation. “According to election officials, a voter turnout of 64.32 percent was recorded by the end of polling.



## Sports Winners Honoured at School's 39th Foundation Day celebration



“Indian Chronicle“Secunderabad, February 11: “The 39th Foundation Day of Sri Sai Vidyalayam was celebrated with enthusiasm. As part of the celebrations, the second phase of prize distribution was organized to honour the sports winners of Classes 9 and 10. “Secunderabad MLA T. Padma Rao Goud attended the programme as the chief guest and distributed awards and certificates to the winners. Speaking on the occasion, he appreciated the students for their performance in sports and encouraged them to participate actively in extracurricular activities along with academics. He stated that sports help in building discipline, confidence, and team spirit among students. “Senior teachers were also felicitated with mementoes in recognition of their dedicated service to the institution. “On the occasion, the MLA and local corporators were felicitated by the school management as a mark of respect and gratitude for their support towards educational activities. “Correspondent K.S. Venkatesh and Academic Director K. Sudha Madhavi thanked the chief guest and other dignitaries for their presence and support. The programme concluded in a joyful atmosphere with the participation of students, parents, and staff members.

## Rangopalpet Division Developed in All Aspects

### “No Question of Leaving BJP: Cheera Suchitra Srikanth

“Indian Chronicle“Secunderabad, February 11: “Former BJP Corporator of Rangopalpet Division, Cheera Suchitra Srikanth, stated that unprecedented development works were carried out in the division with the blessings of Sri Ujjaini Mahankali Ammavari. She said significant progress was achieved over the past five years with the support of the public, officials, party leaders, and party workers. “Addressing the media on Wednesday at the BJP office in Pan Bazaar, she detailed the development activities undertaken during her tenure. She said that lighting works worth Rs. 50 crore were taken up at Sanjeevaiah Park with Central Government funds. She also mentioned that several development works were carried out with Rs. 1 crore from the funds of Union Minister and MP G. Kishan Reddy. In addition, nearly Rs. 40 crore worth of development works were executed with support from the State Government. “She stated that major issues faced by local residents, including drainage problems, were addressed. Modernization of the community hall, desilting of drains, construction of drinking water and drainage pipelines, installation of street lights, construction of retaining walls, and laying of roads were among the works completed. She added that new roads were constructed at 36 locations with an expenditure of Rs. 15 crore. “Cheera Suchitra Srikanth further said that several service activities were undertaken with her personal funds. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she organized annadanam (free food distribution) for 15 days and extended assistance to the needy. Essential commodities were distributed free of cost. Books and school bags were provided to school and college students, and scholarships were awarded to meritorious students. “She expressed happiness that during her tenure as corporator, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath visited Sri Ujjaini Mahankali Temple located within the division. “Clarifying her political stand, she asserted that there is no question of leaving the BJP, describing the party as being like a mother to her. She expressed confidence that the party would once again give her an opportunity to contest as corporator. However, she made it clear that even if denied a ticket, she would contest as a BJP rebel candidate. “Senior BJP leaders S.R. Mallesh, Cheera Satyanarayana (Srikanth), Madan, Ashwini, Nirmala, Praveen, Gopi Kishan, and other party leaders and workers were present at the meeting.



# Municipal Election Polling Concludes Peacefully Across Telangana

## Chief minister Anumula Revanth Reddy Voted in Kodangal muncioality

## Chief Whip Parnam Mahender Reddy Voted along with his Son at Tandur muncioality.



“Indian Chronicle, Tandur, Babar (Feb, 11) “Polling for municipal elections across Telangana officially concluded today. Voting commenced at 7:00 AM and continued uninterrupted until 5:00 PM. Voters still waiting in queues at the closing time were allowed to cast their ballots. “Across the state’s 7 Corporations and 116 Municipalities, citizens enthusiastically exercised their right to vote. Except for a few isolated minor incidents, the entire process remained largely peaceful. “Major political parties campaigned aggressively — leaders traded barbs, heating up the political atmosphere. Now, the fate of candidates rests sealed inside ballot boxes. “Key Election Statistics: “- Total wards across 116 municipalities: 2,582” - 12 wards — candidates elected unopposed” - Polling held in 2,569 wards “- Total wards across 7 Corporations: 414” - 2 wards — elected unopposed” - Voters cast ballots in 412 wards “- Vikarabad District Voter Turnout: “Officials announced overall turnout across four municipalities: 71.82% “- Kodangal (12 wards): 75.81% “- Parigi (18 wards): 77.10% “- Tandur (36 wards): 67.54% “- Vikarabad (32 wards): 74.35% “- High-Profile Voters: “- Chief Minister Anumula Revanth Reddy voted in Gundlankunta Ward, Kodangal Municipality — his home constituency. “- State Govt Chief Whip Patnam Mahender Reddy voted along with his son Kartik Reddy at Junior School polling station, Ward 27, Tandur. “- Tandur MLA Buyyani Manohar Reddy, along with his family and Congress candidate Neeraja Bal Reddy, voted at Krishnaveni School, Ward 12. “- Tandur Election Highlights: “Despite scattered minor incidents, voting proceeded peacefully. “- MLA Manohar Reddy, Buyyani Srinivas Reddy, former MLA Pilot Rohith Reddy (BRS), and Dr. Sampath Kumar monitored voting across all 36 wards. “- MLA Manohar Reddy claimed: “> “All 36 Congress candidates will win by massive margins. Tandur Municipality will fall into Congress hands — we’ll hoist the Congress flag! “- Buyyani Srinivas Reddy (RBOL CEO) added: “> “Congress will win 26 wards. Tandur will see the Congress flag flying high. “- Former MLA Pilot Rohith Reddy (BRS) said: “> “BRS is certain to win the Tandur Chairman seat. “- Dr. Sampath Kumar (BRS) expressed hope: “> “BRS candidates will win 22 seats in Tandur. “- Vote Counting: “Counting of votes will begin on February 13 at 8:00 AM.

# Peaceful Conclusion of Municipal Elections in Medchal–Malkajgiri District;

## Record 83.99% Voter Turnout

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 11, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): “The municipal elections in Ellampet, Moodu Chinthalapally, and Aliabad municipalities of Medchal–Malkajgiri district concluded peacefully with an impressive voter turnout of 83.99 percent. District Collector



Manu Choudhary stated that polling was conducted in a calm and orderly manner without any untoward incidents. Voters participated enthusiastically, exercising their franchise in large numbers, resulting in a record turnout. Following the completion of polling, the ballot boxes were transported under tight security arrangements to designated strong rooms.



The storage process was carried out under the supervision of District Collector Manu Choudhary along with General Election Observer Nirmal Kanti Wesley, ensuring full transparency and security. The Collector expressed appreciation to the election staff and police personnel for their coordinated efforts in conducting the elections smoothly and maintaining law and order throughout the process.

# OVERCOMING THE EMOTIONAL TOLL OF INSULINISATION: EXPERTS CALL FOR INNOVATION-BACKED AWARENESS TO ADDRESS INDIA'S DIABETES MANAGEMENT BARRIERS

Vijayawada

Cipla has launched #InhaleTheChange, a nationwide awareness initiative featuring Bollywood actress Raveena Tandon, aimed at addressing the emotional and behavioural hurdles associated with insulin therapy. Diabetes continues to be one of India's most pressing public health challenges, contributing significantly to long-term illness and loss of life. With over 10 crore Indians living with the disease and the country often called the 'diabetes capital of the world', it's concerning that only 27.5% are aware of their condition and just 7% have their blood sugar under control. These numbers highlight not just clinical challenges, but the daily struggles of patients who delay or abandon treatment due to fear, stigma, or lack of awareness of their condition and options available.

Highlighting the need to address these real-life barriers, Dr. Y. Aiswarya, Consultant Endocrinologist, said:

"Insulin is essential for people living with type 1 diabetes and becomes a critical therapy for many with type 2 diabetes. Yet, everyday barriers like fear of injections, complex routines, and social discomfort often stop patients from starting or sticking with treatment. While newer insulin delivery options offer practical solutions, what truly makes a difference is combining these advances with patient-first communication and support. Campaigns like #InhaleTheChange create space for open dialogue—helping patients feel heard, informed, and empowered."

Insulin is one of the most effective therapies for managing diabetes, especially for people with type 1 diabetes and many with type 2 diabetes. Yet, for many, staying consistent with treatment can be challenging—not due to a lack of awareness or intent, but because of the emotional and practical toll of daily management. Studies show that fear, stress, forgetfulness, embarrassment, and difficulties around routine or privacy often lead to skipped or delayed doses. These barriers highlight the need for care approaches that go beyond clinical outcomes to also consider patient experience, acceptance, and quality of life. Through #InhaleTheChange, Cipla seeks to spotlight these challenges and foster informed, stigma-free conversations that support patient choice and confidence.

**Disclaimer:** This information is only for general awareness and is neither intended nor expected to promote, use, or endorse any product or encourage use of medicines in any way nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice nor for diagnosis or treatment/cure of any medical condition. The views expressed are independent opinion based on studies from validated qualified sources. Your discretion must be exercised before using the information for consulting doctor. Please consult your doctor/Registered Medical Practitioner before starting any treatment/medicine/ inhaler. This is being used only as a reference to create awareness and is NOT an advertisement.



**Cipla**

## DIABETICS CAN FINALLY INHALE THE CHANGE

For years, diabetes care meant one thing—needles. Daily pricks, constant reminders, and the same old routine. But now, a revolution is here. An easier, smarter, needle-free way to take insulin—through an inhaler.

No more hesitation, no more fear. Just the freedom to live life on your terms.

Talk to your doctor today!



Scan the QR code to learn more.

# Darkness descends on Bastar

There is a shop called Tea and Coffee at the centre of Bijapur, a city in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region, nearly 400 kilometres from Raipur. It is enveloped in the aroma of freshly brewed ginger tea. Bubbling saucepans fuel conversations at what was once the Old Bus Stand. In the shopping complex that now stands here, one unit is shuttered, opening only occasionally. Just 10 days ago, it would burst into life around 10 a.m. every day, with a steady stream of visitors from across the country. Tea and Coffee owner Kapil Jhadi was kept busy with orders here. "Journalists, politicians, social workers in remote villages, even policemen in uniform, would come," Jhadi says.

But that was before January 1, the day Mukesh Chandrakar, 33, who occupied the space as an office, disappeared. On January 3, Mukesh's body was found in a septic tank, about 3 km from here. A journalist who began the YouTube news channel 'Bastar Junction' — which now has 1.59 lakh subscribers — Mukesh had run a report on the poor condition of a road in Bijapur. Police say he was murdered by three brothers, all construction contractors, Mukesh's distant relatives: Suresh Chandrakar, Dinesh Chandrakar, and Ritesh Chandrakar. The three, and Mahendra Ramteke, an employee, were taken into custody. Soon after people heard the news of Mukesh's murder, there was an outpouring of emotion on X, with journalists from across India speaking about how he was the go-to person for anything related to the Naxal-prone region. There were also conversations on how grassroots journalists never got their place in the sun, and about their safety. Memorial meetings were held, from Raipur to New Delhi. For Jhadi, who followed his work, "His reports touched the core issues of interior Bijapur and the whole of the Bastar region." Mukesh, who was a freelancer with NDTV, had worked on the story of road-construction corruption with Bastar Junction's correspondent Nilesh Tripathi. The video, released on December 25, exposed the poor quality of a 52.4-km-long stretch, connecting Gangaloor and Nelasnar villages in Bijapur. A day later, the Chhattisgarh government had announced an inquiry into the matter.

Capturing stark realities Mukesh's journalism captured the stark realities of life in Bastar's conflict-ridden zone, where left-wing extremists have waged a decades-long war against the Indian state. His stories tracked villagers risking their lives to source basics like salt, risky makeshift bridges and crumbling roads, parents losing children to blasts, children sustaining bullet wounds in encounters between the police and Naxals. These were documentaries of the everyday struggles of tribal communities caught in the crossfire. A teary-eyed tribal woman who attended Mukesh's funeral said he was like a god for her. "He had helped me get a job. I appeal to the government to find his killers and arrest them as soon as possible," she told TV cameras, before the alleged killers were arrested. Nearly 2 km away from the office is Mukesh's modest home: a one-BHK (bedroom-hall-kitchen) that he rented with a cousin and a colleague. Mukesh's older brother, Yukesh, 36, a TV journalist, who is married with two children, lives in an adjacent house within the compound. It

was in this compound that the brothers had their last conversation on January 1, between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. The chat was about celebrations. "Mukesh and I had planned to have a little celebration of our own on December 31, but he had to go to Dantewada. I went back home and slept," says Yukesh, as he attends to a stream of visitors, including State Congress president Deepak Baij and Bijapur's Congress MLA Vikram Mandavi. On January 2, Yukesh learnt from his son that Mukesh — Bittu for the family — had gone out. Given his inconsistent schedule and knack of breaking stories, no one suspected anything initially, assuming that he had left to cover a story. "I dialled his number, but it was switched off. Even that wasn't unusual. Around 1 p.m. my older (step) brother (Purushottam) called me to ask if all three of us brothers could drive to our village Basaguda, as the paddy procurement season was on and our crops had to be sold. Mukesh was still unavailable," says Yukesh. The search

In his complaint to the police, Yukesh noted that he had called Nilesh, the journalist with whom Mukesh had prepared the report on the Gangaloor-Mirtur stretch. "Nilesh told me that he had spoken to my brother around 6.30 p.m. the previous day, and Mukesh had told him that Ritesh (one of the now-accused men) was to visit him," the complaint notes. Yukesh says it was Nilesh who suggested that the police be informed. Yukesh began the search, followed by other Bijapur journalists, like Ganesh Mishra and Pinaki Ranjan Das, who were close friends. "Mukesh's laptop showed his last location near a shed owned by Suresh (another of the now-accused men)," says Mishra. The shed has nearly 17 rooms in which the contractor's labourers reside and a badminton court where outsiders, including Mukesh, played sometimes. Suresh Patragitri, 30, who works for a web news portal 'Lalluram', says he accompanied a police team to the shed on January 2, and while the rooms were searched, nothing was found there. Patragiri and another journalist, Pushpa Rokde, 40, from 'Prakhar Samachar' recounts that the journalists noticed a newly constructed concrete slab that covered a septic tank. "The next day (January 3) I asked two women who lived there about the slab. They told me it had been constructed around 8, the previous morning. We cross-checked with some badminton players, who confirmed they had not seen the cover earlier," says Rokde, who has been a journalist for a couple of decades. The contractor had allegedly told the police that he wanted to construct a bathroom over it. "But the septic tank underneath would have needed an outlet for the gas. It only added to our suspicion," Rokde adds. While they informed the police, journalists claim it took nearly a day and intense pressure from the community to get it broken open on January 3 evening. Mukesh's body with injury marks all over was retrieved then. As soon as the news of the death spread, the spotlight shifted to other aspects: the story Mukesh and Nilesh had done against the backdrop of the overall risks journalists face in Bastar, where the alleged nexus between officials and construction contractors often escape scrutiny amid stories of conflict.

Following the outcry over the death, a



special investigation team (SIT) was formed. Suresh's properties were demolished by the government. On January 7, the Chhattisgarh Public Works Department (PWD) suspended his registration as a construction contractor. Vested interests at play The news report Mukesh and Nilesh had worked on was aired on NDTV's regional (Madhya Pradesh-Chhattisgarh) network on December 25. The project, initially tendered at ₹50 crore, ballooned to ₹120 crore despite no changes to the scope of work, the report said. Chhattisgarh government's PWD is the agency dealing with such contracts. Nilesh says that he and Mukesh were travelling to interior Bijapur for a different story when he noticed the poor quality of the road and got curious. The Hindu visited the road which remains potholed, despite what appears to be some recent patchwork on certain stretches.

After the report was aired, there was a State raid on Suresh's premises apart from the inquiry, according to local news reports. After the recovery of Mukesh's body from Suresh's shed, older stories about the contractor's meteoric rise from a cook to a multimillionaire who travelled in luxury cars and had a grand wedding, where he had travelled in a helicopter to receive the bride, started doing the rounds. The septic tank in a shed owned by Suresh Chandrashekhar, in which Mukesh's body was found. The septic tank was covered with a recently constructed concrete slab, which planted seeds of doubt in the minds of other journalists.

The septic tank in a shed owned by Suresh Chandrashekhar, in which Mukesh's body was found. The septic tank was covered with a recently constructed concrete slab, which planted seeds of doubt in the minds of other journalists. Nilesh, who has worked as a journalist for a decade and knows the perils of practising the profession in India's interiors, feels burdened by the death of his colleague. "But there was a need for people to see the story, because Mukesh had continuously raised the issue of corruption and irregularities," he says. Of the three brothers who are now in police custody, Ritesh was a friend of Mukesh's, says his brother. After the murder was unearthed, Bastar Inspector General P. Sundarraj said that the duo was having dinner together in the shed when the two had an argument over Mukesh being a 'hindrance' in Ritesh's work despite them being family. Ritesh and Ramteke allegedly attacked Mukesh with

an iron rod. However, the police is looking at Suresh, who was arrested in Hyderabad on January 5, as the person behind the conspiracy, as he is now the 'prime accused'. "We are collecting all the technical and material evidence in the case," says Mayank Gurjar, the head of the SIT now probing the case. The journey to journalism

Mishra says that Mukesh's confidence in his reportage was rooted in his well-oiled network. The duo had travelled to all but 50 of the 650 villages in Bijapur. "He had empathy for last-mile villagers," he says. One of Mukesh's earliest reports that made a mark was about the incarceration of an innocent youth for over a year and how his life had been ruined by this. Then there is the more popular story about how he was a part of a team that secured the release of a Central Reserve Police Force jawan abducted by Maoists in 2021. In a conversation last May with this reporter, he had said that his sensitivity towards the tribals was rooted in his past, which was full of hardship, but also had stories of kindness.

Mukesh was born in Basaguda, a village nearly 50 km from Bijapur. His father passed away when he was just two and a half years old, leaving his unlettered mother, an anganwadi worker with a meagre salary, to raise him and his brother in a tribal area without land or rights to forest produce. They survived on the kindness of tribal neighbours who would give them a part of their crops or produce. One of the stories that he recalled was how he would sleep outside a Vizag hospital where his mother Kaushalya (now deceased) was being treated for cancer because he could neither stay inside the women's ward nor afford accommodation. "On days it rained, there was no sleep," he had said.

To begin with, Mukesh had worked in a garage as a mechanic to make ends meet. The family's struggles worsened during the Salwa Judum movement, a counter-insurgency force, which displaced them to a relief camp. The inspiration to join journalism came from his older brother, and after spending nearly eight years in mainstream national media, he decided to start his own channel. A Raipur-based journalist of a national daily said she had encouraged Mukesh when he discussed it with her. "I told him that it was a good move, as Bastar journalists often remain anonymous or exist as footnotes in reports filed on the region despite their groundwork.

# Bengaluru's residential areas are no longer the neighbours' envy

For many Bengalureans, Indiranagar is their weekend leisure date at its many well-known pubs, restaurants or shops. But for Jayalakshmi Sriguha, now 62, it has been home for almost half-a-century. Once sought-after residential localities, prime old areas of Bengaluru are seeing rapid redevelopment, turning them into bustling commercial spaces. When she moved into their house off Indiranagar 12th Main from Ulsoor in 1977, many people asked her family members why they had chosen an area so forsaken. "I was in class 10. We didn't know that roads were going to come up around us. This was part of a village called Doopanahalli and a laidback place. We were scared to come home after 6 p.m.," she recalls. The tuition teacher says she has seen the area grow before her eyes, remembering how they would marvel at the many beautiful houses being built on 100 Feet Road. "As we were building our house, the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) planted so many trees. In the 1980s, the cross roads came up and plots were sold. I got married in 1984 and moved out of the country. When I returned in 1997 too, there were quite a few empty plots. In 1999, I bought a plot 10 houses away from the house where I grew up," she said. A by-gone era

She reminisces about how residents would play badminton on the road and on empty plots, and how they could see flights land and take off from HAL airport, and even the utility building - then the tallest in the city. "The BPO culture changed everything. Around the mid-2000s, it just crept under us and things just ballooned. I still don't understand how 12th Main became a commercial access road. I still know a lot of people here, but there are very few locals. We are struggling to keep at least our road residential. I tell people this is the only place I have. It is unfortunate what it has become despite our fight. Even if it was commercial, it would have still worked if the basic rules such as parking facilities were followed," she says, while recalling how she battled sewage backflow in her house only a few days ago. Once a sought-after residential area, Indiranagar today is among the prime commercial hubs of Bengaluru. Its story is the same as many other prime old residential hubs of the city. With land parcels becoming scarce in the core areas of the city, real estate players across the board report massive redevelopment taking place in these prime areas. Digbijay Das, Senior Director, Valuation Services, Colliers India, said apart from the Central Business District (CBD) region, comprising M.G. Road, Richmond Road, Residency Road, Infantry Road, Cunningham Road, Sankey Road, Vittal Mallya Road, and Ulsoor, standalone residential developments in Koramangala, Indiranagar, Jayanagar, J.P. Nagar, etc., are being redeveloped into commercial office, retail, and mixed-use development areas. "Increase in commercial activity has led to a rise in land price and this has prompted the redevelopment. Redevelopment is taking place to fulfill the burgeoning demand for commercial office space, retail, and mixed-use real estate in CBD region which is starved of vacant land for new development," he said.

Sudhanshu Mishra, Principal Partner, Square Yards, an integrated platform for real estate and mortgages, noted significant redevelopment across areas like Indiranagar, Koramangala, and parts of Whitefield, driven by rapid urbanisation and the growing demand for modern infrastructure. "Many older neighbourhoods, once dotted with independent houses, are transforming into high-rise apartments, tech parks, and retail complexes. This shift is largely fuelled by the city's robust IT ecosystem and the promise of higher returns for property owners and developers." Once sought-after residential localities, prime old areas of Bengaluru are seeing rapid redevelopment, turning them into bustling commercial spaces.

Increasingly, residential pockets are being converted into commercial or mixed-use developments, often resulting in higher property prices and changing the neighbourhood's character, he said, offering Mumbai's Lower Parel and Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC) as examples. Natural progression "CBDs remain the cornerstone of urban economic activity, serving as pivotal hubs for commerce and corporate operations. However, the emergence of secondary business districts (SBDs) offers a complementary solution, addressing rising commercial space costs and easing congestion. This shift does not signal the end of CBDs but rather complements their role. In Bengaluru, areas near the CBD have evolved into mature commercial markets. With land availability becoming increasingly constrained, redevelopment emerges as a natural progression. By optimising land use and revitalising aging structures, redevelopment maximises the potential of the floor area ratio (FAR), enabling the creation of taller buildings or additional usable space, aligning with the city's growing demand for modern infrastructure," he added. But this transformation has come at a cost, rue old-time residents of these areas who continue to live there.

Sneha Nandihal from I Change Indiranagar, a federation of RWAs, has been at the forefront of a fight against illegal commercialisation of residential areas. "In Indiranagar, there are roads that have been categorised as commercial accesses. However, they shouldn't change the predominant nature of the residential lane. Trade licences being issued indiscriminately. In 2015, in the name of ease of business, the then Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Commissioner issued a circular that only two documents are enough to get a trade licence for properties on the mutation corridor and commercial access - commercial tariff meters and rental agreement. The process mandates that the officials check the place of trade for sufficient parking, fire safety, and ensure there are no building or zonal violations. If these places are found to be in violation, trade licences should be null and void. But no inspections are happening," she said, adding that there are establishments that do not have parking space for even a bicycle or have come up in setback areas [the minimum amount of open space surrounding a building that must be maintained] and basements. Once sought-after residential localities, prime old areas of



Bengaluru are seeing rapid redevelopment, turning them into bustling commercial spaces. C.N. Kumar, a resident of Jayanagar, said the situation is progressively getting worse in this old residential area too. "There are blatant violations of sanctioned plans. Independent bungalows are being converted into multiple floor dwellings. The densification of the area is leading to more traffic, and a strain on water, electricity, sewage network, and other resources. These are all old layouts and there is additional pressure on the resources now. The government should start looking at stricter implementation of existing rules," he said.

Property developers like Anil R.G., Managing Director, Concorde, acknowledged that residential-to-commercial redevelopment in areas like Indiranagar and Koramangala has led to significant transformations. "For instance, Indiranagar's 100 Feet Road has evolved into a bustling commercial hub, with rental values reaching ₹100 to 150 per sqft. This redevelopment has pushed up property prices by 50% to 70%, making it a lucrative opportunity for investors. However, long-term residents often face challenges such as increased traffic congestion. Indiranagar has seen a 30% rise in traffic over the past five years, and noise pollution, altering the quiet residential charm of the area. But, redevelopment has also brought modern infrastructure, better public amenities, and increased footfall, turning these neighborhoods into thriving urban spaces that cater to a younger, tech-savvy demographic," he added. A. Mohan Raju, Managing Director and CEO, Kalyani Developers, also said such residential-to-commercial redevelopment in areas like Whitefield typically leads to rising property prices and a higher cost of living. "While this boosts the local economy, it can displace long-term residents as land values increase and rental rates rise. The neighbourhood may undergo significant changes, with more commercial activity, infrastructure development, and population density, potentially disrupting the peaceful, residential environment. Over time, these areas may become more vibrant and economically prosperous, but the shift could result in the loss of cultural identity and challenges like traffic congestion

and sustainability issues. Urban planning will be essential to balance growth with the needs of the community."

No master plan in place Ironically, the city does not have a masterplan in place after the withdrawal of the draft Revised Master Plan (RMP), 2031, though the High Court of Karnataka in May, 2023, clarified that its withdrawal would not "negate all actions taken in pursuance of it, and the actions already taken as per the provisional RMP-2031 before withdrawal must be given due effect to." In addition, in October, 2022, the High Court of Karnataka directed the BBMP to submit a report on the exercise carried out on the use of residential premises for commercial activities in violation of the law in various parts of the city. The Division Bench was hearing a PIL petition filed by the Wilson Garden Residents' Welfare Association complaining that several basement floors, stilt floors, and parking areas in the residential zone are being allowed to be used by flower vendors in violation of laws. BBMP officials were unavailable for comment. The BBMP, this financial year, revised the property tax of 15,731 properties, as the tax being paid was for residential properties despite the properties being operated under the commercial category. The total pending amount estimated after this revision was ₹398.49 crore. The civic body has so far recovered ₹114.82 crore from 9,260 properties. 'NIMBY' phenomenon However, Mathew Idiculla, an urban policy expert, said different kinds of cities across the world undergo what is termed redevelopment, urban renewal, or gentrification, but in the Indian context, this process hasn't been as stark or disruptive as seen in other parts of the world. This, he said, could be owing to multiple factors, such as complicated ownership titles and land records having multiple claimants, as well as social and emotional factors.

"There's also resistance from old owners for their neighbourhood not to change. If you look at the regulatory side, the master planning system basically prevents any kind of commercialisation. Planning regulations are highly inconsistent with the realities on the ground, though they are made with good intentions.

# Assam rat-hole mine tragedy: Dying for black gold

Rajib Barman, 39, had heard that the job of a rat-hole miner was hazardous, but he chose to do it because he had a debt of ₹60,000 to pay off. A resident of Sitlabazar village in western Assam's Kokrajhar district, Barman decided to work at the Kalamati mine in the Umrangso area of Dima Hasao district via a middleman. He hoped to bring home ₹90,000 by working in the mine for two months at about ₹1,500 per day — more than thrice the usual wage in the rural parts of Assam. This translated into earning ₹90-100 per kilogramme of coal extracted at an average of 15 cartloads of the fossil fuel stripped off the mine. On January 6, 2025, Barman descended into the dark pit for the first day of mining. "The sardar (supervisor of miners) had told us the previous night that we could start working as the water that had accumulated in the mine had been drained out," Barman says. "We went down 250 feet below the ground at 4:30 a.m. and began working inside one of the tunnels." Barman's body ached as he was working in an awkward position for the first time. After more than two hours, he decided to take a break and crawled back towards the mouth of the tunnel. Rat-holes are the labyrinthine passages that branch out from 300-foot-deep pits. A few feet from the opening, Barman heard screams and the sound of gushing water growing louder. "Seconds later, I was swept into the pit," he recalls. "I managed to clamber up the chain of the crane (used to haul coal) and get out. But my three room-mates could not make it." So far, of the nine miners trapped inside, only four bodies have been recovered. Search and rescue operations by the Indian Army, Navy, the National Disaster Response Force, and the State Disaster Response Force were on for the others, but five days ago, Navy divers were withdrawn from the operations. While dewatering of the mine continues, the government has assessed it could take up to 60 days to drain out all the water.

On January 16, 2025, the Assam Cabinet approved a judicial inquiry into the tragedy and decided to constitute a Special Investigation Team to probe the incident, one of the deadliest in recent times. It also decided to frame a standard operating procedure (SOP) to enforce a blanket ban on rat-hole mining in Assam apart from sealing some 220 pits surveyed so far. Dangers lurk below For Raju Basumatary, 55, this is the second time a disaster like this has taken place. The first time this happened was at Ksan in Meghalaya's coal-rich East Jaintia Hills district on December 13, 2018. Then too, he was about 200 metres from the pit that devoured some of his fellow miners. These, though, are not the only mishaps that Basumatary has encountered in 26 years as a rat-hole miner. He came to Kalamati from the Khliehriat area of Meghalaya four years ago. "Khibakhibi hoie thaakhe (Something or the other keeps happening)," he says, rattling off all the possibilities. "A miner slips to death in the pit, another is asphyxiated, somebody else dies after smelling toxic gas, the fourth drowns..."

Basumatary says miners put themselves at risk in the dark depths of the earth. All they have is a torch strapped to their head to guide them. "Still, the money is good and it is guaranteed as long as you extract coal during the season," he says. The "season" he refers to is the mining period between November and March. During the

first two months of this period, workers invariably drain the water that fills the mines, which are often interlinked beneath the ground, because of rainfall and seepage from April to October. Then they crawl into the mines and using pickaxes, extract coal from the walls of a rectangular tunnel that is 2-3 metres high or shovel about 20 kg of coal lumps onto a cart. They drag this to the mouth of the tunnel. Large metal troughs, operated with pulleys from a crane, haul a tonne or two of the coal to the surface. Joseph Soren, 40, was in charge of loading the coal onto one of the troughs eased down from a crane when disaster struck on January 6. He was the last of the 23 miners who made it after helping those who could not swim escape first. "I heard shouts of 'water, water!' and rumbling sounds. Before I could figure anything out, water carrying the miners shot out of the tunnels. We grabbed anything — the chains from the crane, the pipe of a water pump, ropes thrown down from people above — to save ourselves. The murky, stinging water made our eyes burn as we moved up. I struggled to keep my head above the water level," he says.

Soren, who is from western Assam's Chirang district, has worked in half a dozen mines in the Umrangso area, of which Kalamati is a part, over as many seasons, but he now has second thoughts about continuing mining. But then, the payment per season is good enough for his family of five to last at least a year. The money was good enough for Ganga Bahadur Shresth, 38, of Nepal's Rampur village, to travel three days from his home to a mine each season, says his wife, Sushila Rai. His was the first of the four bodies retrieved by rescue workers from the Kalamati mine. "His income from mining made our lives quite comfortable but he never let us know how dangerous his work was. We found this out too late," says Rai, a mother of three. Shresth came with more than 20 workers from Nepal to work in Umrangso. Among them was Lijan Magar, 27, who also lost his life. His was the second body to be retrieved. "We started living here after our wedding two years ago. I don't know where to go with our two-month-old baby," says Junu Pradhan, Magar's wife. The other two bodies retrieved were of Khushi Mohan Roy, 57, from Kokrajhar district's Fakiragram, who was one of Barman's room-mates; and of Sarat Goyari, 37, who hailed from Thailapara in north-central Assam's Sonitpur district. A huge scam For Assam's landless or marginal farmers such as Mohammed Saifuddin Ahmed of Dalgao in Darrang district, all roads lead to the mines when family expenditure exceeds income. The last time the 55-year-old worked in a coal mine was in March 2012, three months before 15 miners died in a flooded mine at Nongalbibra in Meghalaya's South Garo Hills district. The mishap, and a petition filed by the All Dimas Students' Union of Assam, led to the National Green Tribunal (NGT) banning rat-hole coal mining in Meghalaya on April 17, 2014. Upheld by the Supreme Court later, the ban was extended to the other States in the Northeast. "But circumstances made me return to mining after all these years because, ban or not, no other job pays as much," Ahmed says. The Ksan incident in 2018 and Kalamati now make it evident that the ban has largely been on paper. In Meghalaya, the Justice (retired)



B.P. Katakey-headed committee, which was appointed by the High Court of Meghalaya in April 2022 to investigate ongoing illegal coal mining and transportation, continues to receive complaints. One of the new complaints the panel has received relates to illegal mining in Nongalbibra, where the process of banning rat-hole mines began. "The illegal tag has only increased the price of coal; it has not stopped mining," says Shillong-based anti-mining activist Agnes Kharshiing, who survived a violent attack by coal mine owners in 2018. "Hundreds of trucks continue to transport coal on the highways feeding the coke units and cement plants. You can see mounds of freshly extracted coal on the roadside. The police, politicians, bureaucrats, landowners... almost all of them are involved." In 2023, the High Court of Meghalaya made a similar observation, saying the complicity of the State with the mafia operating illegal coal mines was "clear and obvious". The tribal land ownership system in Meghalaya, a Sixth Schedule State, is often cited to justify the rampant mining since the 1980s. A provision of the Sixth Schedule calls for tribal land and resources to be protected. Another empowers the District and Regional Councils to grant licenses or leases for the extraction of minerals within their jurisdiction. Some council administrators and landowners believe that no one can interfere in their operations within their territory. The Sixth Schedule applies to Dima Hasao, a district governed by a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led autonomous tribal council. Autonomy means limited involvement of the BJP-led Assam government in the affairs of the council.

"That, however, does not mean that the heads of the two governments cannot collude to share the spoils of a high-yielding illegal operation," says Jagadish Bhuyan, a former minister, who had filed Right to Information requests seeking details about rat-hole mining in Assam. He is also the general secretary of the Assam Jatiya Parishad, a political party borne out of the anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act movement in 2019. "If a worker risks his life for ₹1,500-2,000 a day, imagine the stakes the mine owners and everyone else along the chain has, to keep the illegal operations going. It is naive to think that the Centre is unaware of the illegal coal trade in Assam and elsewhere in the Northeast," he says.

Bhuyan continues, "Look at the chronology of events. Soon after the mishap,

the Chief Minister tweeted that the mine appeared to be illegal. Then he said the mine was abandoned 12 years ago, but was under the Assam Mineral Development Corporation Limited (AMDCL). The Government of India, which owns fossil fuels and minerals under the earth, suspended the AMDCL's operating license 12 years ago. So, the AMDCL has no right to extract coal and neither does it have the right to mine or trade OB coal." OB refers to the layers of soil, rock, etc. that need to be removed to extract coal. The Assam Congress president, Bhupen Kumar Borah, says illegal coal mining in Umrangso, about 260 kilometres from Guwahati, was just the tip of the 'Syndicate Raj' iceberg in the State. "Illegal syndicates are controlling everything. If Assam is really under the control of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, he should be aware of the coal syndicate. That it has been allowed to operate for years explains the government's silence on Debolal Gorlosa and his wife," he says. Politics of former rebels Gorlosa is the chief executive member (CEM) of the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council, which administers the Dima Hasao district. After the mine flooded, Opposition parties fished out an invoice that was issued to Kanika Hojai, Gorlosa's wife, for buying OB coal, or overburden coal, from the AMDCL. While Gorlosa is incommunicado, his aides believe that he is being targeted. Gorlosa used to be the commander-in-chief of the Dima Halam Daogah, an armed group which was disbanded in 2013. "Once mauled by militancy, Dima Hasao district had three CEMs in as many years before Gorlosa. He ensured peace, stability, and development. Some failed leaders of the Dima Halam Daogah, who are desperate to be in power, are carrying out a smear campaign against him," claims one of his aides. Meanwhile, others believe that Punish Nunisa, who was arrested for allegedly operating the mine illegally, has been made the scapegoat to keep the focus off the "real culprits". Money matters Amid the blame game, the AMDCL has come under the scanner for allegedly doing what it is not authorised to do, which is mining coal or residue. In the line of fire, Anand Natarajan, the AMDCL's Managing Director, insists that the Corporation has not set a foot wrong. "I am being maligned for reviving the corporation that once struggled to pay salaries to its employees. Apart from helping increase the State's revenue, we acquired a coal block in Jharkhand and won the bidding for two coal blocks

# Belgaum Congress session: Gandhiji refused to stay in 'expensive' hut

Months of hard work by several hundred workers and volunteers went into the successful organisation of the Belgaum Congress session in 1924, which was chaired by Mahatma Gandhi. The centenary celebrations of this event at Belagavi (as Belgaum is now called), was inaugurated on December 26. The event concludes on December 27. A photograph of the 1924 Belgaum Congress session chaired by Mahatma Gandhi on display in the Veera Soudha in Belagavi. A photograph of the 1924 Belgaum Congress session chaired by Mahatma Gandhi on display in the Veera Soudha in Belagavi. A photograph of the 1924 Belgaum Congress session, shows Mahatma Gandhi arriving at the venue. A photograph of the 1924 Belgaum Congress session, shows Mahatma Gandhi arriving at the venue.

Congress workers had back then created Vijaya Nagara, a new township on around 100 acres of land between the Military Camp and the Vaccine Depot Ground at Tilakwadi, for the plenary session. Role of Gangadhar Rao Deshpande Gangadhar Rao Deshpande, Congress leader and Khadi activist, was among Gandhiji's close associates. Deshpande was the chairman of the reception committee for the 1924 session. A memorial hall in his name was inaugurated as part of the ongoing centenary celebrations.

Deshpande served as AICC general secretary along with other leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Saifuddin Kitchlew. At the 38th Congress session in Kakinada, Deshpande and his followers placed a demand for conducting the next session in Belagavi. They prevailed upon the senior leadership and outbid attempts by leaders from Mangaluru, Dharwad and Mysuru to hold the session in their cities. He and his team worked for nearly 10 months to prepare for the two-day session. They dug out a huge well and named it 'Pampa Sarovara' to provide water for the delegates. This water body, now known as the Congress Well, continues to yield sweet water to this day. However, tragedy struck during digging of the well. A nine-year-old boy, Babu Harapanahalli, fell into it accidentally and died. Some workers thought it was a bad omen. But Deshpande asked them to continue the work, saying there was no place for blind belief in such honest and good work. Veteran Gandhians N.S. Hardikar and Kaka Karakhanis formed a team of volunteers that took up all kinds of work, including sanitation in the dry latrines. Gandhiji appreciated this with a special mention in the Young India later. Workers and volunteers set up tents for the meetings and for accommodating the delegates. They set up a series of tents for the office-bearers including the president. They lobbied with the Imperial Railways to set up a temporary flag station near the venue. A huge gateway was built near the venue. The session remains historic because it is the only one chaired by Mahatma Gandhi. The leader, who arrived from South Africa became a Congress members in 1915, and became president of the all-India session after nine years. However, his association with the party was short-lived. He dissociated himself from the Congress party in 1935 saying he refused to



be 'a four anna member of the Congress', referring to its annual membership fee.

Gandhiji visited Belagavi four times, between 1916 and 1943. He spent three days in 1916, nine days in 1924, and 14 days in 1942, making two visits that year. In 1942, Gandhiji visited Belagavi to spend time at the khadi and village industries unit set up by Deshpande in his native village of Hudali near Belagavi. The unit has diversified its activities over the years, and now produces soap, pickles and incense sticks. For the Congress plenary, Gandhiji arrived in Belagavi on December 20, 1924,

evening. He left for Mumbai on December 29. Moulana Mohammed Ali, who had chaired the Kakinada session, passed the baton to Gandhiji during a simple ceremony. The president was taken around in a padayatra (procession) around the venue. The nation's tallest leaders were among the 800 delegates and invitees. They included Motilal Nehru and Jawaharlal Nehru, Lala Lajpat Rai, C. Rajagopalachari, Annie Besant and Sarojini Naidu, Chittaranjan Das, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Saifuddin Kichalu, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Rajendra Prasad, Vallabhbhai Patel, and

Moulana Shoukat Ali. A few of the colourised photographs of the 1924 Belgaum Congress session chaired by Mahatma Gandhi on display in the Veera Soudha in Belagavi. A few of the colourised photographs of the 1924 Belgaum Congress session chaired by Mahatma Gandhi on display in the Veera Soudha in Belagavi. Keep costs low Khimajirao Godse, a Belagavi-based handicraftsman, had built a hut using bamboo and other material for the Mahatma near Vaccine Depot. It cost around ₹350. But Gandhiji refused to stay in it as he felt it was expensive. He chose to stay in another tent erected for a delegate.

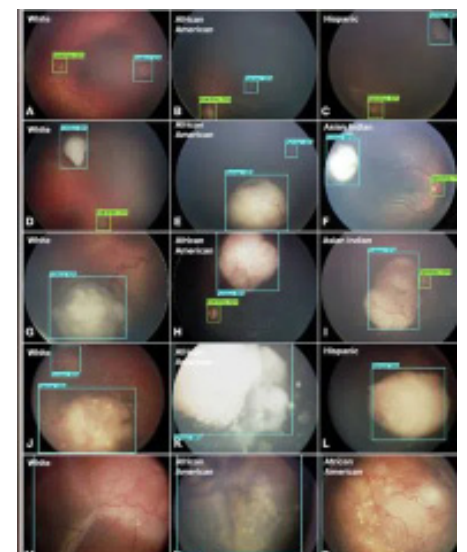
## Hyderabad researchers develop AI to detect eye cancer

Hyderabad: For the first time in India, Hyderabad-based researchers have developed an Artificial Intelligence (AI) based model to detect eye cancers, also known as Retinoblastoma (RB). Eye researches from Hyderabad-based L V Prasad Eye Institute (LVPEI), Dr. Vijitha S. Vempuluru, Dr Swathi Kaliki, ocular specialist from US-based Wills Eye Hospital, Dr Carol L. Shields, IIIT-Hyderabad, and TechSophy Inc collaborated to develop the first AI model dubbed as Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning in Ocular Oncology, Retinoblastoma (ArMOR), to diagnose eye cancers for peoples of all ethnicities with pinpoint accuracy. In the new study that was published in the journal Cancers (October, 2024), the researchers said that they have improved ArMOR and tested its ability to detect retinoblastoma in a multiracial patient group or cohort.

The ArMOR technology was refined with the help of researchers from Interna-

tional Institute of Information Technology (IIIT-Hyderabad), and Bourntec Solutions Pvt Ltd. The researchers used deep learning and geometric calculations to extract various features of retinal tumors, such as tumor seeds, blood vessels, hemorrhage, etc., that an AI can identify.

"The AI model displayed an accuracy of 97 percent for detecting retinoblastoma, and 98 percent, 93 percent, more than 99 percent, 94 percent and 93 percent for grouping tumors into the International Classification of Retinoblastoma groups A to E, respectively," the researchers in the study published in Cancers said. Since AI/ML have been increasingly explored in the field of intraocular tumors and early detection of retinoblastoma (RB) is crucial for optimizing treatment outcomes. "Hence, we aimed to employ AI/ML to develop a potential screening tool for RB and established the feasibility of training an AI model to detect and classify RB from fundus images in an Asian Indian cohort previously.



Taking this work ahead, we explored the model's ability to detect and classify RB in a multiracial cohort.