

Exploitation OF Greater communities's Residents



“Indian Chronicle Feb 5: Unities or Greater Exploitation? “How Association Mismanagement Is Looting Homeowners in Colonies, Apartments and Villas” By Dr. Jithender Rao Thanugula “Senior Journalist” In recent years, the concept of “greater communities” — gated colonies, apartment complexes, and villa projects — was sold to citizens as a promise of better living: security, cleanliness, shared facilities, and collective growth. However, for thousands of homeowners across

urban and semi-urban India, especially in rapidly expanding cities, this promise has turned into a harsh reality of financial exploitation, opaque governance, and systematic looting by Residents' Welfare Associations (RWAs) and management committees. “What was meant to be a democratic, resident-driven system has, in many places, degenerated into an unregulated power structure where a few association members exercise unchecked authority over the hard-earned money of property

owners. “The Rise of Association Raj” Apartment and villa associations were formed to manage common amenities — maintenance, security, water supply, waste management, and basic infrastructure. But today, many of these bodies function like parallel governments, imposing arbitrary charges, increasing maintenance fees without justification, and penalizing residents who dare to question their decisions. “In several colonies and gated communities, association members behave less like representatives and more like rulers. Annual maintenance costs run into crores in large projects, yet transparency remains minimal. Audited statements are either not shared or presented in a manner that ordinary residents cannot understand. When questions are raised, dissenting homeowners are often threatened with penalties, service denial, or social harassment. “Looting in the Name of Maintenance” One of the most common complaints from homeowners is inflated maintenance charges. Residents are forced to pay for services they neither approved nor require. Contracts for security, housekeeping, landscaping, and generators are frequently awarded without competitive bidding, often to agencies with personal links to association office-bearers. “In many apartment complexes, the same set of vendors continue year after year, despite poor service quality. This raises serious concerns of kickbacks and commissions. Homeowners are effectively paying twice — once for services and again for corruption. “Villa owners and plot owners in colonies face similar exploitation. Charges are levied even when facilities are non-functional or incomplete. Roads remain broken, parks neglected, and drainage systems faulty — yet the association coffers remain full. “No Accountability, No Regulation” A major reason behind this looting is the absence of effective regulatory oversight. While laws such as the Apartment Ownership Act or Societies Registration Act exist, enforcement is weak. Most state governments have failed to establish monitoring mechanisms to audit association finances or resolve resident

grievances. “Elections within associations are often a farce. The same individuals retain power for years, manipulating rules and suppressing opposition. Annual General Body Meetings are either not conducted properly or reduced to mere formalities, with decisions already pre-decided by a small inner circle. “Ordinary homeowners, many of whom invested their lifetime savings into purchasing a home, are left feeling helpless within their own communities. “Targeting the Vulnerable” Senior citizens, tenants, and single homeowners are especially vulnerable. In several cases, water supply, parking access, or common services have been denied for delayed payments or disputes. Tenants are treated as second-class residents, despite contributing equally through rent and maintenance. “Such practices violate basic constitutional values and raise serious questions about the legality of association powers. No private body has the right to harass or coerce citizens, yet this has become routine in many gated communities. “The Need for Urgent Reforms” It is time for governments, judiciary, and civil society to recognize this growing problem. Clear guidelines must be issued on maintenance charges, tender processes, auditing, and tenure limits for association office-bearers. Mandatory online disclosure of accounts and decisions should be enforced. “Most importantly, homeowners must awaken to their collective strength. Silence and fear only empower corrupt association members. Democracy does not end at the gate of a gated community. “Conclusion” Greater communities were meant to symbolize collective progress, not collective exploitation. When association members forget that they are custodians, not owners, of community funds, the system collapses into organized looting. “A home should be a place of peace and dignity — not a battlefield where residents must fight to protect their own money. Until transparency, accountability, and rule of law are restored within these associations, the dream of community living will remain deeply flawed.

Thank You Revanth Anna: Rs 19 Crore Sanctioned for Development Works in Uppal Bhagayat

Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy Expresses Gratitude to CM

19

కోట్లతో
ఉప్పల్ భగాయత్లో
అభివృద్ధి పనులు

*Thanks To our
Revanth Anna*

మంజూరైన పనులు, గడువు పనులు

- రూ.9.80 కోట్లతో లే అవుట్లో స్పర్ట్స్ కాంప్లెక్స్ నిర్మాణం.
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- ఒమెన్ టెమ్, చిల్డ్రన్స్ ప్లే ఏరియా అభివృద్ధి, వాచ్మన్ గది, గ్రీనరీ నిర్మాణం. తదితర పనులను చేపట్టనున్నారు.
- రూ.3.10 కోట్లతో లే అవుట్లోని భాగ స్థలాల బరిరక్షణకు కంపౌండ్ వాల్ నిర్మాణం.

త్వరలో..

- రూ.10 కోట్లతో లే అవుట్లో రోడ్ల నిర్మాణం, మెరెప్పైతు పనులు.
- రూ.3 కోట్లతో కమ్యూనిటీ సెంటర్ నిర్మాణం

మందుముల రజిత పరమేశ్వర్ రెడ్డి కార్యోద్యోగి, ఉప్పల్



HMDA in Uppal Bhagayat were sold off by previous administrations without ensuring proper civic amenities. However, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has stood by his promise and continues to release funds for comprehensive development works in the area. "The corporator revealed the details of the sanctioned projects as follows: "9.80 crore for the construction of a Sports Complex in the layout." 6 crore for the construction of compound walls for the Community Center building and the Sports Complex. "Development of Open Gym, Children's Play Area, Watchman Room, Greenery, and other related facilities." 3.10 crore for the construction of compound walls to protect vacant plots in the layout. "She further announced that soon 10 crore will be allocated for road construction and repair works in the layout, and 3 crore will be sanctioned for the construction of a Community Center. Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy thanked the Chief Minister and government leaders for prioritizing the development of Uppal Bhagayat and assured that the works would be completed transparently and efficiently for the benefit of local residents.

"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 5 (Indian Chronicle): "Uppal Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy expressed heartfelt gratitude to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Uppal Assembly Constituency Congress In-charge Parameshwar Reddy, and senior government officials for sanctioning massive development funds worth 19 crore for Uppal Bhagayat. "She stated that in the past, layouts developed by

Hyderabad Martial Arts Students Shine at International Karate Championship, Win 9 Gold Medals



"NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 05, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): "Students of S.S.K Martial Arts Academy India, Hyderabad, delivered an outstanding performance at the 9th International Karate Championship, held at Swarna Bharat Indoor Stadium, Visakhapatnam, from January 30 to February 1. Under the guidance of Chief Instructor K. Sai Kiran, nine students from the academy competed against international-level participants and secured an impressive nine gold medals in the Kata and Kumite categories, bringing pride to Hyderabad. Gold Medal Winners: The medal winners include P. Ishitha Sri, V. Hari Vardhan Goud, R. Mokshitha, A. Shashwatha Reddy, B. Sathvik, CH. Tripura, B. Chathura, J. Simha Teja, and S. Sadhana. The medals were presented by noted film actor and martial arts expert Suman, adding prestige to the occasion. Appreciation and Encouragement: Speaking at the event, actor Suman praised the students for their exceptional performance at the international level and emphasized that disciplined training and dedication were the key factors behind their success. He also congratulated instructor Sai Kiran for his committed coaching and appreciated the parents for their constant support in promoting sports among children. Instructor K. Sai Kiran expressed happiness over the achievement, stating that the students had brought recognition not only to Hyderabad but also to the country. The students said that this victory has motivated them to aim for greater success on future international platforms.



Congress Wave Clear in Asifabad Municipality; Gunda Sneha Shyam's Victory in Ward No.13 Is Certain' – Juvvaji Anil Goud



““Indian Chronicle” kumram bheem, Asifabad District Reporte,Jade Srinivas.February,05.”“Election campaigning in Komaram Bheem Asifabad district headquarters has reached its peak with intense political activity across the municipality. Congress district leader Juvvaji Anil Goud expressed strong confidence that the victory of Congress candidate Gunda Sneha Shyam in Ward No.13 of Asifabad Municipality is certain.”“On Thursday, Congress party leaders and workers carried out an extensive door-to-door campaign in R.R. Colony and YSR Nagar Colony of Ward No.13, seeking public support for their candidate. Juvvaji Anil Goud participated in the campaign as the chief guest and personally interacted with voters, urging them to support the Congress party.”“Addressing the residents, Anil Goud stated that the people’s government under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is successfully delivering welfare schemes to every household across Telangana. He said these welfare initiatives have become a strong foundation for the Congress party’s growing public support.”“He highlighted key welfare schemes such as free bus travel for women, the Mahalakshmi Scheme, 200 units of free electricity, and LPG gas cylinders at ₹500, stating that these measures have significantly reduced the financial burden on common citizens. He emphasized that the happiness seen in the eyes of the poor reflects the true intent of the present government.”“Anil Goud appealed to the people to ensure the continuation of this welfare-oriented governance by electing Congress candidates with a huge majority in the municipal elections. He praised Ward No.13 candidate Gunda Sneha Shyam for being consistently accessible to the people and committed to resolving local issues. He urged voters to secure her victory with the highest number of votes.”“Observing the overwhelming public response in the ward, Anil Goud remarked that opposition parties are likely to lose their deposits, indicating the strong wave in favor of Congress. He added that a clear Congress “hand” wave is visible across Asifabad Municipality.”“The campaign program witnessed the presence of Atrum Sakku Youth Force President Atrum Vinod Kumar, Somashekar, Tiryani Mandal President Chittari Sagar, Rebbena Mandal President Kesari Kishan Goud, several village sarpanches, members of Anil Anna Yuva Sainyam, and a large number of Congress party activists, who made the campaign a grand success.

Telangana Shines at National Para Throwball Federation Cup–2026



““NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 05, (INDIAN CHRONICLE).”“Telangana delivered an impressive performance at the Para Throwball National Federation Cup–2026, held from February 3 to 5 at Singhania University, Jhunjhunu District, Rajasthan, securing podium finishes in both the men’s and women’s categories. The national-level championship witnessed strong competition, with 12 state teams participating in the men’s category and 8 state teams competing in the women’s category. In the men’s division, Andhra Pradesh emerged as champions, while Telangana secured the runners-up position after a strong and consistent performance throughout the tournament. Haryana finished in third place. Telangana’s success in the men’s category was attributed to disciplined training, teamwork, and effective coaching under Singarapu Babu, who guided the team to the finals. In the women’s category, Jharkhand won the championship title, Rajasthan finished as runners-up, and Telangana claimed the bronze medal. The Telangana women’s team, led by captain Macharla Krishnaveni, displayed determination and confidence to secure third place and bring pride to the state. The team’s achievement reflected



strong preparation and strategic support from the coaching staff. Adding significance to the tournament, the Para Throwball Federation of India declared the National Federation Cup–2026 as the trial selection event for the 2nd Asian Para Throwball Championship–2026, scheduled to be held in Malaysia. Outstanding performers from this event will be considered for selection to represent India at the international level. Despite physical challenges, Telangana’s para athletes showcased resilience, dedication, and sporting excellence. Their achievements were made possible through the combined efforts of players, coaches, support staff, organizers, and families. With podium finishes in both categories, Telangana reaffirmed its strong presence in para throwball at the national level.

International Women's Day Celebrations on March 9 "Under the Leadership of Reverend Gonepalli



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 5 (Indian Chronicle): “Horebu Prayer House Ministries, South Swaroop Nagar, has announced that International Women's Day celebrations will be held grandly on March 9 at Kommidi Krishna Reddy Garden. “As part of the program, a morning prayer fellowship gathering will be organized. The decision to conduct the International Women's Day event at Kommidi Krishna Reddy Garden was finalized during a preparatory meeting held recently. “The program will be conducted under the leadership of Reverend Gonepalli. Distinguished guests expected to attend the event include Telangana State President Sanjay, Anand, M.S. Dayanand, Yousabdam, Dr. Ramesh Babu, Reverend Bokka Eliah, Reverend Gone Philip, Emmanuel Prakash, Board Member Ribka Sunitha, Rakshitha Eskil, Sridevi, Esther Shobha, and several other prominent personalities. “Reverend Gone Philip informed that the event aims to honor women and highlight their role and contribution to society.

Felicitation Held for Medipally Crime Inspector Election Reddy

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 05, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): “A felicitation programme was organized in Medipally to honor Election Reddy on assuming charge as the Crime Inspector. Senior Congress leaders of the Uppal constituency, Gaddam Ravikumar and Devendra Chowdary, felicitated him on the occasion and conveyed their best wishes for his new assignment. Speaking during the programme, Gaddam Ravikumar and



Devendra Chowdary expressed confidence that Election Reddy would discharge his duties effectively in maintaining law and order in the Medipally area. They stated that his role would be crucial in crime control and in addressing public grievances, which would benefit the local residents. Responding to the felicitation, Election Reddy said that maintaining law and order in the Medipally jurisdiction would be his primary responsibility. He assured that, with the cooperation of the public, efforts would be made to strengthen peace and security in the area and to take strict action against criminal activities.

Uppal MLA Congratulates Ball Badminton Player Selected for International Tournament

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, Febru-



ary 05, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): “Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy congratulated ball badminton player Duggirala Bhavana Devi, a resident of AS Rao Nagar Division, on her selection to the Indian team for the Indo-Indonesia Ball Badminton Series. The international tournament will be held from February 13 to 19 in Bali, Indonesia. Bhavana Devi's selection to represent India at the international level has brought pride to the Uppal constituency. Speaking on the occasion, the MLA expressed happiness over a local sportsperson being selected for an international competition. He encouraged the player to bring laurels to Telangana and the country in the future and wished her success in winning a gold medal for India in the upcoming tournament. He also assured continued support for sports and sportspersons. Medchal-Malkajgiri Ball Badminton Association Joint Secretary Suryanarayana was present at the event.

Benami Staff, Power Abuse Uncovered in Collectorate



“January 5, Indian Chronicle, Taj Khan” A benami (proxy) employee was exposed at the Collectorate during an inspection by the District Collector. Serious irregularities surfaced in the Land and Survey Department, where an employee was found outsourcing official duties to a private individual. The Collector also expressed strong displeasure over misuse of electricity in government offices. “On Thursday, Kumram Bheem Asifabad, District Collector K. Haritha conducted a surprise inspection of various departmental offices located in the district Collectorate complex. During the inspection, it was revealed in the Collector’s presence that an employee named Rakesh, working as a Field Chairman in the Land and Survey Department, had appointed a private individual to perform his official duties in his absence. “The Collector also took serious objection to electric lights being left switched on in broad daylight in another office. Expressing her displeasure, she remarked that if officials did not have time even to switch off lights, they should inform her over the phone and she herself would come to switch them off. “It may be recalled that during a recent inspection of a nursing college, the Collector had noticed that the warden had left headquarters without permission and was performing duties irresponsibly. Following this, the Nursing College Principal was suspended. “Since assuming charge, the District Collector has been paying special attention to administrative discipline. Her decisions have been receiving a positive response from the public. There is growing discussion that further administrative cleansing is required at the grassroots level, based on comprehensive field-level information. The fact that corrective action has begun within just 15 days of taking charge has become a topic of widespread discussion. Reports also suggest that prior information about the Collector’s inspections is being leaked to officials, and there is a need to keep a close watch on those responsible for such leaks.

BJP Campaign Intensifies in Mooduchinthalapalli Municipal Elections



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 05, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): “As part of the municipal election campaign in Mooduchinthalapalli Municipality, Malkajgiri Member of Parliament Etela Rajender held an election campaign meeting at Potharam village on Wednesday. Addressing the gathering, Etela Rajender appealed to voters of Ward No. 2 to support BJP candidate Priyanka Srikant Reddy by voting for the lotus symbol and ensuring her victory. Speaking during the campaign, Etela Rajender said that Potharam is a village that has embraced the BJP. He stated that while some leaders depend on money, BJP depends on the people. He remarked that true leaders are those who work for public welfare, but alleged that in the present situation, money power is being treated as leadership. He assured the public that if Priyanka Srikant Reddy is elected, he would personally ensure the completion of people’s works. He also urged voters to question Congress leaders about the promises made to them. Criticising the state leadership, Etela Rajender said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has lost public confidence in a very short time. He alleged that the local MLA Mallareddy had admitted his inability to get development works done, and stated that voting for such leaders would be meaningless. He asserted that development is possible only under BJP leadership and claimed that even labour



wages are being paid through funds released by the Central Government. He added that he would always stand with people wherever there is pain or hardship and said that the power to uphold justice lies with the people. Former minister Krishna Yadav also addressed the meeting and said that Telangana needs the leadership of Etela Rajender. He stated that Etela Rajender played a key role in the formation of Telangana and that a poor candidate from the village is contesting the election seeking people’s support. Krishna Yadav alleged that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has failed to implement any of his promises and claimed that no one except Etela Rajender can ensure development and welfare in the state. He cautioned voters not to believe what he described as misleading statements by BRS leaders and said that after elections, such leaders are rarely seen. He added that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is in Delhi and Etela Rajender is here, and appealed to voters to support the BJP by voting for the lotus symbol. Election in-charges Krishna Yadav and Samaranga Reddy, district president Buddi Srinivas, leaders Enugu Sudarshan Reddy, Chandrasekhar Yadav, corporators Lachireddy, Naveen Jeevan Reddy, and other party leaders and workers participated in the programme.

District SP Reviews Helipad, Security Ahead of CM Fadnavis' Visit

“January 5, Indian Chronicle, Taj Khan” “In view of the upcoming visit of Devendra Fadnavis, Chief Minister of Maharashtra, to Kaghaznagar as part of the municipal election campaign, Nithika Panth, Superintendent of Police of Komaram



Bheem Asifabad district, conducted an inspection on Thursday. “The District SP reviewed the helipad site in Kaghaznagar along with the locations designated for the public meeting. During the inspection, she issued several instructions to local police officials and concerned departments regarding security and arrangements. “The inspection was attended by Kaghaznagar DSP Md. Waheeduddin, Kaghaznagar Town CI Prem Kumar, Kaghaznagar Rural CI Kumaraswamy, and other officials. “Later, the District SP carried out a surprise inspection of Bejjur Police Station. She directed officials to take strict action against individuals who attempt to disturb peace and public order.

Preparations Action imminent against Bowenpally Madhavaram Estates.

.. “Secunderabad Cantonment. February.5 (Indian Chronicle): “The Cantonment Board has issued notices and is preparing to take action against large-scale constructions built in an area under its jurisdiction, despite the builders having obtained permissions from the GHMC. Board officials are preparing to take action against Madhavaram Estates, located on the border of the Cantonment's 6th ward and Old Bowenpally division. No permissions were obtained from the Can-



tonment Board for this complex, which encroaches on land under the board's jurisdiction. Three years ago, board officials issued notices to this effect and even pasted copies of the notices on the building walls. Despite this, the owners continued the construction as usual. Recently, a city MLA filed a complaint with the Cantonment Board's senior officials regarding Madhavaram Estates. The written complaint questioned why no action had been taken against the construction undertaken on land under the board's jurisdiction. Following this, board officials issued notices to the builders once again. They also wrote to GHMC officials, questioning how building permissions were granted for land under their jurisdiction. The letter requested the cancellation of the permissions granted in violation of the rules. Meanwhile, it appears that GHMC officials have also issued an occupancy certificate to Madhavaram Estates. It is reported that due to the latest notices from the Cantonment authorities, the mortgage has been put on hold and not yet released authorities.

Uppal Press Club Elects New Executive Committee Vemula Tirupathi Reddy Elected President Unanimously

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 05, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): “The Uppal Press Club has unanimously elected its new executive committee. Vemula Tirupathi Reddy was elected as the President of the prestigious Uppal Press Club.P.



Sagar was elected as Working President, while Gyarampalli Shivaji was chosen as General Secretary. A.V. Sridhar Rao and Kukatla Narottam Reddy were elected as Vice Presidents. Gutti Shekhar was elected as Treasurer, and Dasaraju was elected as Joint Secretary. Kolanu Paka Chandramouli, Dontula Venkata Ram Reddy, Palla Mahender Reddy, Kanchu Srinu, and Kodi Kanti Srinivas will serve as Chief Advisors to the Press Club. The election process was conducted by the Ad Hoc Committee members Venkata Ram Reddy, Chandramouli, and Mahender Reddy, who acted as Election Officers. Former President Venkata Ram Reddy formally handed over responsibilities to the newly elected President. He stated that the newly elected committee will

continue in office for a period of two years. After being elected, President Vemula Tirupathi Reddy stated that the committee would work towards protecting journalistic values and safeguarding the rights of journalists. He emphasized that priority would be given to resolving the issues faced by Press Club members. He further stated that journalists in the Uppal region would be united on a common platform and efforts would be made for their welfare. The committee plans to undertake social responsibility initiatives through the Press Club, provide guidance to young journalists, and strengthen coordination with government officials. He reaffirmed the club's commitment to protecting press freedom and stated that the committee would function with transparency and dedication.



Why will India's foreign policy be a tightrope walk?: Explained

After Prime Minister Narendra Modi was sworn in for a third time in June, the year was jam-packed with incoming and outgoing visits. Above all, 2024 was full of global insecurity and shocks in the neighbourhood, particularly Bangladesh. As 2025 looks to be even more uncertain, Indian foreign policy's biggest challenge is to remain poised for change.

What were the high points in India's external relations?

The most difficult negotiation completed this year was for disengagement at the Line of Actual Control with China. While restoring ties and rebuilding the trust shattered by the Chinese PLA's transgressions since 2020 is a more prolonged task, the first formal Modi-Xi Jinping meeting in five years at Kazan, on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Russia, was a turning point. The year began with a visit from French President Emmanuel Macron as a guest on Republic Day and a reaffirmation of the dependability of bilateral ties. Mr. Macron was not the government's original invitee, as Mr. Modi had hoped to host U.S. President Joseph Biden and also hold the Quad in Delhi that time. But when Mr. Macron stepped in, Mr. Modi set the seal on a number of India-France future forays in defence, energy and maritime cooperation. Early in 2024, the conclusion of the India-European Free Trade Association agreement, India's first with Europe, was heralded as a template for India to complete other such negotiations, although the year ended without similar progress on FTAs with Australia, the U.K., and the European Union. The neighbourhood was also the subject of some bright spots, including the attendance of leaders of most of the neighbouring countries for Mr. Modi's swearing-in. Pakistan wasn't invited, but External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar made the first such visit in nearly a decade to Islamabad for the SCO summit. Several visits by the Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay as well as Mr. Modi's visit to Thimphu to receive an award, and successful visits by the new Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Disanayake and Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu, setting aside the tensions earlier, were other high points of the year.

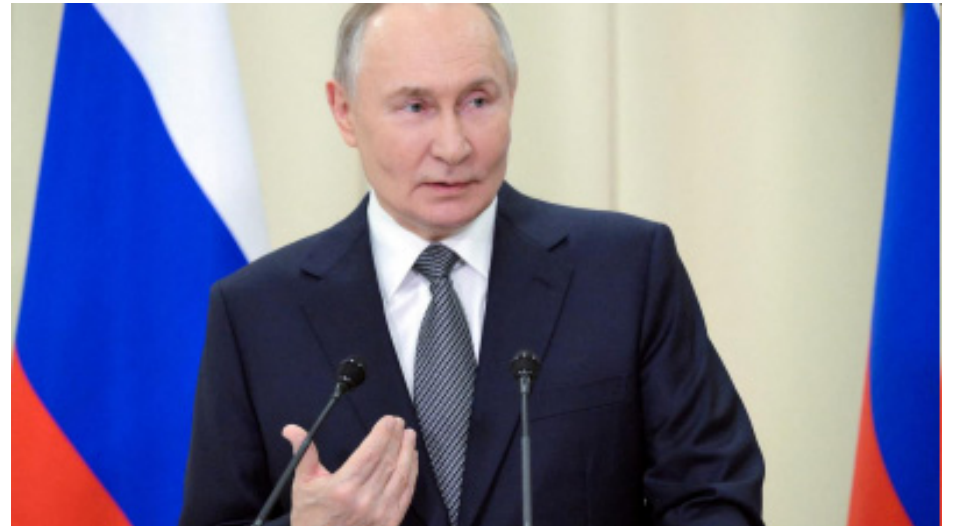
What kept South Block awake at night in 2024?

The transformation of Bangladesh, from a friendly neighbour and most important connectivity partner under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, to becoming estranged over her ouster from power in August was the year's biggest shock for New Delhi. The MEA repeatedly raised concerns over the sharp rise in attacks on Hindu minorities that followed, and Ms. Hasina's stay in India has become the biggest thorn in the once close partnership. Ties with Canada took a turn for the worse as Canadian authorities doubled down on allegations that Indian officials had ordered the Nijjar killing, even naming Home Minister Amit Shah in the alleged conspiracy. New Delhi dealt with Canada by slamming its doors shut on PM Justin Trudeau, with the hope a new government will be elected there in 2025. But it wasn't easy to do the

same with the U.S., where the Department of Justice filed indictments against the Adani group and a new indictment against an Indian official for the alleged Pannun assassination plot. The U.S.'s role in the South Asian neighbourhood, especially with the changes in Bangladesh, and China's forays into Nepal and other neighbours are a continuing challenge. However, the election of U.S. President Donald Trump and the largely pro-India team he has picked could be a breather.

How did Indian foreign policy navigate global conflict?

With both the Russia-Ukraine conflict and Israel's war in Gaza, India consistently put itself on the "side of peace". Mr. Modi's visits to Russia and Ukraine within weeks of each other raised speculation that he would play mediator in future negotiations. There were no high-level visits from or to Israel, and Mr. Modi made a point of meeting Palestinian PM Mahmoud Abbas at the UN. While New Delhi repeatedly called for an end to the civilian casualties, it continued to hedge its position at the UN on resolutions seeking to bring Israel to account for the killing of more than 45,000 in Gaza. With multilateral initiatives like IMEC (India-Middle East Europe-Economic Corri-



dor) and I2U2 (India, Israel, UAE and U.S.) in trouble, India sought to engage West Asian countries bilaterally. In 2025, a more difficult tightrope walk for South Block is expected between Iran and the Israel-U.S. combine.

What's on the diplomatic calendar in 2025?

Mr. Jaishankar's year-end visit to Washington and meetings with the Trump

transition team indicate that ties with the U.S. will be a priority in 2025. Mr. Trump is expected to visit India for the Quad Summit next year and Mr. Modi is likely to call on him in Washington before that. 2025 is expected to begin with a ministerial visit from Iran, followed by U.S. NSA Jake Sullivan for a last-moment iCET (Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology) meet.

Keeping up with UP: RSS chief cautions against raking up temple-mosque disputes

Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat has raised hackles with his advice against raking up temple-mosque disputes, especially in Uttar Pradesh. The advice ahead of the Mahakumbh in Prayagraj, where the Akhil Bhartiya Akhada Parishad, the highest body of 13 Akhadas (Hindu monastic organisations), is likely to take a position on issues, which may include the growing claims of Hindus on temples Muslim rulers allegedly demolished to build mosques. The RSS chief's statement came against the backdrop of violence in Sambhal over the survey of the Shahi Masjid that emperor Babur said to have been built in 1529 after demolishing a temple. The Akhada Parishad may take a divergent view. On December 19, Bhagwat said the Ram Temple in Ayodhya was built to respect the sentiments of the Hindus but to use it to become a "Hindu leader" was unacceptable. Several parishad members have appreciated chief minister Yogi Adityanath, and he may once again muster their support for his ongoing campaign to restore historical temples. Swami Jitendranand Saraswati criticised the RSS chief's remarks, saying despite Bhagwat's similar comments in the past, temple structures have been identified at 56 sites, signalling sustained interest in the contentious issues. He emphasised that religious organisations often align their actions with public sentiment rather than political agendas. The efforts to reclaim the Kashi and Mathura temples is the other contentious issue on which the Akhada Parishad

may take a contrary view. The RSS is not pushing for Kashi and Mathura temples. It neither controls nor spearheads the movement for it. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad, an ancillary body of the RSS, had demanded the liberation of Ayodhya, Mathura, and Kashi temples. It sought the Akhada Parishad's support for the Ayodhya temple. Kashi is more state-sponsored. Adityanath has been hinting at the renovation of Mathura temple. Earlier, Bhagwat advised Hindus against looking for Shivlinga under every mosque and creating social disharmony. There have been few takers for his advice even in the Sangh's associated organisations amid heightened Hindu assertiveness. There has also been a fresh campaign to find abandoned and deserted temples in Muslim areas in places such as Muzaffarnagar, Meerut, and Kanpur which have a history of communal riots. The demographic profile of districts in western Uttar Pradesh changed after communal clashes from 1987 to 2013. In Kanpur, Muslim families started moving from the Hindu-dominated Mall Road, Kamla Towers, Ludhera, Dalelpurva, etc since the 1931 riots. Kanpur mayor Premalata Pandey recently inspected Muslim areas, reopening temples, and ordering their renovation. Some of these deserted temples were encroached upon. Pandey vowed to revive temples. She claimed there were 125 ancient temples in Muslim areas, including Bekanganj, earlier known as Sunar Wali Gali. She ordered the removal of encroachments and warned of "bulldozer action" if Muslim residents created any obstruction.

Small and big temples are being cleaned and whitewashed so that daily worship can resume. Sudhir Dwivedi, vice president of Sanatan Math Mandir Raksha Samiti, is restoring temples with the help of the local community. The focus remains on Raja Yayati Fort said to be centuries old at Jajmau in Kanpur. ASI declared it a protected heritage site after it was discovered in 1968 during the construction of a bridge. In Muzaffarnagar, Hindus and Muslims relocated in the 1990s and this continued until after the 2013 riots. Large-scale migrations to safer zones in western Uttar Pradesh led to a change in demographics. A Hindu, who moved from Muslim-dominated Mehmoodnagar, told HT the situation worsened after homes were attacked during the 1990 riots. "I sold my house for a song and moved out after living there for 26 years. Two Hindu lanes sandwiched between Muslim settlements in a locality have virtually disappeared." Muslims have been leaving Kakra village 20 km away. The mosque here is abandoned and Gayoor, the last of the Muslim inhabitants, is preparing to leave. "Migration of Muslims from urban areas began after the 1987 riots. [Farmer leader] Mahendra Singh Tikait tried to regain the confidence of Muslims but Arya Samaj threw a spanner while the Sangh Parivar's temple movement put up a barrier," Allahabad-based professor A Satyanarayana said. The ghettos that developed after every communal riot in these cities hampered interactions between the two communities that could have addressed conflicts and averted violence.

Why cervical cancer risk goes up because of these misconceptions: Here is what you need to know

Cervical cancer remains one of the most prevalent and deadly cancers affecting women in India, accounting for nearly 60,000 deaths annually. Despite significant advancements in medical research, treatment options and preventive measures, the impact of cervical cancer continues to be devastating. This is largely due to misconceptions, and a lack of awareness.

Does cervical cancer only affect older women?

Contrary to popular belief, cervical cancer is not exclusive to older women. While the majority of cases are diagnosed in women over 30, studies indicate that younger women, particularly those with early sexual activity or exposure to the human papillomavirus (HPV), the cancer-causing virus, are also at risk. According to the National Cancer Registry Programme (NCRP), 25 per cent of cervical cancer cases in India occur in women under 40. Regular screenings like Pap smears and HPV tests are critical for early detection, irrespective of age.

Are poor hygiene practices the primary cause?

While hygiene plays a role in overall reproductive health, the primary cause of cervical cancer is persistent HPV infection. Data from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) shows that nearly 70% of cervical cancer cases in India are caused by high-risk HPV types. Vaccination against HPV, coupled with regular screenings, significantly reduces the risk.

Does cervical cancer treatment guarantee a cure?

Treatment advancements have made cervical cancer one of the most treatable cancers when detected early. However, the possibility of recurrence cannot be ignored, especially in cases diagnosed at advanced stages. Studies indicate that up to 30 per cent of women treated for cervical cancer experience recurrence within two years. Adhering to follow-up care, a healthy lifestyle and timely screenings are essential to minimise this risk.

Can women with cervical cancer ever get pregnant?

One of the most distressing myths is that cervical cancer renders women infertile. While certain treatments, like hysterectomy, may impact fertility, newer fertility-sparing techniques are now available. Procedures like conisation (removal of a cone-shaped tissue) and radical trachelectomy (surgery to remove cervix, vagina and surrounding tissue) allow women with early-stage cervical cancer to preserve their fertility. A 2022 study highlights that nearly 85 per cent of women who underwent these procedures successfully conceived within three years.

Is HPV screening painful?

HPV screening is a quick and relatively painless procedure. It is often performed during a routine pelvic exam, and most women report little to no discomfort during the test. A healthcare provider will collect a sample of cells from the cervix using a small brush or spatula, which typically causes minimal discomfort. The procedure is much less invasive and painful than many women expect, and the ben-

efits of early detection far outweigh any temporary discomfort.

Why do I need HPV screening if I have had the HPV vaccine?

While the HPV vaccine significantly reduces the risk of infection from certain high-risk HPV strains, it does not protect against all strains of the virus. The vaccine primarily protects against the most common cancer-causing types but it does not guarantee immunity against every potential strain that could lead to cervical cancer. Therefore, even women who have been vaccinated should continue to undergo regular HPV screenings as part of their overall cervical cancer prevention strategy. The combination of vaccination and regular screening offers the best protection.

Does a positive HPV test mean I have cervical cancer?

A positive HPV test result does not mean you have cervical cancer. In fact, most HPV infections, particularly those caused by low-risk strains, are cleared by the body on their own within a couple of years. However, a positive test for high-risk HPV strains indicates an increased risk of cervical cancer, but it does not mean cancer is



present. If you test positive, your healthcare provider will likely recommend follow-up testing, such as a Pap smear or a colposcopy, to monitor any potential abnormal

changes in cervical cells. Early detection and regular screenings are crucial for identifying pre-cancerous changes before they develop into full-blown cancer.

Have you made your own emojis yet?: AI has entered the chat

I created tiny stickers to this effect, so I could send them to friends and family, to sum up my experience of house-hunting — the grief of leaving one and trying to find another — in Mumbai. I made the little icons using a tool called Emoji Kitchen. Launched by Gboard, the Google virtual-keyboard app, in 2020, it allows users to mash emojis together to create new ones compatible with platforms such as WhatsApp, Snapchat and Telegram. It has been more widely used since 2023, when it became available via Google search (without the need to download the app). Another tech giant has now entered the space of customisable emojis.

In December, Apple released Genmoji, which uses artificial intelligence (AI) to generate customised emojis across Apple devices. It's as simple as typing the idea into the emoji option in iMessage. A public demonstration in June saw an Apple executive generate, in real time, a funky icon of a crocodile wearing a tutu on a surfboard. A public demonstration of Genmoji by Apple in June saw an Apple executive generate, in real time, a funky icon of a crocodile wearing a tutu on a surfboard. A public demonstration of Genmoji by Apple in June saw an Apple executive generate, in real time, a funky icon of a crocodile wearing a tutu on a surfboard. The graphic-design platform Canva allows premium users to generate custom emojis using AI. Since 2022, Telegram has had a custom emoji feature in its premium offerings too. Meanwhile, Unicode Consortium, the US-based non-profit that approves and standardises the world's official, universal set, has been approving

fewer and fewer new ones.

"The Unicode Emoji Subcommittee (ESC) has entered a new era where the primary way... to move forward is not merely to add more... but to consider how the ones added provide the most linguistic flexibility," illustrator-designer Jennifer Daniel, who leads this effort, said on her blog, Did Someone Say Emoji?. The focus, going forward, is to ensure that the emoji library doesn't become a "junk drawer," she added. In 2024, then, just eight new ones have been approved: 1) face with bags under the eyes, 2) lifeless tree, 3) harp, 4) shovel, 5) fingerprint, 6) purple splatter (a mess, paint, ink, stain), 7) beetroot (for a vegetarian diet) and 8) the flag of Sark, a self-governing British dependency in the English Channel. That's a sharp drop from 31 new emojis in 2022 (including the long-requested pink heart), 112 in 2021 (including the disco ball and saluting face), 117 in 2020 and 230 in 2019. Rather than new ones, recent updates to the emoji standard have focused on a greater representation of cultures, communities, genders and skin tones. In 2019, for instance, about 17 icons representing the differently abled were added. ***With AI set to sprout a garden of emojis, and Unicode prepping to encode fewer of them, what does the future look like, for us and them? The aim is to eventually have so wide an expression of events, possibilities and emotions that one may use to express joy, or combine and to express quite the opposite. AI could help in this mission as well as hurt, says cognitive scientist, comics theorist and emoji researcher Neil Cohn, who has worked with Daniel over the years to create emojis.



"AI-generated emojis may help people come up with interesting ways to express themselves visually, but I also think it might be too wide open. One of the advantages of the emoji is that they use a fairly small, fixed set of expressions. Because of this, people have internalised many, and their meanings are, by and large, clearly understood," he says. The ability to craft emojis in seconds could help bridge the gaps that exist in the current set, which is still quite West- and Japan-centric, adds Lieke Verheijen, assistant professor of language and communication at Radboud University in the Netherlands. However, unless these emojis are standardised or freely accessible on a global scale, they cannot meaningfully impact the lack of representation. "Perhaps, with AI entering the picture," Verheijen adds, "this would be a good time for Unicode to reassess who approves new emojis, and how."