

Work on Kyathanpalli RoB dragging on for a decade

Mancherial: Work on a road over bridge across a railway crossing on the outskirts of Kyathanpalli village in Mandamarri mandal has been dragging on for nearly a decade. In order to ease traffic and to reduce waiting time for motorists at the railway crossing, a road over bridge was sanctioned in 2015 at an estimated cost of Rs.31 crore. A sum of Rs.4 crore was earmarked for the bridge across the railway line, while Rs.27 crore was allocated for acquiring lands and laying approach roads.

The construction of the bridge over the railway line was completed in 2016. But, balance works including approach roads on either side of the bridge are being executed at a snail's pace. Farmers who were displaced by the structure initially did not come forward to give away their land. A major portion of them, however, allowed the government to acquire the land after former Chennur MLA Balka Suman held consultations with them. The work gained a momentum for some period.

Still, the work on the approach roads relating to the bridge is progressing at sluggish pace for the last few months. The delay in completion of the work is not only causing inconvenience to motorists and locals, but is also allegedly contributing to accidents. Two youngsters who attempted to cross the railway line were killed on the spot when a speeding train hit them on November 15. Sameer, a snake bite victim died while being shifted to a hospital in Mancherial town as the gate remained closed for quite a long time. Locals said that many such incidents go unreported.

"People of Kyathanpalli town and surrounding villages are bearing the brunt of the delay of the work on the bridge. They are forced to wait for at least 30 minutes to cross the railway line in order to reach the district headquarters for various needs including medical emergencies every day," Sadanandam D, a local said, urging officials to take steps to expedite the work. The Roads and Building department executive engineer V Narasimha Chary told



'Telangana Today' that due to hurdles in land acquisition of land on the side of Kyathanpalli to the bridge, the work was getting delayed. Farmers say they would give land only the compensation is cred-

ited to their bank accounts. Funds will be deposited in their accounts soon. Efforts are being made to throw the bridge open to the public by two or three months, he said.

Siddipet farmers continue postcard campaign



Siddipet: Farmers of Siddipet are continuing their postcard campaign for the fourth consecutive day on Thursday. The farmers wrote letters to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy demanding him to implement the bonus of Rs.500 per quintal of paddy for the Yasangi crop. They also urged Revanth Reddy to implement the Rs

2 lakh loan waiver and Rs.15,000 Rythu Bharosa promises with immediate effect. Farmers at Magdumpur, Thornala and Bussapur villages came together to write letters to the Chief Minister on Thursday.

The Siddipet postcard campaign was launched by the farmers on April 15, with farmers from various parts of the district

joining in to write the letters drawing inspiration from them. Former MPP of Nanganur mandal Japa Srikanth Reddy, who reached the paddy procurement centre at Magdumpur on Thursday to support the farmers, said paddy farmers had got a poor yield this Yasangi because of untimely rains and lack of sufficient irrigation water. Since the Congress came to power promising a bonus of Rs.500 per quintal of paddy, the farmers were expecting some solace.

However, the State government was delaying the bonus citing the model code of conduct as a reason again. BRS mandal

president Lingam Goud said the Congress was citing the election code just as a reason as it was not committed to implementing promises made during the Assembly election campaign.

There was no election code in force when the Congress came to power in December. "Why did they not implement the bonus to the Vanakalam paddy if they were committed to it?" he asked, stating that the BRS would continue to fight for farmers and force the government to implement the promises of the Rs.500 bonus, Rs 2 lakh loan waiver and Rs.15,000 Rythu Bharosa assistance.

Pegasystems launch AI-powered mentor

Hyderabad: Pegasystems Inc., the noted AI decisioning and workflow automation platform provider, introduced Pega GenAI Coach, a generative AI-powered mentor for Pega solutions that proactively advises users to help them achieve optimal outcomes.

Leveraging an organization's own best practices for sales, service, and operations, Coach quickly analyzes a user's work and relevant data in context to intelligently guide them toward better and faster results, according to a press release from the company. The Pega GenAI Coach directly integrates into workflows and acts as an always-on mentor within Pega solutions. It analyzes work and guides users with salient advice to overcome roadblocks. Managers can use Coach to quickly get up to speed on their team's work and surface insights into their team's performance.

Critics may rant, but Erling Haaland's second season for Manchester City has been far from disappointing

Manchester City's Erling Haaland reacts during the English Premier League soccer match between Manchester City and Luton Town at Etihad stadium in Manchester, England, Saturday. (AP) Manchester City's Erling Haaland reacts during the English Premier League soccer match between Manchester City and Luton Town at Etihad stadium in Manchester, England, Saturday. (AP)

"What does he know about English football?" the pundits sneered when Arsene Wenger assumed reins of Arsenal from Nagoya Grampus, a Japanese League club. Over the next two decades, the Frenchman changed the game in England, both cultural and sporting, and left the shores as a loved visionary. Several managers and players with strange accents and alien surnames would enrich and embellish the game in what is hyped as the most competitive league in the world. Yet, an innate scepticism remains, to scrutinise those from beyond the isles with an extra lens of criticism, to subconsciously find faults and flaws, and to pounce on their slightest slip-ups.

This season, Erling Haaland would have fathomed the merciless scrutiny from former players, failed managers and middle-aged fanboys masquerading as pundits, the meaning of their mic-picking, often reduced to hectoring rivals. The Norwegian, former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher wrote in a column for The Telegraph, is a world-class finisher but not a world-class player yet. "An ultimate luxury player", reads his first sentence. The piece, in itself, is not a scathing rant on Haaland, but clickbait-ish stuff naturally swallowed the meat of the copy, which focuses on where Haaland needs to improve, and how high-class centre-backs have suffocated him in recent times. His sparring partner in the commentary box, Roy Keane, too entered the ring, remarking that "he is almost like a League Two player", after his lacklustre performance against Arsenal two game-weeks ago.

All that made it sound as though Haaland has endured a harrowing patch. It is both true and untrue. He has not bettered or matched the stratospheric standards of last season, wherein he racked up 52 goals in 53 games, besides plotting nine assists, in City's treble-winning season. This season, his numbers are a more mortal 31 strikes and half a dozen assists from 38 games. He has missed more straightforward chances than ever before (the one against Manchester United baffles!), he has meandered anonymously in several games. Skilled defenders like Antonio Rudiger and William Saliba have indeed strangled him. He sits 557th among 562 in the non-penalty goals minus expected goals ratio, a loose measure of striking efficiency. He has scored just one goal in eight games this season against the top four in the Premier League and Real Madrid.

But all this was only to be expected. The second season would have always been tougher than the first. Defenders get more accustomed to his movements and patterns, analysts spend more time on de-

tecting his fallibilities. Even greats like Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi have waded through such passages. Barcelona rendered Ronaldo a mere spectator in the 2009 Champions League final, and as did Inter Milan lock Messi in the next edition. But both bounced back to scale greatness. Haaland has not yet been granted entry to that hallowed space, but his prowess gleams. Easily forgotten is that he spent a considerable time of the season on the treatment table. It perhaps explains his rush to strike — last season he spent .88 seconds for every goal-bound shot. This season, he has expended only .69. He could be over-wary of tackles flying into him. With more goals, he could re-discover his composure.

Another much circulated criticism is that Haaland could be a liability when he does not score. Of the 41 games he has not scored in, City have lost nine. When he scores, the win percentage shoots to 88. Keane blasted his lack of work-rate when City did not have the ball and his lack of contribution in defensive transitions. Manchester City's Erling Haaland, centre, celebrates after scoring his side's third goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Manchester City and Luton Town at Etihad stadium in Manchester, England, Manchester City's Erling Haaland, centre, celebrates after scoring his side's third goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Manchester City and Luton Town at Etihad stadium in Manchester, England.



(AP) But this was a pact with the devil Guardiola made when he signed him, when he chose a classical striker for a false nine, or an auxiliary midfielder. He had to retool his team to a more direct entity, as Haaland likes the ball quickly into him. It meant less control in midfield and fewer passing options in the centre of the park. The absence of John Stones, the play-making centre-back, the recurring injury to Kevin de Bruyne and the departure of Ilkay Gundogan this season only compounded Guardiola's woes and, in turn, reduced the Haaland's influence.

There, though, are ample signs that he is sharpening his defensive side. There was an instance in the game against Real Madrid wherein he galloped back frenziedly to catch Vinicius Junior at the other end. Guardiola pointed out how he has helped create space for his colleagues.

"He helps us to make more spaces in the areas and his contribution has been exceptional since the day he arrived last season," he said before the game against Luton Town when probed about Haaland's impact. The City manager, of course, has heard and read about the doomsday narratives surrounding Haaland from the day he landed in England. From 'will he adapt to the physicality in the Premier League' to 'how long will the bubble last' tropes. Last year, he would even say: "You are waiting for Haaland to fail." Still they are, and even minute blemishes are overblown. And they would be when Real Madrid arrive at the Etihad this week to decide the Champions League quarterfinal. He might nick a goal, or perhaps not, he might win another treble, win the Golden Boot and perhaps the Ballon'd'Or. But the same rant would echo: "What does he know of English football?"

Decoding India's all-natural gift to the world: learn more about fitkari and its benefits

Fitkari or alum has been extensively written about in Ayurveda and has been a part of Indian culture for centuries. Known for its natural healing and antimicrobial properties, it has recently caught the attention of several countries in the west as a natural deodorant and antiseptic. Dr Swetha Sridhar, assistant professor, Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital explains, "Alum stone, known scientifically as hydrated potassium aluminum sulfate, has a long history of use in traditional medicine and skincare. It is recognised for its astringent and antiseptic properties, primarily due to the aluminum ions it contains."

So, what can fitkari be used for?

Alum can be included as part of dental hygiene products like toothpaste and mouthwash, where it helps reduce gum inflammation and inhibit bacterial growth. The antibacterial properties of alum help fight off acne including blackheads and whiteheads. It can also help heal acne scars. Fitkari functions as an astringent as well, helping tighten the skin's pores and giving a fresh glow to the skin. Due to its antimicrobial and antibacterial properties, fitkari makes for a great deodorant especially for the warm summer months in India. It effectively fights odour-producing



bacteria and keeps you smelling and feeling fresh all day. Even though fitkari is renowned for its benefits, Dr Sridhar reminds that one should always tread carefully. She asserts that people should keep the following concerns in mind: Being a natural astringent, alum can lead to skin dryness. Its use can strip the skin of essential oils, leading to excessive dryness, particularly in individuals with sensitive skin or when applied to delicate areas such as the underarms. Routine use on the skin is not universally recommended, especially without prior patch testing, due to the risk of

irritation and potential for causing dryness. In sensitive individuals, particularly those with predisposed skin conditions, alum usage may exacerbate dryness and irritation. Additionally, its application on Indian skin types has been noted, in some cases, to lead to pigmentation issues, likely due to irritation or an overreaction of the skin to the drying effects. It's advisable to use alum with caution, says Dr Sridhar, considering its astringent nature. Individuals interested in using fitkari for skincare or health purposes should conduct a patch test to gauge sensitivity.

PBPartners unveils its future-ready vision at annual flagship business meet, Shapath 3.0

PBPartners, the PoSP arm of Policybazaar, proudly announced the successful culmination of its flagship annual business meet, Shapath 3.0, held recently in Gurgaon. This event unveiled PBPartners' commitment to fostering innovation, technological advancement, and financial inclusion in the Indian insurance sector. Shapath is an annual meetup of key stakeholders at PBPartners to discuss how the year that went by fared, goals for the new financial year and strategies to up-scale the business, and boost financial inclusion amongst agent partners. They also discussed how PBPartners has been able to ease customer pain-points by offering customised services and guidance to policyholders; and how to level it up.

Shapath 3.0 served as a platform for key forces within PBPartners' business ecosystem to come together and discuss ground-breaking strategies for this financial year through an array of presentations, panel discussions, and immersive experiences. The event featured specialized business unit sessions designed to provide valuable insights into PBPartners' strategic initiatives across various sectors, including health, motor and life insurance. These sessions were geared towards enhancing customer experiences and driving insurance penetration. At the heart of Shapath 3.0 were discussions centered around sustainability and scalability in the insurance industry. Dhruv Sarin, PBPartners' Co-founder, articulated the importance of delivering a seamless experience to partners, enabling them to effectively reach a maximum number of customers. Sarin underscored the significance of streamlining transaction processes and providing agent partners with efficient productivity tools to facilitate engagement.



Sarin further added "Our efforts last year, coupled with digital efficiencies, a vast agent partner network and an array of products, have been in alignment with the industry's collective vision to bridge protection gap beyond metros. Our goal for the upcoming year is to construct a robust and sustainable business model that thrives on scalability, firmly anchored on

the pillars of technology and data. Leveraging our valuable insights from nearly three years of collaboration with agent partners, customers, and insurance companies, we are committed to forging a seamless partner experience built on trust. By empowering our partners with a cutting-edge platform, spanning 400 cities and 17,000 pin codes, we aim to extend our

reach to the depths of India, and not just the nation's length and breadth. Another key focus area for us this year is consumer-centric innovations that will help financially protect Indians against the 3Ds - Death, Disease and Disability. Our mission is not solely to facilitate insurance transactions but also to empower our agent partners, both intellectually and financially

Google fires 28 employees in Israel government contract protest



In an internal memo to employees, the company said that behaviour like this "has no place in our workplace, and we will not tolerate it."

New Delhi: Tech giant Google has laid off 28 employees who were involved in sit-in protests at its offices over a Google contract with the Israeli government. The layoffs happened after nine employees were suspended and then arrested in the US earlier this week, reports The Verge. The 28 employees who have been asked to go protested a \$1.2 billion Google Cloud contract for the Israeli government.

In an internal memo to employees, the company said that behaviour like this "has no place in our workplace, and we will not tolerate it." "The overwhelming majority of our employees do the right thing. If you're one of the few who are tempted to think we're going to overlook conduct that vio-

lates our policies, think again," Google told the staff. "The company takes this extremely seriously, and we will continue to apply our longstanding policies to take action against disruptive behaviour — up to and including termination." The group behind the protests called Google's move a "flagrant act of retaliation." "Google workers have the right to peacefully protest about the terms and conditions of our labour.

These firings were clearly retaliatory," said the group called "No Tech for Apartheid." The company said that following an investigation, "we terminated the employment of twenty-eight employees found to be involved. We will continue to investigate and take action as needed."

MG Motor India joins forces with Epsilon Group to enhance EV Ecosystem in India

MoU signed with Epsilon Group's subsidiaries- Power EV for charging solutions and LICO for battery life management

MG Motor India has announced its partnership with the Epsilon Group, reinforcing its commitment to the EV charging infrastructure and ecosystem in India. As part of the strategic collaboration, carmaker signed an MoU with two Epsilon Group subsidiaries - Power EV, for charging solutions and LICO, for battery recycling and second-life expertise. The unified framework of this alliance underscores the commitment to developing an efficient charging infrastructure and battery lifecycle management that will underpin MG Motor India's EV stance.

Power EV offers a diverse array of AC and DC Chargers, which accommodates charging speeds from 22kW to 120kW with Power Panel Management Software, that empowers usage of charging stations with unprecedented ease and efficiency. As per the agreement, Power EV will provide Custom Charging technology to develop AC and DC charging solutions for charging solutions for MG's EVs, thereby enhancing the end-user experience. Through active involvement in the MG Charge initiative - deploying 1000 charging points in 1000 days within residential communities and apartments across India - Power EV aims to bolster the existing public charging network by expanding the availability of AC chargers and introducing high-capacity DC charging options. Additionally, this partnership will capitalise on Power EV's expertise to innovate efficient, smart, robust and state-of-art charging technologies tailored for MG Motor India's forthcoming EV models.

LICO contributes to battery circularity through end-of-life battery recycling and refurbishing, to recover critical materials like lithium, cobalt, manganese, and nickel for reuse, fostering sustainability. LICO and MG Motor India will together implement strategies for battery repurposing in line with circular economy, focusing on renewable energy storage and ensuring compliance with end-of-life battery recycling regulations. LICO will assist MG Motor India in its Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) obligations by providing comprehensive battery recycling and certification services. Through R&D collaboration, they shall develop a sustainable package to optimise recycling efficiency and repurposing capabilities to derive maximum potential from EV battery recycling. The partnership emphasises the implementation of essential safety standards and traceability in Reverse Logistics for end-of-life battery packs.

Commenting on the partnership, Gaurav Gupta, Chief Growth Officer, MG Motor India, said, "MG Motor India has consistently advocated sustainability ever since it started operations in India, and has driven the development of a robust EV ecosystem in India. Our collaboration with the Epsilon Group signifies a strategic alliance aimed at realizing this vision through an efficient charging infrastructure which aids and complements a circular economy by way of second-life and end-of-life solutions for batteries. By combining our expertise



and resources, we are helping pave the way for an efficient, accelerated adoption of EVs and aiming for a greener tomorrow. Vikram Handa, Managing Direc-

tor, Epsilon Group, said, "The MoU with MG Motor India marks a significant milestone in our journey towards promoting faster adoption for green mobility energy and circular economy principles. By providing

custom charging technology and implementing innovative battery repurposing strategies, we are contributing towards building a greener, more sustainable tomorrow.

Google employees arrested and placed on leave after sit-in protests against Israel contract

Several Google employees in the U.S. were placed on leave and/or arrested after they carried out a sit-in protest at company offices in New York and California to demonstrate against Project Nimbus - a \$1.2 billion deal with Amazon that supports the Israeli government's technology infrastructure. The organisation No Tech for Apartheid issued a statement on Thursday, claiming that over two dozen Google workers had been "indiscriminately" fired in an act of retaliation by the company. During the sit-ins on Tuesday, protesting workers livestreamed footage of themselves being arrested in both cities, with the No Tech for Apartheid organisation calling them the 'Nimbus Nine.' The sit-ins lasted close to 10 hours, with workers holding up signs calling for Project Nimbus to be dropped. "Google cited 'bullying' and 'harassment' as the reasons for workers' firing. If there has been any bullying or harassment at the company, our Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim colleagues have been the recipients," said No Tech for Apartheid in its statement, adding that Google's allegations of property damage were false. Tech workers worldwide are split in their reac-



tion to the ongoing bombardment of Palestinians in the Gaza strip, with some openly supporting Israel's military and volunteering their services to help locate people taken hostage by Hamas, while others are organising targeted boycotts against firms like HP and Siemens, or disrupting the companies supporting Israel's military. OpenAI chief Sam Altman said in January that Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian colleagues in tech were fearful of shar-

ing their experiences, as they worried about retaliation or hurting their career. Acknowledging he was Jewish, Altman said that he received support in the face of growing antisemitism but that his Muslim peers did not receive similar backing. Another OpenAI official deleted his posts on X and apologised in December after it was found he was calling for the Israeli military to increase its bombardment of Gaza.

Airtel Payments Bank Launches Interoperable Eco-friendly NCMC Enabled Debit and Pre-paid Cards

Airtel Payments Bank today announced the launch of its eco-friendly NCMC (National Common Mobility Cards) enabled debit and pre-paid cards. The Bank has partnered with National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) to launch these interoperable cards that are powered by RuPay. The launch comes in alignment with the Bank's commitment to India's One Nation, One Card vision. The Bank has introduced NCMC enabled debit card for its savings account customers and NCMC enabled pre-paid card for the wallet customers. Both cards are being made from eco-friendly e-PVC material, which is certified for its environmental sustainability. The adoption of these cards allows Airtel Payments Bank to make a significant positive impact on the environment.

Customers can use any of the cards to make safe, secure and contactless payments at all merchant establishments, online (e-commerce), as well as offline NCMC transit transactions at metros, buses, parking, etc across the country. At

metro stations, commuters would just have to tap and go at the gates without the hassle to get in queues and purchase tickets. The card also facilitates the issuance of concession and monthly passes wherever supported by the transport operator, eliminating the necessity to buy and handle multiple cards for various transport operators.

Speaking about the launch, Ganesh Ananthanarayanan, Chief Operating Officer of Airtel Payments Bank said, "We are delighted to introduce our eco-friendly range of NCMC enabled Cards, which are made using recycled PVC. Airtel Payments Bank upholds the principles of responsible consumption and production to contribute to a sustainable future. These cards exemplify our dedication to sustainability, emphasizing our commitment to delivering a secure and convenient banking experience. We support India's vision of One Nation, One Card and will continue to work towards this." Commenting on the partnership, Praveena Rai, COO, NPCI said, "We



aim to redefine the landscape of transit payments, offering seamless and efficient options for commuters. This partnership not only showcases our commitment to revolutionizing the payment ecosystem but also emphasizes our dedication to meeting the evolving needs of customers, fostering a future where digital transactions in transit are streamlined, secure, and widely acces-

sible."

Customers can now order Airtel Payments Bank's NCMC enabled Debit Card from the Airtel Thanks App, or acquire it by visiting the nearest banking points or from any of the designated points at the various metro stations. The NCMC enabled Pre-paid Cards will soon be available on online and retail platforms.

PhonePe's Share.Market Introduces Futures & Options Segment with focus on Intelligence



Share.Market, a PhonePe product, today announced the launch of its Futures and Options (F&O) segment. This addition marks a significant milestone in the platform's mission to empower traders with comprehensive trading tools and resources which will facilitate an enhanced trading experience with a dedicated focus on the Intelligence layer. Within seven months of the launch of the business, total Share.Market lifetime customers are over 1.55M with over 1.4M monthly active MF SIP transactions. In addition, Share.Market has been able to provide access to Intelligence to over 75,000+ users (daily app engagement) with 1.5L demat accounts. The introduction of F&O capabilities on Share.Market enhances the platform's offerings, with a comprehensive Option chain analysis to track Options. Futures and

Options contracts across various Indices and Stocks play a role in Investor and Trader journey to manage risk, hedge positions, and enhance the overall return profile through efficient portfolio management. To bring more Intelligence, trader focused data points around greeks and strategy building with effective money management will be rolled out.

Key features of the F&O offering include: Robust Trading Interface: A user-friendly interface designed to streamline the trading process, enabling Traders to execute F&O trades with ease and efficiency. Effective risk management capabilities around tracking and managing orders includes optimal capital allocation and timely exits. Evolving Intelligence layer: Enhanced Option Chain with Max Pain, Put Call Ratio (PCR) and easy visualization of

Open Interest (OI) change, together with charting capabilities of individual Future and Option instruments has been launched. Many more features around hedging, mechanics for strategy selection, building blocks behind strategy execution and management are all in the pipeline. Leveraging Pledge for Margin Trading: For seasoned traders, there is an option of getting collateral margin through pledging of existing holdings. Educational resources: Along with an Intelligence layer on the platform, augmenting with access to educational resources, tutorials, and webinars to help traders deepen their understanding of F&O trading strategies and concepts. Talking about the launch of F&O, Ujjwal Jain, CEO, Share.Market said, "As Investors and Traders empower themselves to Invest and Trade better, Share.Market has been able to take the ambitious steps to elevate Discount Broking powered by Intelligence." He further added, "With the launch of Futures and Options trading to our platform, we are fur-

ther expanding our suite of offerings. This addition will further strengthen our efforts to empower investors and traders with the tools and resources they need to navigate today's dynamic financial markets." The launch of the F&O feature underscores Share.Market's dedication to innovation and customer-centricity. By continuously enhancing its platform with new features and capabilities, Share.Market remains at the forefront of the industry, catering to the evolving needs of investors and traders. Launched in August end 2023, Share.Market elevates discount broking by providing market intelligence, quantitative research-based WealthBaskets, a scalable technology platform, and a great customer experience for investors and traders alike. It provides a wide spectrum of investment products allowing investors across different demographics to build a well-rounded and balanced portfolio. Share.Market offers stocks (intraday and delivery), Exchange-Traded Funds (ETFs), Mutual Funds, and WealthBaskets.

Parenting is 18 years of prompt engineering: Elon Musk

New Delhi: Raising a kid is 18 years of prompt engineering, said Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk on Wednesday. "Whoa, I just realised that raising a kid is basically 18 years of prompt engineering," he wrote in a post on X.com. The father of 11 children, Musk had earlier said: "Having children is saving the world."

In his post on Wednesday, Musk also cautioned on what schools can teach the children. "Our first child will be born next month – what's your biggest piece of advice?" asked a user. "Be super careful about what schools teach your kids," Musk replied.

Smriti Irani on why she chose to participate in Miss India 1998: 'I thought that if someone questioned me on stage...'

Before turning to politics, Smriti Irani was a well-known face on television for more than a decade — best known for essaying the role of Tulsi Virani in the daily show, *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi*. But did you know that she was also a finalist in the 1998 Miss India contest? Sharing why she chose to participate in the beauty pageant, Irani said that she thought it was an opportunity to hone and showcase her oratory skills.

"I did enter Miss India contest because there was an opportunity to converse, to speak. It was not only about looking good, it was also about the presentation of the self. I thought that if someone questioned me on stage, I would respond with such a mind-blowing answer that I would fetch the crown. But I was wrong," the Union Cabinet Minister Irani said in a conversation with *Curly Tales'* Kamiya Jani. According to Irani, who started as a model, back then one did not need to have good conversation skills or general knowledge to participate in Miss India. All that was needed was a "good face", she admitted. In many of her previous conversations, Irani has also spoken about her initial struggles, which included working at McDonald's when it was newly opened in India.

Looking back at her journey, Irani shared that she has also been criticised for her "looks". "I was also rejected a lot of times. A lot of people said, I look uncouth, others said I am dark-skinned. Some others said I look emaciated. If I was too thin,



then it was a problem. If I am too fat, then that is also an issue. It depends on people's mood on how they pick," said Irani, who also undertook a few modelling campaigns after Miss India. A little search also led us to her introductory video from the Miss In-

dia 1998 contest. "At 21, I stand at 5 feet 8 inches tall. I am pursuing training in literature and love adventure sports," said Irani. "As a collegium of culture, India is of great interest to me — the people who govern it. Therefore, it goes without saying that

I am very interested in politics," she was seen saying in the throwback video shared by The Universal Pageantry page on Facebook. The video also sees her sashaying down the Miss India ramp during one of the pre-rounds.

The story of Indian political parties' symbols, and how Congress got the hand, BJP the lotus

Election symbols are a critical component of elections. They are a party's identity, and help voters recognise candidates. When parties split, a battle is fought for its election symbol. What is the history of the iconic election symbols of the country's oldest and largest parties, the Congress' 'Hand', and the BJP's 'Lotus'? Before the first Lok Sabha election of 1951-52, the Election Commission of India (ECI) realised that election symbols were critical in a country where the literacy rate was less than 20%. It was decided that symbols should be familiar and easily recognisable, and should not show any object with a religious or sentimental association, such as cow, temple, the National Flag, spinning wheel, etc. Parties that were recognised as national and state parties, were offered choices from a list of 26 symbols approved by the ECI.

How are election symbols allotted in India?

At present, Rules 5 and 10 of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961 deal with symbols. Rule 5 states that the ECI shall "specify the symbols that may be chosen by candidates at elections in parliamentary or assembly constituencies and the restrictions to which their choice shall be subject".

The Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968 defines a "reserved symbol" as one that is "reserved for a recognised political party for exclusive allotment to [its] contesting candidates". A "free symbol" is "a symbol other than a reserved symbol". Festive offer Election symbols, Election Commission of India, poll symbols, Janata Party poll symbol, Congress poll symbol, Hand, Lotus, Lotus election symbol history, Lotus evolution, free and fair elections, indian express news Before the first Lok Sabha election of 1951-52, the Election Commission of India (ECI) realised that election symbols were critical in a country where the literacy rate was less than 20%. Free symbols are allotted to independents and unrecognised registered parties based on their request and preferences. Symbol of the Congress Ahead of the first election, the preferred symbol of the Indian National Congress was 'Plough with Bullocks', followed by 'Congress Flag with Charkha'. However, on August 17, 1951, the Congress was allotted 'Two Bulls (later 'Bullocks') with Yoke on'. The 'Human Hand', the Congress symbol today, was allotted to the All India Forward Bloc (Ruiker Group). In 1969, the Congress split into the Congress (O) and Congress (R), where 'O',

headed by S Nijalingappa, stood for 'Organisation' and 'R', headed by Jagjivan Ram, for 'Requisitionists'. On January 11, 1971, the ECI decided that Jagjivan Ram's Congress, which was supported by Indira Gandhi, was the real Congress. But the Supreme Court stayed the ECI's order and ruled that neither group would be entitled to use 'Two Bullocks with Yoke on'. On January 25, 1971, the ECI allotted 'Charkha being Plied by Woman' to the Nijalingappa group, and 'Calf and Cow' to the Jagjivan Ram/ Indira group. Several leaders objected, saying 'Calf and Cow' or 'Gomaata' was related to religious sentiments, but the ECI overruled these objections. In the late Seventies, the Indira-Jagjivan Ram Congress split again, and the anti-Indira group was led by Devaraj Urs and K Brahmananda Reddy. On January 2, 1978, Indira was elected president of the Indian National Congress, and she approached ECI to retain 'Calf and Cow'. After the ECI said no, Indira moved the SC, which refused to interfere and dismissed the petition as withdrawn. On February 2, 1978, the ECI recognised the Indira group as a national party named Indian National Congress (I) and allotted it the symbol 'Hand'. In 1979, the ECI froze the symbol 'Calf and Cow', and later recognised the Devraj Urs

faction as a national party named Indian National Congress (U) with the symbol 'Charkha'. The ECI subsequently decided that Congress (I) was in fact the real Indian National Congress. From the 1984 Lok Sabha election onward, Congress (I) became Congress, with the 'Hand' election symbol. The Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) was allotted 'Deepak' ('Lamp') as its election symbol on September 7, 1951. The BJS continued to use 'Lamp' until it was informally merged with the Janata Party before the 1977 election. Janata was born as an amalgam of four national parties and some unrecognised parties. But the Janata Party very soon suffered a series of splits. On April 6, 1980, a group of leaders who had earlier been with the BJS met in Delhi and declared Atal Bihari Vajpayee as their leader. Both groups claimed to be the real Janata; however, the ECI ruled that neither could use the name until its final decision. On April 24, 1980, the ECI froze the Janata Party's symbol 'Haldhar within Wheel', and recognised Vajpayee's group as a national party under the name of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and allotted it the symbol 'Lotus'. Besides 'Haldhar within Wheel', the Janata splits resulted in the freezing of four other symbols — 'Lamp' (of the erstwhile BJS), 'Tree' (of the erstwhile Socialist Party),

From tea to rice: 5 food items you should never reheat (and why)

Reheating foods, especially leftovers, is a common practice in most kitchens across the world. But if experts are to go by, reheating is not good for your health. "It is important to understand that not all foods react well to this process," said Garima Goyal, a clinical dietitian. That is because reheating certain foods can lead to a loss of flavour, texture, nutritional value, and safety. As such, let's find out why reheating certain food items is discouraged.

Tea contains delicate compounds like antioxidants and polyphenols, which contribute to its flavour and health benefits. When tea is brewed initially, it releases various compounds, including tannins and catechins. Reheating tea can cause these compounds to degrade, leading to a loss of flavour and even potential benefits. "Tea contains caffeine, which can become more concentrated upon reheating, potentially causing adverse effects like jitteriness or sleep disturbances. Reheating tea can also potentially contribute to acidity due to the breakdown of certain compounds and changes in pH levels," said Goyal.

Reheating tea, Goyal said, can cause the release of tannic acid, which is a polyphenol compound found in tea leaves. "Tannic acid can impart a more acidic taste to the tea, particularly if it has been reheated multiple times," shared Goyal. Furthermore, if the tea is left standing for an extended period after brewing and then reheated, it can become more acidic as bacteria present in the tea may produce acidic byproducts through fermentation. "For individuals prone to acid reflux or gastrointestinal issues, consuming acidic beverages like reheated tea may exacerbate symptoms. To minimise acidity and ensure optimal taste and benefits, it's best to brew tea fresh each time and avoid reheating," said Goyal. Spinach contains nitrates, which are converted into nitrites when reheated. "Nitrites can then react with amino acids to form nitrosamines, which are known carcinogens. Reheating spinach can also lead to a loss of water-soluble vitamins like vitamin C and B vitamins, diminishing its nutritional value," Goyal said. Furthermore, spinach is a rich source of iron, particularly non-heme iron — the form of iron found in plant-based foods. Non-heme iron is more susceptible to oxidation compared to heme iron, the type found in animal products. "When spinach is cooked and then reheated, the iron present in the spinach can undergo oxidation, a chemical reaction that occurs when iron comes into contact with oxygen in the air. This oxidation process can result in the formation of iron oxides, which can change the colour and taste of the spinach," said Goyal.

Additionally, the oxidation of iron in reheated spinach can affect its nutritional value as oxidised iron may not be as readily absorbed by the body compared to non-oxidised iron, potentially reducing the overall iron bioavailability of reheated spinach. Furthermore, the oxidation of iron makes it less palatable. Further, reheated spinach tends to develop a slimy texture and bitter taste, making it less appealing. "To pre-

serve the nutrients and avoid the formation of harmful compounds, consuming fresh spinach or incorporating it into dishes without reheating is recommended," suggested Goyal.

When cooking oil is reheated, it undergoes chemical changes that can degrade its quality and safety. Goyal mentioned that repeated heating and cooling cycles can lead to the formation of trans fats and harmful compounds like aldehydes, which are associated with inflammation and cardiovascular disease. Additionally, reheating oil beyond its smoke point can produce toxic fumes and impart an unpleasant taste to food. To maintain the integrity of cooking oil, it's advisable to use fresh oil for each cooking session and avoid reheating oil multiple times.

Mushrooms are porous and can easily absorb moisture, making them an ideal breeding ground for bacteria. Goyal shared that reheating mushrooms can promote the growth of bacteria, increasing the risk of foodborne illness. Moreover, mushrooms contain certain compounds like polysaccharides, which can undergo enzymatic reactions when reheated, altering their flavour and texture. Consuming reheated mushrooms may result in a loss of freshness and palatability. Mushrooms contain various proteins, including enzymes and structural proteins, which contribute to their texture and nutritional profile. "When mushrooms are cooked, these proteins undergo structural changes through a process called denaturation," Goyal said. Upon reheating mushrooms, the denaturation pro-



cess can continue or occur again, causing further changes in the protein composition. This can result in modifications to the texture, flavour, and nutritional properties of the mushrooms. "Additionally, reheating mushrooms can also lead to the breakdown of certain protein molecules into smaller peptides and amino acids through processes like hydrolysis. This can affect the overall protein content and composition of the mushrooms, potentially influencing their taste and digestibility," said Goyal.

To minimise protein degradation and preserve the quality of mushrooms, it's advisable to reheat them gently and avoid prolonged exposure to heat, said Goyal. Goyal elucidated that *Bacillus cereus*, a bacterium commonly found in

rice, can survive the cooking process and multiply when rice is left at room temperature for an extended period. "Reheating rice does not always eliminate these bacteria and their toxins, which can cause food poisoning. Additionally, reheated rice tends to lose moisture and become dry and unappetising," said Goyal. To prevent foodborne illness, it's crucial to store cooked rice properly in the refrigerator and consume it within a day or two. "Understanding the reasons behind the recommendations against reheating items like tea, spinach, cooking oil, mushrooms, and rice can help make informed choices about food preparation and storage practices. By prioritising freshness and proper handling, you can enjoy meals that are not only delicious but also safe and nutritious," Goyal shared.

30% Indians have never checked their blood pressure; these states performed the best

A new report by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) paints a concerning picture of blood pressure awareness among young adults in India. The study, published in the International Journal of Public Health (IJPH), revealed that nearly 30% of individuals in India aged 18-54 have never had their blood pressure checked. This lack of awareness is particularly worrisome in the context of rising non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in India. High blood pressure, a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke, often goes undetected in its early stages, highlighting the importance of regular checkups. The study also found significant geographical variations in blood pressure awareness. Southern states displayed the highest rates, with an average of 76% of the population having had their blood pressure measured at least once. In contrast, states like Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Odisha, Jharkhand, Gujarat, and Nagaland reported lower percentages. These findings call for targeted public health initiatives aimed at raising awareness about the im-

portance of regular blood pressure checks, particularly among young adults in these specific regions. Dr Varun Bansal, consultant cardiologist and cardio-thoracic surgeon at Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, emphasised the importance of regular BP checks. "Even if you feel healthy," he explained, "monitoring your BP is crucial for early detection of hypertension or other cardiovascular issues." The frequency of these checks depends on individual health factors. "For those with normal blood pressure," Dr. Bansal advised, "annual check-ups are sufficient. However, more frequent monitoring is recommended for individuals with hypertension, diabetes, obesity, or a family history of heart problems." 2024 polls, 2024 lok sabha polls, Lok Sabha Elections 2024, employment, universal healthcare, healthcare, Indian express news, current affairs By prioritising regular blood pressure checks and adopting a proactive approach, individuals can significantly reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease and live healthier lives. What are the benefits of routine BP monitoring?

Regular BP checks offer numerous health benefits. Early detection of hypertension allows for prompt intervention, preventing complications like heart attacks, strokes, or kidney disease. "Monitoring BP helps healthcare professionals assess cardiovascular risk, adjust treatment plans, and recommend lifestyle changes for optimal blood pressure control," explained Dr. Bansal. Ultimately, regular checks empower individuals to take charge of their cardiovascular health and overall well-being.

How can you check your BP at home?

Fortunately, monitoring BP at home is a convenient and cost-effective option now. "Invest in a digital BP monitor from a reputable pharmacy," advised Dr. Bansal. "Ensure it's accuracy-tested and follow the manufacturer's instructions for proper use." Before taking a reading, it's essential to relax for a few minutes, sitting quietly with feet flat on the ground. Position the cuff on your upper arm at heart level and inflate it as instructed.

Misleading analyses of poverty, complacency from policymakers will worsen India's inequality crisis

In a recent working paper, we document long-run trends of income and wealth inequality in India. We find that inequality declined post-Independence, began rising in the 1980s and has skyrocketed since the 2000s. Between 2014-15 and 2022-23, the rise of top-end inequality has been particularly pronounced in terms of wealth concentration. India's top 1 per cent shares are now at their highest historical levels, making the Billionaire Raj more unequal than the British colonial Raj and squarely placing India among the most unequal countries in the world. We firmly stand by these findings. Nonetheless, given the complexities in inequality measurement, we welcome constructive debate on ways to improve our series, particularly for the last decade when data quality has significantly deteriorated, as amply highlighted in our paper.

On March 27, two articles simultaneously appeared, questioning our results. One was co-authored by the Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) to the Government of India (V Anantha Nageswaran and Deeksha Supyaal Bisht, 'Ten reasons why Piketty's paper gets it wrong on inequality in India', Livemint, March 27) and the other by a former part-time member of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (Surjit S Bhalla and Karan Bhasin, 'The devil is in the footnote', IE, March 27). After carefully reviewing both articles, we found little constructive criticism, but plenty of misrepresentation and misunderstanding. This is perhaps not surprising — it is hard to be both judge and jury when working closely with a government. These articles are better read as textbook cases of inequality denial in action — the authors pick one element irrelevant to our inequality estimates and twist it out of context to cast doubt over robust results. By the time the air is cleared, the damage is already done.

Bhalla and Bhasin's (BB) critique is largely built around footnote 36 (page 24) in our paper that highlights the tentative nature of minor findings. Nageswaran and Bisht (NB) also refer to the same footnote as a "QED moment". Now, this "gotcha" drama would have been worth some money if the footnote had absolutely any relevance to the core of the debate — our inequality estimates. Alas, it does not, whatsoever. poverty, poverty analyses, wealth inequality, India's inequality crisis, poverty analyses methods, post-Independence inequality, wealth concentration, indian express news Despite privileged access to all sorts of administrative data, the CEA has done little to shed light on economic inequality.

It only pertains to our claim that the Indian tax system might be regressive when viewed from the lens of net wealth (rather than incomes); that is, the tax liability as a fraction of net wealth might be falling as one gets wealthier. BB and NB pick this footnote about the tax system and spin a false impression that it somehow applies to our inequality estimates — it does not. After wasting many precious words misconstruing our footnote, BB move on to comparing our estimate of the top 1 per cent income share with two earlier papers — Abhijit Banerjee and Thomas Piketty

(2005; BP) and Lucas Chancel and Thomas Piketty (2019; CP). We could certainly dive into the weeds, as two of us already have ('The opaque 1%', IE, February 3, 2018), except that BB seem to have made an elementary error. They state that "... the 1999 estimate of the top 1 per cent has been inflated to read 21 per cent". After a forensic investigation, we fail to find where BB got this figure from. In our recent paper (Appendix Table B.1) as well as in CP, the top 1 per cent income share for 1999 is reported as 14.7 per cent. Therefore, BB's claim that we "... get a ladder increase in inequality estimates for many years earlier with each update", is simply false. Our best guess is that they have carelessly misread the bottom 50 per cent share in 1999 (20.7 per cent) as the top 1 per cent share. No wonder they find nonsensical growth rates. Case dismissed. A final word: The striking similarities between their botched critique of rising inequality and their error-ridden and misleading analysis of poverty are hard to miss.

Despite privileged access to all sorts of administrative data, the CEA has done little to shed light on economic inequality. When a serious academic attempt has been made, the least one could expect of him is the "tedium of ploughing through 85 pages". NB's article is high on polemics but fails to deliver any substantive critique. For instance, how is multidimensional poverty relevant to income and wealth inequality? Similarly, to counter our claim that the tax system might be regressive when viewed from the lens of net wealth, NB cite two very interesting papers showing that the tax system is progressive in terms of incomes (which we never denied in the first place), while conveniently ignoring Ram Singh's (2022; CDE-DSE working paper no. 331) novel work that came to the same conclusion as us. NB are certainly right in saying that improved tax compliance could spuriously increase income inequality in our series, but did they skip page 33 in the

paper (section 7.5) where we explicitly address this concern? Quoting data from PRICE's ICE360 survey, NB state that our paper "... by singularly focusing on the top 1 per cent misses India's emerging middle class". This is a strange accusation since we carefully study the full distributions of income and wealth, not just the top 1 per cent. We even specifically highlight depressed growth rates in the middle of the distribution (page 28). Be that as it may, NB also seem blissfully oblivious to the fact that we too utilise PRICE's ICE360 survey as an alternative to NSSO's PLFS. What do we find? Between 2015-16 and 2020-21, the bottom 50 per cent income share fell sharply from 14.4 per cent to a shock-

ing 9.8 per cent, contrasted with a marginal increase in our benchmark PLFS-based series (Appendix Figure B.3). The CEA cannot have the cake and eat it too — we let him have his pick. We would have liked to address his other concerns too but are now out of space. One could certainly quibble with our methodology and estimates, but to those willing to objectively engage with reality, India's vulgar inequalities are staring back at us from all directions. Inequality denialism is, of course, not unique to India, as we have seen at close quarters in the US and elsewhere. Worryingly, however, this sort of complacency from policymakers and the elites will only exacerbate India's already ballooning inequality crisis.



AI candidate could win US elections in 2032: Elon Musk

New Delhi: Artificial Intelligence (AI) will lead the US Presidential elections in 2032, said Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk.

He said this on Saturday at the 10th annual Breakthrough Prize ceremony — the world's largest science award for major advances in fundamental physics, life sciences, and mathematics. The Press asked the tech billionaire, who attended the event clad in a classic suit with a bow tie, about the 2024 US Presidential election winner. "Who will win the White House in 2032? Which type of AI? Transformers or fusion?" replied Musk, sharing a hearty laugh. The billionaire also made funny poses for the Press.

Last week, in an interview on X Spaces, Musk predicted that AI will turn smarter than humans by 2026. Last year,

raising concerns about the influence of AI in elections, Musk noted: "If AI is smart enough, it could undermine democracy". Meanwhile, the ceremony also saw Microsoft Co-founder and philanthropist Bill Gates, who recently visited India. He was seen with Paula Hurd, the widow of late Oracle CEO Mark Hurd. Breakthrough Prize, which celebrates advances in fundamental science, was founded in 2012 by Sergey Brin (co-founder of Google), Mark Zuckerberg (founder of Facebook), Priscilla Chan (co-founder of the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative), Julia and Yuri Milner (technology investor and science philanthropist), and Anne Wojcicki (co-founder of 23andMe). Each year, the ceremony awards at least five \$3 million prizes for major contributions to physics, life sciences, and mathematics.

