

15-floor Multi-Level Parking at Nampally metro nearing completion

Hyderabad: The fully automated and computerized 15-floor Multi Level Car Parking (MLP) near Nampally metro station, which is being developed by Hyderabad Metro Rail Limited (HMRL) is nearing completion and trial runs are expected to start by next month.

The much-needed multi-level car parking, built on half-an-acre HMRL land, complex with 10 parking floors and 5 commercial floors, is expected to be ready at the coming months. "The project suffered delays due to Covid impact, debt financing problems, global supply chain disruptions etc. All the imported materials have now arrived and are being fixed as a jigsaw puzzle by experts," HMRL, MD, NVS Reddy, during a visit to the facility on Sunday, said.

The ultramodern MLP complex, being developed by Bhari Infra Pvt Ltd at a cost of about Rs.80 crore with a concession period of 50 years on PPP model, is the first of its kind in India with German Palis parking system. Out of the total built up area of about 1,44,400 sqft., 68 percent is kept for parking of about 250 four wheelers and 200 two wheelers while the remaining 32 percent is used as commercial space for shops and a film theatre with two screens.

The MLP complex uses state-of-the-art automated parking technology. On the ground floor of the complex there are four 'In or Out' (I/O) Terminals fitted with turn tables. The driver of a vehicle can simply leave the car on the turn table of the designated I/O Terminal. As a vehicle is entering the MLP, the user/driver will be given a smart card, while regular users will be issued permanent RFID cards. The user/driver will be guided to the assigned I/O Terminal and by swiping the smart card in the card reader, the gate of the I/O Terminal opens and the user can conveniently leave the car on the turn table.

NVS Reddy indicated that the turn table is big enough for any vehicle to be conveniently left on it, unlike the existing few other automated parking complexes in Delhi, Mumbai etc., where the driver has to struggle to keep the vehicle on the limited designated space of the turn tables. Based on the dimensions of the vehicle, the computerized parking system will automatically classify the vehicle either as an SUV or a Sedan and a transporter-shuttle will take the vehicle through a lift to the allocated spot on the designated floor and park it there. For retrieving the parked vehicle, the driver pays the parking fee and shows the parking ticket to the card reader, after which a transporter-shuttle brings the car back automatically. The vehicle is always delivered in such a way that no reversal is required for driving out. Being a highly sophisticated and efficient parking system, the time taken for parking is less than a minute and retrieval will take just 2



minutes. This highly sophisticated and world class parking complex will put Hyderabad on a high pedestal and herald

a new parking revolution in India, averred NVS Reddy. The MD urged developers of the MLP, Dr. Hari Kishen Reddy and

Bhavana Reddy to complete the finishing works early and start the trial runs by next month.

City surgeons conduct a surgery on one year old using Indian robotic system

Hyderabad: Surgeons from Hyderabad-based Preeti Urology and Kidney Hospitals on Wednesday announced that they have successfully performed a ground-breaking robotic Pyeloplasty on a one-year-old infant using an indigenously built Indian robotic surgical system SSI Mantra.

Dr. Chandra Mohan Vaddi, Senior Urologist and MD of Preeti Urology & Kidney Hospitals, who conducted the procedure with SSI Mantra robotic system, said that robotic pyeloplasty is a minimally invasive surgical procedure to treat uretero-pelvic junction obstruction. It involves using robotic instruments to reconstruct the blocked area. It is preferred over traditional methods due to its safety and effectiveness in addressing kidney blockages.

The infant was admitted to the hospital from Bidar and was diagnosed with left kidney swelling due to a significant block at the Uretero-Pelvic Junction. The options to treat the medical condition included open



surgery, laparoscopic, or a robotic-assisted approach. Opting for the SSI Mantra robotic system offered several advantages, including 3D vision, greater magnification, in-

creased precision with wristed instruments, better access to the target area, minimally invasive techniques, and ergonomic comfort, Dr Chandra Mohan said,

I met nobody in rural India who saw Modi as corrupt and autocratic

Many things have changed in India since Narendra Modi first became prime minister. But one change that has gone almost unnoticed is that a process of real decolonisation has transpired. And because of this the old, colonised ruling class has been swept away. This is a very good thing. It should have happened long, long ago. As someone who belonged to that ruling class, I consider myself well qualified to explain why this process of decolonisation was overdue and how we failed India as its ruling class. The truth is we were an effete, hopeless bunch. We spoke no Indian language well, but this did not matter to us. We were proud of speaking English well. In our drawing rooms we sneered at those who dared enter without speaking good English. And at those whose table manners were not embellished with western refinement. In short, those who fumbled with forks and knives and preferred eating with their hands and without cutlery.

When we travelled to foreign lands, we made a good pretense of being Indian, but we never cared to understand what it meant to be Indian. We pretended to know everything about India's ancient culture and civilisation, but we knew almost nothing. In the schools and colleges we attended, we learned more about western civilisation, history, and literature than about our own, so it was not totally our fault. When it came to politics and elections, we stuck loyally by the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty and its various heirs because they were people like us. We did not care that Parliament had been turned into a private members club. It was our club. Nor did we care that the Congress Party under Sonia Gandhi's stewardship had also become a private club. It was our club. In our drawing rooms we talked endlessly of democracy and secularism and saw ourselves as ordained to protect these ideas.

Then along came Narendra Modi and the earth shifted beneath our feet. He may not have been personally responsible for everything that changed but he was a vital part of the political change that happened, and this somehow became an essential element of the bigger changes that were happening. Suddenly, almost overnight, after Modi first became prime minister, we became not just powerless but irrelevant. A new breed of Indians who spoke Hindi well and English not at all started replacing us in the high offices of government, as political analysts, and anchors in TV studios, in journalism, in Bollywood movies and TV series. They were not impressed with our skills in English, and we were so impressed by how Indian they were that we tried to emulate them just to belong. Some of us have succeeded, most of us have not.

Those who have not but wish to continue being relevant cling these days to Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi and hope that somehow, they will be able to defeat Modi. Some act as advisors to the current heirs of the Dynasty and fill their heads with grandiose ideas like saving the Constitution

and saving democracy. But the truth is that Rahul Gandhi's main message remains the same as it was in the last general election. This is that Modi is corrupt and that he works only for a handful of rich Indians. He steals your money, he shrieks at his political rallies, and he gives it to his rich friends. How exactly does this work?

As leader of the Congress Party, he is seen, especially by foreign correspondents, as the only man who can defeat Modi. It is bad luck for him that he seems so incapable of convincing Indian voters of this, despite trying hard to prove that he is one of them. He has worked with farmers in rice fields, transported coal on bicycles with miners, listened to the woes of vegetable sellers and spent long hours with mechanics in dingy shops to show how much he cares about the 'common man.' So why is the common man not impressed? Could it be because these gestures come across somehow as noblesse oblige and not genuine acts of sympathy? What is it about 'autocratic', 'dictatorial' Modi that attracts ordinary Indian voters more? The answer that I got to this question on my recent travels in rural India is that people have seen changes in their lives, and they believe that these changes have happened



because of Modi. These are not remarkable changes. They are simple things like roads, drinking water, electricity, and Internet services but because they were not there before, they seem remarkable. Many of these things should have happened long ago. But because we were so colonised a ruling class, we did not notice that ordinary Indians were forced to endure the worst public services. In our drawing rooms and in our entitlement, we did not care about such things because in

our privileged cocoon it would have been unthinkable to go to a government hospital or a government school. Modi's advent burst the bubble in which we lived, and the truth is that most of us have no idea why this happened. We continue to hope that he will be defeated this time and hope that the message that democracy is in danger will resonate with voters. When the results come, we are likely to be disappointed again. I met nobody in rural India who saw Modi as corrupt and autocratic.

One of India's most provocative modernists, how FN Souza's art was perplexing yet arresting

Already a pivotal figure in the Bombay art fraternity, Francis Newton Souza had gained a considerable following by 1949, when his paintings were featured in an exhibition at the Art Society of India. Several visitors inquired about his work but not everyone was pleased. Within days his "obscene" artwork, including a nude self-portrait, were seized. Charged with obscenity, his studio was searched by the police looking for pornographic material, leaving him both furious and disdained.

No stranger to censorship or controversy, the incident reaffirmed Souza's resolve to seek a more liberal audience. In July 1949, the 26-year-old boarded the SS Canton and set sail for London. "I have not much to say for the ten days that I have been here; but I have learnt that life in London is a luxurious commodity to sustain, and elements like water need pennies to be dropped in, and necessities like lavatories need pennies to be dropped in. I was very fortunate to have my good friend (Ebrahim) Alkazi with whom I could share my lodgings, otherwise I would get hopelessly into financial difficulties. So eagerness is a liability. I have learnt my bitter lessons. He, who never hopes, can never despair," recalled Souza in a letter to fellow members of the Progressive Artists' Group, dated August 17, 1949 (published in Geysers: Letters Between Sayed Haider

Raza & his Artist-Friends; The Raza Foundation). Five years hence, when he presented his first solo in the city — in 1955 at Gallery One — it was a sell-out. It received as much acclaim as his autobiographical essay, Nirvana of a Maggot, published in Encounter magazine in the same year.

Often described as the enfant terrible of Indian art, who defied social and artistic conventions and strived to break new ground, the country, arguably, lost one of its most provocative modernists with his move to London. But, for Souza it was a journey into the unknown that opened a new world for him. "He was a man who didn't just travel along as things happened, but someone who guided his own career, life and thinking. He was very well aware of himself," recalls friend and artist Krishen Khanna. Uday Jain, director of Dhoomimal Gallery that marked his birth centenary on April 12 this year with an exhibition titled 'Reminiscing Souza: An Iconoclastic Vision: Celebrating The Birth Centenary Of Francis Newton' adds, "His work was different from his peers. Even when most artists, including him, were still trying to find their style, his lines and use of colour was as confident."

Growing up in the idyllic village of Saligao in north Goa, Souza was a toddler when his father, English teacher José Victor Aniceto de Souza, passed away, fol-

lowed by the demise of his older sister. Struggling with debt, his mother Lilia Maria Cecilia Antunes had just moved to Mumbai to work as a dressmaker when Souza was afflicted with a serious bout of smallpox. While his miraculous recovery led to the addition of Francis to his name, as gratitude to Goa's patron saint St Francis, his mother also resolved for her son to lead the life of a Jesuit priest. What she didn't know was how ill-suited Souza, with his unrestrained temperament and artistic inclinations, would be for such a life. She enrolled him at St Xavier's High School but he was expelled two years later for sketching pornographic drawings in the lavatory. At 16, he joined the Sir JJ School of Art, from where, too, he was suspended after he participated in the Quit India Movement. Back home, in a fit of rage, he painted what later became one of his seminal works — The Blue Lady — an azure nude painted with a palette knife. Speaking of his disappointment with formal education, in the catalogue of his exhibition at the Bombay Art Society in 1948, Souza wrote: "I underwent an abortive art training. The teachers were incompetent... Shelley was expelled once, Van Gogh was expelled once... I was expelled twice. Recalcitrant boys like me had to be dismissed by principals and directors of educational institutions who instinctively feared we would topple their apple-carts."

Indus Appstore Launches the Voice Search Feature in 10 Indian Languages

PhonePe's Indus Appstore, India's homegrown app marketplace, today announced the launch of its Voice Search feature available in 10 Indian languages in addition to English. This innovative feature transforms the user experience, enabling users to discover apps through voice search in their preferred language. The Voice Search technology is powered by artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms, ensuring accuracy and precision in understanding diverse accents and speech patterns offering relevant search results.

Vernacular language speakers account for approximately 75% of India's Internet user base underscoring the need to bridge the linguistic barriers that come with discovering and engaging with apps. Traditional text-based search in regional languages pose numerous challenges,

including the need for specialized keyboards and complex character compositions. These hurdles hinder seamless communication. Indus Appstore's Voice Search technology elevates user experience by allowing users to freely express themselves in their local language with just a tap of the voice search button. This aligns with Indus Appstore's mission to empower users with inclusive and accessible features, catering to varying levels of literacy and linguistic preferences. Additionally, this new feature is a positive development for app developers as it is proven to boost app installs. Speaking on the launch, Akash Dongre, Co-founder and CPO, Indus Appstore said, "The new Voice Search feature is our effort towards creating an inclusive and accessible app store. With 82% of smartphone users engaging in voice-activated technology, integration of Indian



languages has been the strongest growth driver for tech across the six-to-sixty age spectrum. The user-centric feature posi-

tions Indus Appstore at the forefront of transformative Voice Technology that is the need of the decade."

HDFC Bank Educated over 2 Lakhs Citizens on Safe Digital Banking Practices PAN India in FY24



The Bank Conducted Over 16,600 Cyber Fraud Awareness Workshops PAN India

HDFC Bank as a part of digital banking awareness drive, conducted a series of secure banking workshops pan India. The Bank organized over 16,600 workshops sensitizing over 2,00,224 citizens on safe digital banking practices. These workshops were aimed at educating school and college students, law enforcement agencies, senior citizens, self-help groups, customers and employees. Through these interactive sessions, participants gained valuable insights on safe digital banking practices so that they don't fall prey to cyber

frauds.

The workshops included real life examples, stories and videos which helped participants understand various Modus Operandi used by fraudsters and tips on how to stay safe from such frauds. HDFC Bank has been conducting Cyber Fraud Awareness Workshops under the Secure Banking initiative at various locations across the country over the past four years. The workshop covered an array of pertinent topics, offering a better understanding of digital security:

1. IFAW's Background: Attendees were introduced to the mission/role of International Fraud Awareness Week in advocating digital awareness.

2. Cyber Fraud Awareness: Detailed discussions were held explaining common cyber threats like Vishing, Phishing, Smishing, remote device access, SIM swap, and UPI frauds. Real-life examples were used to deepen understanding.

3. Secure Net-banking and Shopping Tips: The sessions highlighted best practices for secure online transactions, spotlighting the significance of Vigil Aunty and offering invaluable tips for safe online shopping.

4. Preventive Measures: Attendees were guided not to divulge sensitive infor-

mation such as OTPs, CVVs, Debit/Credit card credentials and UPI PINs.

Commenting on this Mr. Manish Agrawal, Executive Vice President – Credit Intelligence and Control – HDFC Bank said, "Cybercrime is a serious threat to individuals and organisations alike. Lack of awareness causes people to fall for such cyber frauds. Therefore, it is essential to create awareness among the citizens so that they do not share confidential banking data or click on unverified links. The objective of these workshops is to educate participants on various modus operandi used by fraudsters and the secure banking practices that they need to follow so that they do not become victims of such online frauds. These awareness workshops are in line with HDFC Bank's philosophy and core value i.e. Customer Focus."

CriticalRiver announces 100 pc ownership for all its employees through ESOP initiative

Hyderabad: CriticalRiver Inc., the technology solutions provider on Wednesday announced that 100 percent of its employees will now have ownership in the company through its ESOP initiative, marking a significant milestone in its commitment to empowering its workforce, a press release said.

With over 1,000 employees across 9 global locations, this strategic move reinforces the company's commitment to retaining its top talent. CriticalRiver will grant 100 ESOPs to each employee annually based on their years of service. Furthermore, each employee's account will receive an additional 100 ESOPs each year.

Anji Maram, Founder & CEO of CriticalRiver Inc., said, "This strategic move is more than a milestone; it's a testament to our confidence in our team and our collective future. The ESOP further reinforces our commitment to innovation and excellence, ensuring unwavering customer confidence.

Chandra Chandragiri, CFO of CriticalRiver Inc., expressed enthusiasm about the new journey, emphasizing the strategic decision as a testament to their faith in their employees, who are now more than ever the pillars of the company's success.

Analysing digital ad campaigns during the silence period of the first phase of the Lok Sabha elections

As the world's largest elections are underway, all eyes are on digital platforms and the role they are playing in influencing the electorate. However, it may also be time to question the effectiveness of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) set down by the Election Commission (EC) in ensuring free and fair elections in India.

Section 126 of the Representation of People Act, 1951 prohibits the display of election matter to the public through television or similar apparatus during the 48-hour silence period ending with the hour fixed for the conclusion of polls. The EC in its various notifications has clarified that 'similar apparatus' under Section 126 includes social media as well. Despite clear rules prohibiting political campaigning during the silence period, a study conducted by the CSDS-Lokniti has found political parties to be spending substantial money on advertising campaigns on social media during this time. Social media campaigns

It was found that BJP posted 60,500 ads from April 17 to 19, 2024 on Google and 6,808 on Meta platforms, while the Congress posted 1,882 and 114 ads respectively during the same period (Table 1). This revelation is note-worthy since the Internet penetration in India is over 50%. Out of the total ads posted from April 17 to 19 on Google, 500 ads, 250 ads posted by the BJP and another 250 posted by the Congress, were selected for analysis using randomised selection. Out of this sample, 64 ads posted by the BJP and 32 posted by the Congress were found to be targeted to States/constituencies that voted in the first phase of elections (Table 2).

This study revealed that 13 out of every 50 ads of the BJP were aired during the silence period in constituencies participating in the first phase of elections. Notably, political ads were observed in 11 States and Union Territories preceding the first phase of elections, with several States being majorly targeted (Table 3). This data underscores the strategic placement and targeting of political advertisements during critical phases of the electoral process. Of the total number of Congress ads, States voting in the first phase of elections were targeted as a whole. However, except for Haldwani in the Nainital constituency in Uttarakhand, no other Congress ads specifically micro-targeted any poll-bound constituencies during the silence period (Table 3). The strategy of geotargeting

During the silence period, the BJP's digital campaign showcased an impressive level of location based targeting precision, evident in its focus on specific locales such as a panchayat in Baghpat, Uttar Pradesh, and Belthangadi in Karnataka. These instances provide just a glimpse into the party's widespread use of tailored strategies. Additionally, the BJP targeted the Nagina constituency in Uttar Pradesh with a substantial number of advertisements during this crucial period, recognising the historical significance of the Muslim-Scheduled Caste (SC) combination in securing victories in this constituency (Table 4). However, the northeastern region remained largely overlooked throughout the silence period. The Congress avoided con-



stituency-level targeting. In fact, 42% of Congress ads specifically excluded the poll bound constituencies from the targeted States which went for polls in the first phase. All the constituencies in Rajasthan, Assam, Bihar and Chhattisgarh which voted on April 19 were excluded in the ads posted by the Congress in these States. Similarly, in ads targeted to Madhya Pradesh, all poll-bound constituencies, except Sidhi, were excluded. Unlike the BJP, the Congress was found to be vigilant in its presence across Manipur with a major chunk of its targeted ads focusing on all the major themes during the period of analysis (Table 3 and 5).

The Meta campaign In the case of Meta, the parent organisation of both Instagram and Facebook, both the BJP and Congress are seen to have run ad campaigns during the first phase of the election. This analysis is based on their official social media handles.

Unlike Google ads, none of the ads on Meta platforms were pin code-specific. Still, they were State-specific, stating that ad campaigns operating in a particular State apply to the territorial area of the whole State, including those constituencies involved in the first phase of elections. Of the 6,808 ads posted by the BJP, several ads were circulated in more than one State. For Congress, which posted 114 ads during this time, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, and U.P. were the main targets (Table 6). This data throws light on the ad campaigns by the two major parties on Meta from April 17 to 19, the official silence period for the first phase of the election.

There is a clear lead by the BJP in the sheer number of ads posted. There is also a more diversified campaign from the BJP, in contrast to the Congress, as can be evident from the language in which the ads are posted. The BJP has posted ads in more than seven languages, while the

Congress has posted only in three. In the lead-up to the first phase of elections, it became apparent that political parties are stretching the boundaries of the MCC, particularly through digital media ad campaigns. There seems to be a lack of preventive as well as punitive actions taken to address such violations, raising questions about the effectiveness of the MCC in ensuring free and fair elections.

By utilising location-based targeting in digital campaigns and focusing on key

locales, it seems that parties may have found ways to reach voters during a period when campaigning is restricted. As the second phase of Lok Sabha elections approaches, it may be worth considering these observations regarding adherence to the MCC. Sanjay Kumar is a Professor at CSDS, Aditi Singh is an Assistant Professor at O.P. Jindal Global University, and Abhishek Sharma, Hana Vahab, Subhayan Acharya Majumdar are researchers with Lokniti-CSDS.

Elon Musk's X challenges YouTube with TV app launch

New Delhi: Taking on Google-owned YouTube, X social media platform will soon launch a dedicated TV app for users to upload high-quality videos, its CEO Linda Yaccarino has announced.

In a post on the social media platform, Yaccarino said that from the small screen to the big screen, X is changing everything.

"Soon we'll bring real-time, engaging content to your smart TVs with the X TV App. This will be your go-to companion for a high-quality, immersive entertainment experience on a larger screen," said the X CEO.

Users can expect trending video algorithm, AI-powered topics, cross-device experience, enhanced video search, effortless casting, and wide availability (coming soon to most smart TVs). "We'll keep you updated. And of course please share your ideas. We build X for our community," said CEO Linda Yaccarino.

The trending video algorithm is designed to help users stay updated with tai-



lored popular content. The AI-powered topics will organise videos by subject and the app will also feature enhanced video search.

An X user commented that a video playlist/index for creators would be nice, "so we can create our own playlists". "Many users post a wide variety of videos and would want to separate their original content from 30 second news clips they are commenting on. It would help viewers be able to view only their curated videos," the user wrote.

Towards a less poor and more equal country

In March, World Inequality Lab, a global research centre focused on inequality and public policies, published a working paper titled, 'Income and Wealth Inequality in India, 1922-2023: The Rise of the Billionaire Raj'. The authors — Nitin Kumar Bharti, Lucas Chancel, Thomas Piketty, and Anmol Somanchi — combined data from national income accounts, wealth aggregates, tax tabulations, rich lists, and surveys on income, consumption, and wealth to present their results. Income and wealth inequality. First, let's look at income inequality. By 2022-23, the report states, 22.6% of India's national income went to just the top 1% in the country, the highest in the last 100 years. And just the top 0.1% of the population earned nearly 10% of the national income in India. The share of the top 1% in the national income is among the highest in the world.

In terms of wealth inequality, the share of the top 1% in wealth was 40.1% in 2022-23, the highest level since 1961. The share of wealth among the top 10% increased from 45% in 1961 to 65% in 2022-23. Conversely, the share of the bottom 50% and middle 40% in wealth declined. In short, the rich got richer and the poor got poorer in wealth. "About 10,000 individuals out of 92 million Indian adults own an average of ₹22.6 billion in wealth, 16,763 times the average Indian," the report states. India's wealth inequality is not as extreme as Brazil and South Africa where the top 10% hold 85.6% and 79.7% of the national wealth, respectively. However, its wealth concentration increased threefold between 1961 and 2023. Additionally, as India's income inequality is among the highest in the world, even higher than South Africa, Brazil and the U.S., it will only add to the wealth inequality. The report says between 2014-15 and 2022-23 "the rise of top-end inequality has been particularly pronounced in terms of wealth concentration". It states that "the 'Billionaire Raj' headed by India's modern bourgeoisie is now more unequal than the British Raj headed by the colonialist forces." Inequality undermines both growth and reduction of poverty.

Between 1960 and 1980, inequality was dropping. The pattern of growth and its objectives ensured that outcome. However, inequality began increasing with the beginnings of liberalisation in the 1980s, and faster after the 1991 economic reforms in India.

The dynamics of income and wealth inequality are interwoven with the dynamics of economic growth and human development. India's average income adjusted for inflation and purchasing power differentials were on a par with China and Vietnam until 1975. In the next quarter century, incomes in China and Vietnam increased by 35-50% compared to incomes in India. Post-2000, China's income started to grow at an astonishing rate and became 2.5 times India's income. However, growth in China has been broad-based compared to growth in India. In 2022, the share of the top 1% in income in India was nearly 50% higher than that of China. The Chinese economy has been maintaining a higher growth rate over the years with a moderate growth in economic inequality while India's growth has been moderate coupled with extreme growth in economic inequality.



That is why India is a "poor and very unequal country". Here, we would like to emphasise that the twin objectives of high economic growth and reduction of inequality can only be achieved with improvements in human development and poverty reduction. This is what China and Vietnam achieved. Additionally, improvements in human development should precede economic growth if economic growth is to be sustained in the long run. At the national level, the States that sustained high growth over three decades (over 7% GSDP per year) were relatively advanced in human development. These include Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka in the south; Maharashtra and Gujarat in the west; and Punjab and Delhi in the north. States that are relatively backward in the Human Development Index ranking in-

clude Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan. These States were only able to register a growth rate of less than 5% per annum post-liberalisation.

Human development The Human Development Report (HDR) 2023-2024 ranked India 134 out of 193 countries. India is now the fifth largest economy but it still ranks lower than Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and Bangladesh in human development. Its economic growth has not translated into growth in human development. The poor should not have to wait for the benefits of economic growth to trickle down; human development should be given priority in promoting inclusive growth. In the absence of improvement in human development, enhancement of capability and functioning, and poverty reduction, the growth pro-

cess cannot be inclusive and will only add to inequality. Economic growth therefore does not need to be at a higher pedestal in terms of policy objectives. As per the HDR 2023-2024, India's score comes down by 31.1% if we account for economic inequality. The extent of economic inequality is such that it cannot be overcome by the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, which provides a few kilograms of free foodgrains to about 81.35 crore beneficiaries. Sops without jobs cannot be the basis for sustained and inclusive growth. As the paper says, "It is unclear how long such inequality levels can sustain without major social and political upheaval". Santosh Mehrotra is a Research Fellow at The IZA Institute of Labour Economics, Bonn; Rakesh Ranjan Kumar is a Senior Research Fellow at the International Institute for Migration and Development, Kerala

Xantham, guar gum in yoghurt, biscuits may raise diabetes risk: Study

New Delhi: Love to binge on ultra-processed foods like cake, biscuits, bread, yoghurt, and ice creams? Beware, these foods rich in emulsifiers like xantham and guar gum may raise your risk of diabetes, finds a study. Emulsifiers, the most commonly used additives, are often added to processed and packaged foods to make them look more appealing, boost their taste and texture as well as increase shelf life.

The study appearing in The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology linked emulsifiers including mono- and diglycerides of fatty acids, carrageenans, modified starches, lecithins, phosphates, celluloses, gums, and pectins to the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. Previously emulsifiers have been linked to cancers of the breast

and prostate. Researchers from France's INRAE – National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment studied the relationships between the dietary intakes of emulsifiers, assessed over a follow-up period of 14 years, and the risk of developing type 2 diabetes in a large study including 104,139 adults between 2009 and 2023.

They diagnosed about 1,056 cases of diabetes as a result of chronic exposure to some emulsifiers. These were carrageenans (3 per cent increased risk per increment of 100 mg per day); tripotassium phosphate (15 per cent increased risk per increment of 500 mg per day); mono- and diacetyl tartaric acid esters of mono- and diglycerides of fatty acids (4 per cent in-

creased risk per increment of 100 mg per day); sodium citrate (4 per cent increased risk per increment of 500 mg per day); guar gum (11 per cent increased risk per increment of 500 mg per day); gum arabic (3 per cent increased risk per increment of 1,000 mg per day) and xanthan gum (8 per cent increased risk per increment of 500 mg per day).

"These findings are issued from a single observational study for the moment, and cannot be used on their own to establish a causal relationship. They need to be replicated in other epidemiological studies worldwide and supplemented with toxicological and interventional experimental studies, to further inform the mechanisms linking these food additive emulsifiers and the onset of type 2 diabetes."

Lakshya Sen and Priyanshu Rajawat hold the key to India's Thomas Cup defense

It wasn't necessarily the 'India-effect', but most Thomas Cup teams at this 2024 edition, are hitting badminton's team World Cup starting April 27, with bolstered second and third singles players. India, the defending champions, after a gloriously dreamy title march from 2022, though, might have laid down the chuckling blueprint for success that's possible only from the quality of depth that India possessed in the form of Kidambi Srikanth and HS Prannoy in nicking the MS2 and MS3 rubbers two summers ago.

Though Prannoy as India's No 1 is likely to be rotated and Srikanth will likely get alternated too, this Thomas Cup is the sternest test of big-screen temperament for designated Nos 2 and 3, Lakshya Sen and Priyanshu Rajawat. Now that India has totally bought into the significance of team events, and is fielding a full-fledged challenge, the pair of under24s in Sen and Rajawat, have their task cut out. Even in the 2022 edition, the MS1, Sen, had a wretched run right upto the finals owing to illness. Though he was masterly against Thomas Cup perennials Indonesia, beating Anthony Ginting to take the opening point, and effectively shock the white & red brigade out of their wits, pushing them on the defensive, in the finals. Lakshya Sen will face Indonesian Jonatan Christie in the semifinals. (BAI) Lakshya Sen will face Indonesian Jonatan Christie in the semifinals. (BAI) Sen might find a regular MS2 shift a little more arduous, because playing the third match of a tie is the apogee of team events. Make – or – break, do – or – die, must-win, and worse, C A N N O T – L O S E in bold, underlined. Should he be promoted to MS1, it's the difficulty of the opponent that's a straightforward challenge, and greater adrenaline for the potential of an upset. He doesn't always win, far from it, but he sure has the temperament for a Goliath-gnawing tussle.

But MS2 tends to pair up similarly mid-dling ranked talents in No 8 – 20 range, and Sen, though he has the game to take on the best, is susceptible to lapses of concentration against such players. He will need to put in the consistency-shift at MS2. It's not particularly glorified – he's expected to not lose, and won't be revered for winning overtly either, unless he goes 6 played – 6 won like Srikanth did last time around, though Prannoy was pushed into the dramatic deciders. Just going out there, and doing the basics right, can test Sen's flair and flamboyance in this anchoring role.

Sen had a decent run at the All England, and his confidence should be high. He's a big occasion player and Thomas Cup and Commonwealth Games titles are proof enough. But can he rev himself up for the near-mundane matchups, with an unfancied second men's doubles and a non-Prannoy, not entirely dependable MS3 to follow – is the pivot and pivotal question. While Dhruv Kapila and MR Arjun start as underdogs in most WD2 matchups, Srikanth's brittle leadup results in pressure games, can see the team try giving Priyanshu Rajawat a go. As such, Srikanth as MS3 is head and shoulders above most counterparts in his classy game, but he will

need a good start to convince himself and the world that his confidence is restored. Parupalli Kashyap as coach is a brilliant shepherd to have in such situations, and has spoken of how team causes are what Srikanth loves these days. But should the need arise, Rajawat will need to step up.

India's Priyanshu Rajawat defeated China's Lan Xi Lei 21-14, 21-13 India's Priyanshu Rajawat defeated China's Lan Xi Lei 21-14, 21-13

For someone dubbed mini SriKi, Rajawat has shown traces of stylish play, but is nowhere close to Srikanth in the achievement metric. The 30-year-old had two impressive titles from Thailand and China by age 23, and could string together excellent runs deep into a tournament, which Rajawat hasn't yet managed. Like Sen, there's enough in Rajawat's game to start a hype-train. But at the Thomas Cup, in whatever chances he gets, he will need to deliver on those expectations. The 'promise', 'potential', 'future hope' semantics stage is over at an event like Thomas Cup, which is about the now and the present.

Rajawat's grittiness hasn't been put to test on the circuit, where the presence of India's Top 3 gives him the leeway to keep learning from the losses, a long rope so to speak. His outrageous talent ought to be backed. Kiran George is a sort of an unknown who can be a surprise element once in a while, and he's mentally sturdier than he lets on. But this is where Sen and Rajawat prove that they deserve to be dubbed replacements to Srikanth, without actually having won his level of titles. Sen will need to snap out of those reveries he disappears into where points are conceded in a bunch. He will be forced to dig deep for greater variety in overhead strokes from the back court. He is defensively sturdy under pressure and you could back him 9 times out of 10 to win the net eyeball confrontations or flank defense sallies. But his finishing attack from the back court – pulling out the big smash after a punishing rally – isn't as well-rounded or power-packed, sophisticated or consistent enough to beat likes of Li Shifeng, Anders Antonsen, Anthony Ginting and Kenta Nishimoto on successive days. At 6-11 down in the third against World No:4 Anders Antonsen, Lakshya Sen was told by coach Vimal Kumar to shut out the 'silly errors'. Lakshya then went onto to win 15 of the last 17 points and book his place in quarterfinals of the All England. (Badminton Association of India) At 6-11 down in the third against World No:4 Anders Antonsen, Lakshya Sen was told by coach Vimal Kumar to shut out the 'silly errors'. Lakshya then went onto to win 15 of the last 17 points and book his place in quarterfinals of the All England. (Badminton Association of India) Sen's mental toughness could be as good as if not better than Saina Nehwal. But he will need to tactically be on point, in this MS2 / MS1 role, extracting wins. In that sense, this Thomas Cup is a bigger responsibility than last time when India could absorb the pressure of his MS1 losses with Srikanth, Prannoy lined up to follow. His pure chutzpah beating Ginting in finals will need to be replicated in every tie here. Rajawat is



plain and simple expected to take on the 2-2 tie pressure. Many squads are likely to blood young talent – Alwi Farhan for Indonesia, Magnus Johannesen for Denmark, Chia Hao Lee, Swiss Open winner Chun Yi-Lin of Taipei and Cheuk Yiu Lee (of Hong Kong) who's Top 15 and at India Open, beat Srikanth, Kunlavut, Ginting and Kodai. Perhaps a name to watch out for is Thai Panitchaphon Teeraratsakul, age 20, in the MS3 role alongside Kunlavut Vitidsarn. China, Denmark, Indonesia, Thailand still hold the aces, but India re-

mains a very strong contender with its depth, the reliable presence of Satwik-Chirag and the team's strategic nous. But Srikanth and Prannoy are two years older than last time. And you can't shake off the certainty that Lakshya Sen and Priyanshu Rajawat will need to step up this time, and deliver the goods. Sen will need a 6/6 like Srikanth coolly pulled off last time. The Olympics is the ultimate target for both Prannoy and Sen. But it's at the Thomas Cup, that the passing of the baton – of responsibility – will happen.

The bitter truth about baby formula is 'added sugar'

In 2006, we published a report describing a cohort of 51 children and young adults with Type 2 Diabetes — this was a surprising finding at the time. Little did we know then that a supplement used at six months of age containing added sugar (such as in Cerelac and others produced by Nestle, as detailed in a recent report by the International Baby Food Action Network, IFBAN) could also contribute to obesity and diabetes. Interestingly, prior to the current report, a study conducted in India in 2021 revealed that 28 per cent of baby food products had a "high sugar profile". These revelations are particularly concerning for several reasons.

First, considering the heightened propensity of Indians for developing diabetes and its complications, every effort must be made to avoid any potential triggers from an early age. Introducing sugar-containing feeds at the age of six months is highly detrimental to Indian infants who are already fragile. Damage to organ systems at this stage leaves permanent metabolic scars. How does such baby food harm the tender livers and pancreases of infants? Constant exposure to simple sugars places an additional burden on the pancreas to produce insulin (resulting in "hyperinsulinemia"), leading to its exhaustion. This process also induces resistance to the hormone leptin and in the process contributes to obesity. Both pancreatic exhaustion and excess body fat raise blood

sugar levels and release harmful substances known as "inflammatory cytokines", which can damage the kidneys and heart and lead to hypertension. Additionally, formula-fed infants continuously exposed to a predominantly sweet taste are more likely to develop a preference for such flavours later in their lives.

This has the potential to foster a dependence on sweet intake, perpetuating early organ damage in adolescence and early adulthood. It would be worthwhile to conduct long-term studies on children who have received such products from an early age to assess their risk of developing diabetes and heart disease. Second, there is a notable discrepancy in the treatment of developing countries regarding the presence of excess added sugar in infant formulas. While formulas without added sugar are available in developed countries, those in developing nations, including India, often contain added sugars. This double standard is unjustified and unethical, particularly because some developing countries do not even list the amount of added sugar on product labels. Third, the promotion of sugar-containing infant formulas in India and other developing countries raises concerns. Cerelac, a popular brand with substantial sales is promoted as "supplementary food for babies from 10 to 12 months", despite containing significant amounts of added sugar.

Developers double down on premium housing as affordable launches stagnate

Demand for big-ticket housing in India's residential real estate sector is set to rise in the next decade, in line with a significant shift observed over the last five years, where launches of high-end residential units priced above Rs 1.5 crore skyrocketed by a staggering 1,000 per cent between 2019 and 2023. In the meantime, new launches of units priced below Rs 75 lakh, including affordable housing, remained stagnant in the country's top seven cities, even as sales grew by 27 per cent. With dwindling inventory levels, currently the lowest in a decade, and a 26 per cent spike in average prices over five years, the scales appear tilted towards the premium end of the market, where developers are gravitating due to soaring demand and better margins. While affordability is better now than in 2014, the surge in big-ticket launches coupled with stagnation in affordable housing options raise questions around affordability moving forward, particularly for first-time buyers.

In both 2019 and 2023, developers in the top seven residential markets including Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, and Chennai launched roughly 74,000 units priced below Rs 75 lakh, as per an analysis of JLL India data. However, the share of launches in this small-ticket segment dropped from 55 per cent in 2019 to 25 per cent in 2023. The share of small-ticket launches dropped even as the share of sales in the same segment remained comparatively higher. To be specific, the share of small-ticket sales was 61 per cent in 2019 and 41 per cent in 2023. In absolute numbers, sales grew by 27 per cent to over 1.1 lakh units.

The stagnation in small-ticket launches occurred as big-ticket launches of units priced above Rs 1.5 crore surged from roughly 8,000 units in 2019 to 95,000 units in 2023, a whopping growth of over 1,000 per cent. The share of big-ticket launches also increased from a mere 6 per cent to 33 per cent. In 2023, big-ticket sales stood at around 62,000 units, up by over 230 per cent from 18,000 units in 2019. The share of big-ticket sales also increased from 13 per cent to 23 per cent. While sales in the big-ticket segment are far behind launches in 2023, compared to the small-ticket segment where the ratio is flipped, the demand for big-ticket units is robust and expanding, according to experts.

"Currently, buoyed by stronger economic momentum, wealth creation and consumer's aspiration towards home purchase, the residential real estate sector in India is experiencing an upcycle," a CII-Knight Frank report released Friday said. The demand for luxury housing will be fueled by an increase in the share of HNIs and UHNIs households in India, which will triple from 3 per cent now to 9 per cent in 2034, the report added. In addition to the expansion of India's wealthy class driving demand for premium housing, other factors are also at play. For instance, following the outbreak of Covid-19 in 2020 where lockdowns and work-from-home policies confined employees to their

homes, demand for larger units shot up considerably. The average flat size in 2023 was 1,300 square feet, 11.4 per cent higher than 1,167 square feet in 2020, as per data from Anarock Research. For example, in the Delhi-NCR region, the average flat size jumped by 51 per cent from 1,250 square feet in 2019 to 1,890 square feet in 2023. Similarly, in Hyderabad and Bangalore, the average flat size increased by 35 per cent and 16 per cent respectively over the last five years.

"A lot of mid-segment buyers now want projects with better amenities. They want to be closer to markets, city centres, or locations with heavy social infrastructure. If they are moving a little farther away from the city, they're wanting bigger homes because of work-from-home. Let's not forget, even if India's return to office numbers are okay, there is still a substantial portion of people who work from home now. These are young couples with kids, who need additional rooms and flexible configurations, so they are looking for bigger houses. The moment I start looking for a bigger house, my ticket size goes up," said Rohan Sharma, director at JLL India. The demand for bigger homes and better amenities has played a key role in pushing prices up. In 2019, the average housing price was Rs 5,600 per square feet; in 2023, it increased to Rs 7,080 per square feet, as per Anarock data. Apart from booming demand, the increase in housing prices also reflects rising input costs and property rates. Moreover, developers are preferring big-ticket launches over small-ticket ones due to better margins. "While there has been decent demand for the below Rs 75 lakh segment, developers have also seen their margins shrinking. One of the reasons why they have also followed that [big-ticket] market is because that is a better margin market," Sharma added. The surge in big-ticket launches coupled with stagnation in small-ticket launches despite growth in sales is set to impact affordability, especially when inventory levels dropped to their lowest in 2023. Inventory overhang measures the amount of time it would take to sell all current listings, provided there are no new listings. In 2019, it was 30 months, which increased to 55 months in 2020, indicating a high quantity of residual stock. In 2023, inventory overhang dropped to a decade low of just 15 months. The drop in inventory is likely to be the most pronounced for the small-ticket segment, where sales have consistently outpaced launches in the last five years.

While prices have gone up, affordability levels were better in 2023 compared to 2013, according to the JLL Home Purchase Affordability Index (HPAI) published in December last year. HPAI is the ratio of the average household income to the eligible household income, which is defined as the minimum income a household needs to earn to qualify for a home loan on a 1,000 square feet apartment at the prevailing market price. An HPAI value above 100 indicates affordability whereas an HPAI value below 100 indicates unaffordability. For example, the HPAI



value in the Delhi-NCR region stood at 65 in 2013 and increased to 119 in 2023. In Bangalore, the value has increased from 90 to 158. Mumbai is an exception, where the value having increased from 43 to 88 continues to indicate unaffordability. "Among the critical elements of affordability, while prices remain on a trajectory that is likely to worsen affordability levels, stronger income growth should act as a good buffer. Repo rate trajectory is likely to be impacted by global economic signals even as a strong domestic economy is likely to cushion the impact

and pave the way for a rate cut down in the road in 2024," the JLL HPAI report said.

With drastic changes in big- and small-ticket launches in the last five years, the share of medium-ticket launches, that is units priced between Rs 75 lakh to Rs 1.5 crore, increased slightly to 42 per cent in 2023 compared to 39 per cent in 2019. The number of launches jumped by 130 per cent to over 1.2 lakh units. The share of medium-ticket launches in sales also increased from 26 per cent to 36 per cent, which corresponds to 98,000 units in 2023, a jump of 164 per cent from 2019.

Women and children in Mancherial hospital struggle to beat the heat

Mancherial: New mothers and pregnant women admitted to the 330-bedded Mother and Child Hospital (MCH) in the district headquarters are struggling in the scorching heat due to lack of air coolers even as the district is reeling under torrid heat wave conditions. The district is registering sweltering heat wave conditions for the last few days. The maximum temperature of the district is hovering around 45 degrees.

Some patients of the MCH situated on the banks of Godavari are carrying mobile fans and compact air coolers to beat the heat and humidity caused by evaporation of water in the river. However, poor patients are facing inconvenience due to the deficiency of air-coolers. New mothers and pregnant women are struggling to handle the heat in the hospital. While new mothers are depending on handkerchiefs to provide respite to infants from the scorching heat wave conditions, pregnant women are spending sleepless nights.

"It is a nightmarish experience to stay in the hospital in summer. I bought a compact cooler to beat the heat. However, many new mothers and pregnant women may not afford to carry a fan or air cooler. Officials should take steps to find a solution to this problem," M Soujanya, a new mother from Gadderagadi in Kyathanpalli told 'Telangana Today.'

When asked, MCH superintendent Dr P Harishchandra Reddy said general and post operative wards were equipped with sufficient fans, but air coolers were not provided as per norms. He conceded that some patients were carrying mobile fans and compact air coolers as they were unable to beat the heat. Officials said 50 air conditioning machines, sanctioned to the hospital were being used in Intensive Care Units, CT Scan, Laboratories, Operation Theatres, X ray, Special Newborn Care Units and offices of Superintendent and other important officials. Some of the machines develop snags at regular intervals.

'High growth not possible if we don't do our own science, produce own tech': Principal Scientific Advisor Ajay Kumar Sood

India will not be able to achieve 10-12 per cent economic growth, if "we don't do our own science and produce our own technologies," and to that effect, what is needed is a ramp-up on all key science indicators, not just in numbers but in quality as well, said the government's Principal Scientific Advisor, Ajay Kumar Sood. In an interview with The Indian Express, Sood said India had missed the bus on certain critical technologies in the past and must not allow that situation to repeat in areas like artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, clean energy solutions, or semiconductors that are still under development.

"Improving our science and technology output is linked to our economic growth... essential for our goal to become a developed nation by 2047. The kind of economic growth that is required to take us there — 8 or 10 per cent or more — would not be possible without deployment of breakthrough technologies. It is these technologies that will drive economic growth in coming decades. Most of these technologies are still being developed, and there is an opportunity for India to make fundamental contributions in these areas, take leadership, and reap the benefits... A Viksit Bharat will have to be a leader in science. There is no other way," said Sood. He said India had a strong scientific base and good scientific traditions but its contribution had not been commensurate to its size or capabilities, as was evident from the commonly used science indicators. "We must improve on (these commonly used science) indicators... We should be in top three or top five. But I am not a great fan of just increasing the numbers. There has to be quality output... Take the example of publications. India is currently third, I think, in the number of publications. But we have to ask how much of those are appearing in the top one per cent

of the journals," he said. "At the same time, we cannot have a small pool and expect everyone to be making fundamental contributions. So, both numbers and quality have to be improved," he said. Sood, who was with the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, prior to becoming the PSA, is one of India's leading physicists, best known for his work in condensed matter physics overlapping with material science and engineering. As PSA, he advises the government on all matters related to science, and acts as the main interface between the scientific community and the government. Sood said the scientific community needed to be provided the right environment, adequate resources and the right incentives, and the government was trying to address their concerns. He said he was aware of the difficulties being faced by the researchers, particularly with regard to funding delays, and bureaucratic hurdles. "I have a first-hand experience of these difficulties. After all, I have been a researcher myself for 40 years. These complaints (from the scientists) are not without substance. And we have to make sure that these are addressed to their satisfaction. Some of these have been," he said. Underlining the need for industry to become a partner in scientific research, Sood said: "Science and technology have to get tied with business, with economic activity. They have to be integrated with our economic model, our economic vision. There has to be indigenisation of technologies — not existing technologies but new technologies. We need to do new technologies, otherwise we will only be following others. We can never be able to achieve 10-12 per cent economic growth if we don't do our own science and produce our own technologies," he said. Sood said India was in a position to take advantage of existing opportunities in emerging technologies,



but it required very hard work. "Take the example of quantum technologies. A lot of work needs to be done in developing human resources, laboratories etc. But we would like to be there, in the leadership position. Frankly, we are not way behind. We are very much in the race. But we have to work very hard.

It is a similar story in a lot of other areas," he said. "The bottom line is that we must ensure that we are not left behind in terms of these new technologies. In the past, we have missed the bus on some very crucial technologies — supercomputers, for

example. And we have suffered because of that.

We have been at the receiving end of technology denial regimes because of which our nuclear programme faced challenges, our space programme faced challenges," he said. Sood said recent government interventions like the setting up of the National Research Foundation (NRF) were aimed at making some necessary structural changes, like getting universities and colleges involved in scientific research, increasing the scientific base, and attracting private sector funding into science.

10 things to know before buying an AC this summer

An intense heatwave has gripped many parts of India. The maximum temperatures have been ranging from 40-46 degree Celsius in many areas. As summer months are getting unbearably hot across the country, it is only obvious that many among our readers are considering buying air conditioners (AC). We are here to help you make the decision of placing your bet on an AC easier. Of course, there are plenty of good options to choose from, but the cooling performance depends on a lot of parameters including the cooling capacity, power rating, air quality, and more. Here are the top 10 things you need to consider before making a decision: 01

Cooling capacity (in tonne); always based on the carpet area. The right capacity of the AC depends on the carpet area you need to cool. For example, a one tonne-AC can cool 120-140 Sq. ft. area, and a one-and-a-half tonne-AC can cool 150-180 Sq. ft. area. Bigger spaces with 180-240 Sq. ft. area will need a two-tonne AC. 02 Energy efficiency; stars matter. Buying an energy-efficient AC is a better

bet in the long run as it will help you save both money and power. Needless to say, the AC must have a star-rated energy efficiency rating (EER), standardised by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE). More stars, better the efficiency and hence, better power saving. If you plan to use the AC for eight to 10 hours on average, it is recommended you go for a 3-star AC, at the very least. 03 Split AC or window AC? While it might look like an aesthetic decision to make, there is more to this choice. Split ACs look more sophisticated, take up less space, and operate more quietly. However, they come at a premium, when compared. Window ACs are cheaper to purchase and cheaper to install and maintain. If you think you will have to move the AC, for instance, if you stay on rent and might have to move, go for Window ACs. 04 Inverter or non-inverter AC? Split ACs now come with and without an inverter. Ones with an inverter will cost you anywhere between Rs 3,000 to 5,000 more, but they offer more uniform cooling and are cheaper to run. On the contrary, a non-in-

verter AC will be cheaper to acquire, however, cooling will not be as efficient, and running cost will be higher, when compared to inverter ACs. Picking an inverter AC is a no brainer, we guess. 05

Brand. Always recommended. Always go for a brand that has been making ACs for a while. This ensures the product has passed the test of time. However, if you come across new sub brands from bigger players, and if the dealer recommends it, you are good to go. Whether you buy from a retail store or an online marketplace, the dealer will take care of the initial installation. Do keep the warranty card safe, and register the product online, if needed.

06 Service network. ACs require servicing at least once a year to maintain optimal performance. Getting a branded AC makes ensuring service easier. This will also help you secure spare parts in case of minor issues. 07 Cooling speed. Different ACs offer different cooling speeds, and this varies from location to location as well. In a city, where the average temperature is above 45 degrees in the summer, you

might need an AC that offers faster cooling, and it is also important to get an AC that offers different cooling speeds, which can help control the temperature in a granular manner. 08 Air quality

Most modern ACs come with an integrated air filter, and depending on the brand, the functionality differs. If you live in a place like Delhi NCR, where the Air Quality Index is perennially poor, choose an AC that has strong air filtering capabilities. If you live in Kerala, you may save the extra bucks. 09 Multipurpose AC. ACs are no longer just used for cooling. In winter, they double up as heating devices. Again, not every AC can offer both cooling and heating capabilities, you need to choose based on your location. 10 Smart AC. If you're used to all your devices being 'smart', Smart ACs are on offer. It offers more insights on cooling and power usage, and these can be controlled using voice commands or using a smartphone. Some of the smart ACs also have self-diagnostic capabilities, which makes it easy to repair if something goes wrong.