

Telangana government begins scouting for land to set up pharma villages

Hyderabad: After scrapping the Hyderabad Pharma City project at Mucherla, Kandukar, Kadthal and neighbouring areas in Rangareddy by the previous BRS government, the Congress government is now scouting for land to establish pharma villages in different districts. To this effect, the Vikarabad district administration has issued a notification to acquire land spread over 71 acres at Polepally village in Dudyal mandal. Of the 10 proposed villages, two are likely to come up at Nalgonda and Medak districts.

The previous government had proposed the Hyderabad Pharma City (HPC) as the world's largest integrated cluster for pharmaceutical industries with thrust on R&D and manufacturing. The cluster, spread over nearly 14,000 acres, was recognised as a National Investment and Manufacturing Zone (NIMZ) by the Centre, given its national and international importance. The project was to be developed at about 25 km from the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA). There was also a proposal to establish a Life Sciences University and meetings were held with differ-

ent universities in this regard.

In the name of decentralising pharma industries, the Congress government is now proposing to establish 10 pharma villages in different districts, setting aside the tailor-made land developed for setting up units at the Pharma City. However, there is a mixed reaction from the industry over the State government's decision to develop 10 pharma villages. While a section of industrialists opine that it would generate employment for youth in different places, others stress that securing land and obtaining environment clearances would be a challenge. The small cluster concept can be beneficial but it all depends on the State government's commitment towards the effective implementation of the proposed ideas, said an office-bearer of the Federation of Pharma Entrepreneurs Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. For the successful implementation of the ideas, one industry giant should lead the initiatives proposed by the government in each cluster. Again, the government should come up with incentives for the industry, the office-bearer said. Pointing out the other side of the coin,



a member of the Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India said securing land and environmental clearances for the new pharma villages could be a challenge. Considering the fact that land prices have shot up across the State, ac-

quiring land would not be easy. Further, to set up basic units, reasonable permissions should have to be obtained, but for manufacturing drugs and others, red zone clearances would have to be secured. This could consume time, the member said.

OpenText takes pride in inclusivity with launch of 'Hope in a Cup' café in Hyd



Hyderabad: Seeking to support members of the LGBTQIA community in their entrepreneurial journey by providing essential training and on-ground experience, OpenText has launched the 'Hope in a Cup' café at their Hyderabad office. This initiative, in partnership with the NGO, Nirmaan Organization, also aims to equip the members of the community with the resources and skills needed to create and develop their own ventures.

In addition to providing space within its office, OpenText has invested Rs.25 lakh in developing the infrastructure of the café, training the community members who will work at the café and the overall program coordination for this initiative as part of the company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts. In alignment with OpenText's equity, diversity, and inclusion (ED&I) priorities, the Hope in a Cup café will be managed by three members of the LGBTQIA

community, with the assistance of a dedicated project coordinator.

Yvonne Thomson, Vice President, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion, OpenText said, "as we continue to prioritize breaking down barriers in the way of marginalized and underrepresented groups, this café is testament to our commitment and vision of a world where all voices are heard, welcomed and valued." Mayur Patnala, Founder, President – Nirmaan Organiza-

tion attended the inaugural event. Manoj Nagpal, Managing Director, OpenText India said, "We strongly believe that an equitable, diverse, and inclusive work environment is not only essential for innovation but helps to make businesses and people better." The 'Hope in a Cup' project empowers LGBTQIA community members through a two-month training program in café management, equipping them to start their own businesses.

Volunteers take up cleanliness drive as part of Jubilee Hills Rotary Club initiative

Hyderabad: More than 30 volunteers have taken up a cleanliness drive at the Langer Houz Talab as part of an initiative taken up by the Rotary Club of Jubilee Hills, here on Saturday.

The volunteers during the drive collected 20 large sacks of litter that included plastic bags, plastic bottles, disposable food plates, glass bottles and other non-biodegradable material. Given the magnitude of litter, the volunteers decided to visit the same lake for three or four more times to show a greater impact.

Rotary Club of Jubilee Hills is

partnering with the GHMC in the drive for cleaner and greener lakes in twin cities. Environmental protection is one of the seven areas of focus of Rotary International and under this focus areas, Rotary Club of Jubilee Hills along with voluntary work from one of the largest global corporate is taking up cleaning of lake surroundings and make them free of plastic and other litter by the visitors.

Rotary Club of Jubilee Hills President B K Reddy, Murthy Vadapalli and Nagraj Kacham incharge of lake cleaning projects also participated.

Court shifts the tide on stray dog policy

"Under all circumstances, there cannot be any indiscriminate killings of canines and the authorities have to take action in terms of the mandate and spirit of the prevalent legislations in place." With this single line, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India brought to an end a 15-year-old case titled Animal Welfare Board of India & Anr Versus People for Elimination of Stray Dogs & Ors, also known as the All India Stray Dogs case or AWBI vs PEST. The last hearing was held on May 9 this year when the judgment was reserved. Since then, all dog lovers (and regrettably, all dog haters) have been waiting with bated breath for the final judgment. That judgment came out on July 12 and has been cheered in some circles and criticised in others.

The case centred on whether municipal and local authorities can wantonly kill stray dogs to reduce the stray dog population, eradicate rabies, and prevent man-animal conflict, or whether local bodies must follow the World Health Organization (WHO)-backed scientific approach of sterilisation, which achieves these objectives. Legally speaking, the matter was framed as a battle of supremacy between State and Municipal laws, which authorise the killing of stray dogs (euphemistically referred to as culling) as opposed to the Central law (Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960, and the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules, 2001), which mandates that killing is strictly prohibited and, the only recourse is the scientific solution of sterilisation.

These State and Municipal laws permitting the killing of stray dogs were challenged in various High Courts. The High Courts of Bombay, Karnataka, and Himachal Pradesh ruled that local authorities have discretionary powers to kill stray dogs and are not bound by the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960. On the other hand, the Kerala High Court ruled that local bodies possess no such discretionary powers, and, that they are guided by Central law, which penalises cruelty to animals, specifically canines. All these judgments were appealed and came to a head in the Supreme Court, which then issued notices to all the States and Union Territories in 2015, taking the case to a pan-India level.

The denouement of this case was reached when the final order was uploaded on the Supreme Court's website. The Supreme Court laid down that since the inception of the case, a lot of water has flown under the bridge and, specifically, there has been a change in the legislative landscape with the notification of the new ABC Rules, 2023 under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960. These two pieces of legislation mandate that wanton killing by municipalities is prohibited and that sterilisation must be followed. The Supreme Court then stated that any parties with issues regarding these new laws can challenge them in the relevant High Courts. In the meantime, the governing law of the land remains the Central law (PCA Act 1960 and ABC Rules, 2023), which prohibits the killing of stray dogs by local authorities or municipalities. 'Duty of every citizen'

The court then capped off this judgment with these stirring lines: "Compassion to all living beings, is the enshrined Constitutional value and mandate, and cast

obligation on the authorities to maintain." This refers to Article 51A(g) of the Constitution of India, which deals with the fundamental duties of the citizens and states: "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures." With such a positive and compassionate conclusion to a very scientifically backed judgment, the Supreme Court ended this matter. The dog haters, or to put it politely the cynophobes, can certainly go to the High Courts and file writ petitions praying for the striking down of the new Central Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023. But the question is what good would that do? Is killing all the stray dogs the panacea that we are promised to deliver us from all evils? Science certainly does not back the claim that killing helps reduce the population. WHO's Expert Consultation on Rabies, which met in Geneva in October 2004, in its technical report endorses the sterilisation program by stating that it is the only effective and humane method of controlling stray dog populations. A 2014 report commissioned by the Bombay Municipal Corporation stated that sterilisation is the only scientific humane solution. The same corporation in a 1994 circular admit-



ted that killing strays does not affect the population. In this circular, the Bombay Municipality admitted to killing about 4.5 lakh stray dogs between 1984 and 1994 and spent more than ₹2 crores. But what takes the cake is that, despite no evidence to prove the efficacy of killing and evidence to the contrary, the same Bombay Municipal Corporation approached the Supreme Court seeking permission to kill stray dogs in this case. One can only hope that the spirit

of scientific temper and humanism, as enshrined in the fundamental duty in our Constitution under Article 51A(h), imbues itself in the minds of our citizens.

We must eschew unscientific and barbaric methods such as the killing of stray dogs in favour of the scientific approach, which is a win-win for everyone. We domesticated stray dogs around 10,000 years ago and let us not let them or ourselves down.

Pune records 73 Zika virus cases, health department urges calm

As of Wednesday (August 7), 88 people have been admitted with the Zika virus infections in Maharashtra, a senior health official from the Integrated Disease Surveillance Program (IDSP) of the Public Health Department, Government of Maharashtra, said. In all, 73 cases of Zika virus have been reported from Pune city, 6 from Pune rural, 2 from Pimpri Chinchwad, 4 from Ahmednagar, 1 from Sangli, 1 from Kolhapur, and 1 from Solapur. Of these, eight new patients were admitted on Wednesday, of whom 7 are from Pune city and 1 from Pune rural. On Wednesday, a total of 7 pregnant women tested positive to the virus whereas the State count of pregnant women positive with the virus is 37. The health department said they are closely monitoring pregnant women with positive Zika virus cases.

The first case of Zika virus infection in the city this year was reported on June 20 when a 46-year-old doctor in the Erandwane area tested positive. Subsequently, his 15-year-old daughter too tested positive for the infection. From January 2024 till August 7, total serum samples collected from pregnant women were 1409, of which 81 were collected on August 7. Total samples collected in the state are 1,594 of which 83 were collected on August 7 and 88 samples are currently positive. Total surveyed houses in the State so far are 1,74,729 of which 7,814 were surveyed on August 7.

"Till date we have surveyed a total



population of 6,88,572; 1,74,717 houses were inspected for worms of which 3,745 were found contaminated; 5,30,783 utensils were examined of which 25,476 were found contaminated, we have added temephose, a larvicide, in 16,320 utensils with water," informed an official from health department. Guppy fish or temephose should be used in cement containers that cannot be emptied. There were reports on a few deaths which we are yet to officially declare as the death monitoring committee is auditing the reports to understand the actual cause of death," an official from the health department informed. The virus spreads through the bite of an infected

Aedes mosquito, which also transmits dengue and chikungunya. This mosquito usually bites during the day. The health department said, "The death rate is very negligible, so people do not need to panic. In case of fever, immediately report to government hospitals where the best diagnosis and treatment for this disease is available at free of cost. Private medical practitioners should also get such patient's sample checked from National Institute of Virology Pune through government system. Use mosquito nets while sleeping and use full sleeved clothed during the day. Do not create a breeding ground for mosquitoes under any circumstances."

Suchitra Model United Nations 6.0 Concludes on a High Note, Empowering Youth to 'Voices R.I.S.E, Solutions Soar'



The 6th edition of the Suchitra Model United Nations (MUN) conference concluded on a high note, leaving a lasting impact on the young minds who participated in this transformative event. Themed 'Voices R.I.S.E, Solutions Soar', the two-day conference brought together over 290 delegates from across the region and beyond to tackle pressing global issues, fostering a sense of global unity and responsibility.

The delegates engaged in spirited debates across multiple committees, in-

cluding the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), Joint Crisis Committee (JCC), Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), All India Political Parties Meet (AIPPM), and the International Press (IP). A unique highlight was the surprise Committee X, the Council on Foreign Relations, which tested the delegates' adaptability and quick thinking. "Suchitra MUN 6.0 was more than

just a conference; it was a transformative platform where young leaders honed their diplomatic skills, forged lasting friendships, and contributed to a better world," said Deepa Kapoor, the Principal of Suchitra Academy. "The delegates' personal growth and learning experiences were truly inspiring, and we are proud to have facilitated such an enriching event." The opening ceremony set the tone for the event, with the guest speaker inspiring delegates to be agents of change. On the second day, the

'No Bag Day' initiative encouraged delegates to connect and collaborate in a relaxed atmosphere, culminating in an awards ceremony recognizing outstanding performances and a vibrant social gathering. "Suchitra MUN 6.0 was a resounding success, thanks to the hard work and dedication of the organizers," Deepa Kapoor added. "The echoes of insightful debates and collaborative spirit will continue to inspire future generations as we strive to empower young minds to be the voices that rise and the solutions that soar."

No direct evidence to show plastics cause autism, but what does BPA do?

A study that came out recently has prompted much media attention about the role of plastics in developing autism. In particular, the study focused on exposure to a component of hard plastics – bisphenol A, or BPA – in the womb and the risk of boys developing this neurodevelopmental disorder. Importantly, the study doesn't show plastics containing BPA cause autism. But it suggests BPA might play a role in oestrogen levels in infant and school-aged boys, which can then affect their chance of being diagnosed with autism. Let's tease out the details. BPA is a component of hard plastics that has been used for a few decades. Because BPA is found in plastics used for food and some drink containers, many people are exposed to low levels of BPA every day.

But concerns about how BPA impacts our health have been around for some time because it can also weakly mimic the effects of the hormone oestrogen in our body. Even though this action is weak, there are worries about health because we are exposed to low levels across our lifetime. Some countries have banned BPA in baby bottles, as a precaution; Australia is voluntarily phasing it out in baby bottles.

What is autism and what causes it?

Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder diagnosed based on difficulties with social communication and repetitive and/or restrictive behaviours. People with au-

tism may experience other issues, such as seizures, changes in motor function (for example, difficulties with fine motor coordination, such as holding a pencil or turning a key to open a door), anxiety, sensory issues, sleeping problems as well as gut upsets. There's a broad range of the intensity of these symptoms, so people with autism experience daily life in vastly different ways. So far most studies have described autistic people who are able to interact very well in the community, and in fact may demonstrate outstanding skills in certain areas. But there's a big gap in our knowledge around the large number of profoundly autistic people, who require 24-hour care.

There is a strong influence of genetics in autism with more than 1,000 genes associated with it. But we don't know what causes autism in most cases. There are a few reasons for this. It is not standard practice to undertake detailed gene sequencing for children with autism. Although there are clearly some individual genes responsible for certain types of autism, more often autism may result from the complex interaction of many genes which is very difficult to detect, even in large-scale studies. Environmental factors can also contribute to developing autism. For example, some antiseizure medications are no longer prescribed for pregnant women due to the increased risk of their children developing neurodevelopmental disor-

ders, such as autism. This latest study looks at another possible environmental factor: being exposed to BPA in the womb. There were several parts to the research, including studies with humans and mice.

What did they find in humans?

They collected urine from 847 mothers late in their pregnancy and measured the amount of BPA. They then focused their analysis on samples with the highest levels of BPA. They also measured gene changes by analysing blood from the umbilical cord at birth. This was to check aromatase enzyme activity, which is associated with oestrogen levels. Children with gene changes that might indicate lower levels of oestrogens were classified as having "low aromatase activity". The team found a link between high maternal BPA levels and a greater risk of autism in boys with low aromatase activity. In the final analysis, the researchers said there were too few girls with an autism diagnosis plus low aromatase levels to analyse. So their conclusions were limited to boys.

What did they find in mice?

The team also studied the effect of mice being exposed to BPA in the womb. In mice exposed to BPA this way, they saw increased grooming behaviour (said to indicate repetitive behaviour) and decreased social approach behaviour (said to indicate reduced social interaction). The team

also saw changes in the amygdala region of the brain after BPA treatment. This region is important for processing social interactions.

The researchers concluded that high levels of BPA can dampen the aromatase enzyme to alter oestrogen production and modify how neurons in mouse brains grow. But we should be cautious about these mice results for a number of reasons: we cannot assume mouse behaviour directly translates to human behaviour

not all mice were given BPA using the same method – some were injected under the skin, others ate BPA in a sugary jelly. This may influence levels of BPA the mice actually received or how it was metabolised the daily dosage delivered (50 micrograms per kilogram) was higher than the levels people in Australia would be exposed to, and much higher than levels found in the mothers' urine in the study.

What's the take-home message?

Finding a link between two factors – in this case BPA exposure in the womb and autism – doesn't say one causes the other.

However the researchers do propose a mechanism, based on their mice study. They propose that high levels of BPA can dampen the aromatase enzyme to alter oestrogen production and modify how neurons in mouse brains grow.

World Breastfeeding Week 2024: "Closing the Gap: Breastfeeding Support for All"

World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) is an annual celebration held every year from 1 to 7 August in more than 120 countries. It is an opportunity to celebrate and promote the benefits of breastfeeding for both infants and mothers. The theme for 2024 "Closing the Gap: Breastfeeding Support for All" is particularly relevant for India, where the need to address disparities in breastfeeding support is critical. Undernutrition is associated with 45% of child deaths and only about 44% of infants 0–6 months old are exclusively breastfed globally. In India, the Gaps in breastfeeding practices vary significantly based on socioeconomic status, geographic location, cultural norms, and societal stigma. Other significant disparities are Healthcare System Gaps and workplace Challenges like lack of breastfeeding facilities, insufficient maternity leave policies, etc. Addressing these disparities is essential for improving overall health outcomes and achieving equitable maternal and child health. Breastfeeding is widely recognized as the gold standard for infant nutrition. Breastmilk is the ideal food for infants. It is safe, clean and contains antibodies that help protect against many common childhood illnesses. It is also linked to reduced risks of chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases later in life. Breastfeeding improves IQ, school attendance, and is associated with higher income in adult life. For mothers, breastfeeding offers several health benefits, including reduced risks of breast and ovarian cancers, improved postpartum recovery, and enhanced emotional bonding with their baby. Moreover, breastfeeding is a cost-effective way to nourish infants, reducing the economic burden of formula feeding on families and health systems. Improving child development and reducing health costs through breastfeeding results in economic gains for individual fami-

lies as well as at the national level.

WHO and UNICEF recommend early initiation of breastfeeding within 1 hour of birth, exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months of life, and introduction of nutritionally adequate and safe complementary (solid) foods at 6 months together with continued breastfeeding up to 2 years of age, or beyond. In recent years, India has made strides in promoting breastfeeding through various initiatives like Government Programs-The National Health Mission (NHM), Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) ensuring that mothers receive the necessary support to initiate and sustain breastfeeding, Public Awareness Campaigns to educate families about the benefits of breastfeeding and dispel myths and Workplace Policies including lactation breaks and designated breastfeeding rooms. World Breastfeeding Week 2024 provides a vital opportunity for India to address and close the gap in breastfeeding support. By focusing on the theme "Closing the Gap: Breastfeeding Support for All," the country can work towards ensuring that every mother has access to the resources and support she needs to successfully breastfeed her child. Through comprehensive education, community engagement, policy advocacy, and targeted interventions, India can make significant strides in improving breastfeeding practices and contribute to a healthier, more resilient world.

DR. SUCHITA N. KAWALE.
MBBS, MD (COMMUNITY MEDICINE),
ASS. PROFESSOR,
DEPT. OF COMM. MED.,
ESIC MCH, SANATHNAGAR,
HYDERABAD, TELANGANA.
Email- suchisuccess80@gmail.com
Orchid id-0000-0001-5599-0134.



Zero Dose Implementation Plan 2024 developed for 143 districts in 11 States, says Nadda

A Zero Dose Implementation Plan 2024 has been developed for 143 districts in 11 States in India that have a high number of unvaccinated children, Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda said in the Parliament on Friday, August 9, 2024. Mission Indradhanush (MI) and Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) are special vaccination campaigns conducted in collaboration with States that have a high number of unvaccinated children. Until 2023, 12 phases of MI or IMI have been conducted where 5.46 crore children and 1.32 crore pregnant women have been vaccinated, the Minister said.

Responding to a question in the Lok Sabha, the Minister said there has been a flawed comparison with countries that have a high burden zero dose children in the 2023 WHO/UNICEF report on estimates of national immunisation coverage as it has not taken into consideration India's popu-

lation and high vaccination coverage. As a percentage, zero dose or unvaccinated children account for 0.11 per cent of the country's total population, the Minister said.

Mr. Nadda said the government was aware of the 2023 report of World Health Organization/UNICEF Estimates of National Immunization coverage (WUENIC) on India's position on zero dose children. "However, there has been a flawed comparison with countries having high burden zero dose children as it has not taken into consideration India's population and high vaccination coverage," Nadda said. With continued efforts, there has been a commensurate decrease in drop-out percentages from DTP-1 to DTP-3 from 7 per cent in 2013 to 2 per cent in 2023 and increased coverage of measles from 83 per cent in 2013 to 93 per cent in 2023, he stated. From a figure of 26 lakh zero dose children in 2013, the number of unvacci-

nated children has dropped to 16 lakh zero dose children in 2023, according to the WUENIC report. The vaccination coverage of over 90 per cent for most antigens covered under the programme is also at par with many high-income countries. India's 83.46 per cent exceeds the global vaccine coverage average (72.77 pc) for WHO recommended vaccines. Comparatively, Nigeria has achieved a DPT1 coverage of only 70 per cent as against 93 per cent for India (WUENIC 2023), Mr. Nadda said. Given the large population size, our country has the highest cohort of vaccinated children -- 2.5 crore children out of the cohort of 2.6 crore with Full Immunisation Coverage at 93.5 per cent for FY 2023-24 and 1.3 crore vaccination sessions, the Minister said. India's immunisation programme is the largest public health initiative globally. The government has taken several measures in coordination with the states and Union

Territories (UTs) to ensure that all eligible children receive missed or due doses of vaccines, the Union Minister said. Besides, National Immunisation days (NIDs) and Sub National Immunisation days (SNIDs) for Pulse Polio programme are special vaccination campaigns carried out every year. India has been maintaining its polio free status since 2014 onwards. VHND (Village Health and Nutrition Day) on designated days for immunisation activities are hosted. State Task Force on Immunisation (STFI), District Task Force on Immunisation (DTFI) and Block Task Force on Immunisation (BTFI) ensure effective implementation of the drives that are regularly undertaken, Mr. Nadda said. Regular information, education and communication campaigns are held. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has also developed the UWIN portal for the registration and recording of all vaccination events of children and pregnant women, Mr. Nadda stated.

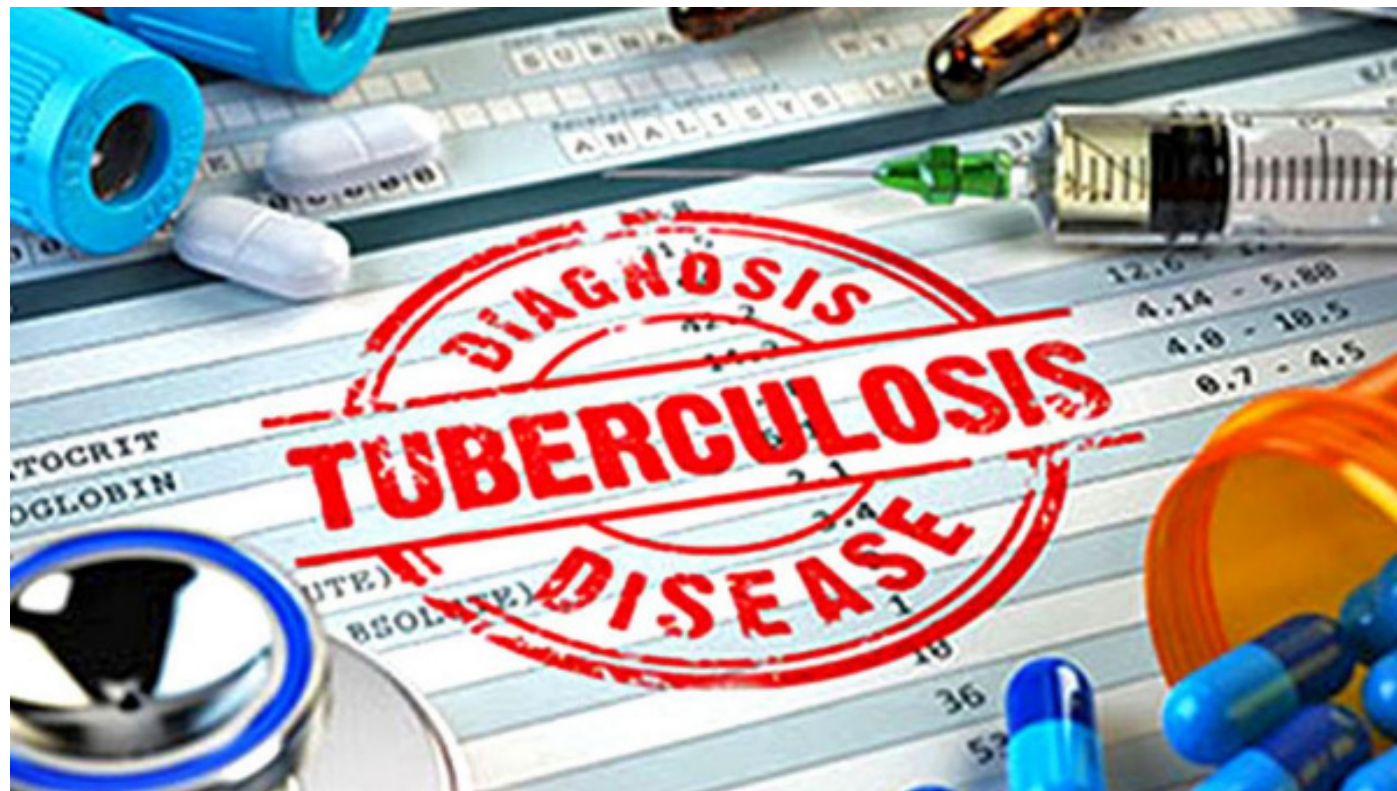
India to roll out new treatment regimen for drug-resistant TB

India is getting ready to roll out BPaL (bedaquiline, pretomanid, and linezolid) regimen for all multi/extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis patients and the training for this new exercise is scheduled to begin this month. This is a significant move in the country's battle against M/XDR-TB with the new regime indicating good results in countries including Pakistan, South Africa, Ukraine, etc. Announcing the move on social media on Friday, Soumya Swaminathan, principal advisor, National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme, said that "the move should improve treatment outcomes and help thousands of patients".

Dr. Swaminathan said in her post: "India is getting ready to roll out BPaL regimen for all M/XDR-TB patients — training to begin this month. This should improve treatment outcomes & help thousands of patients. Scaling up NAAT coverage will be an essential element of the strategy." A nucleic acid amplification test, or NAAT, for tuberculosis (TB) is a molecular test used to detect the DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) of Mycobacterium tuberculosis complex (MTBC) in a sputum or other respiratory sample. Welcoming the announcement, Leena Menghaney, South Asia head of humanitarian aid organisation Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) said: "After the availability of generic bedaquiline cost to TB programmes has fallen — (BPaLM price is US\$426 (US\$130 bedaquiline, US\$238 pretomanid, US\$31 linezolid and US\$27 moxifloxacin). This is a momentous day for people with drug-resistant tuberculosis, because India will finally replace many of the longer, arduous and less-effective treatments by offering better, safer and shorter BPaLM treatment that is much more likely to cure this deadly disease. The next step is to also introduce delamanid-based short oral regimens for children and as an alternative for people who cannot tolerate bedaquiline or linezolid."

A senior Health Ministry official explained that after the introduction of the new anti-TB drug pretomanid, which is prescribed as part of the BPaL regimen, medical practitioners and researchers noted that the combination drastically cut short the TB treatment duration by half. From a treatment duration range of 18 to 24 months, BPaL brings down treatment time to around six months. Furthermore, the older all-oral-drug-regimen included nearly 14 different anti-TB drugs for a patient to take every day. With BPaL, it is likely to take just three daily tablets.

Currently, India has a 56% treatment success rate for MDR/RR-TB cases, and 48% for XDR-TB cases, attributable to long and toxic drug regimens. In fact, historically, treatment of such forms of TB anywhere would take 18 months or longer, with reported global success rate of 52% in the past. A shorter regimen, such as BPaL, which is all oral and requires lesser doses per day, will make it easier for a patient to adhere to and complete treatments, he explained. Also, in a paper titled 'Savings from the introduction of BPaL and BPaLM regimens at the country level' published last month, the study notes that in 2022,



the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommended the six-month regimens BPaL (bedaquiline + pretomanid + linezolid) and BPaLM (BPaL + moxifloxacin) as treatment options for most forms of drug-resistant TB. The study found that through BPaL/BPaLM regimens, drug-resistant TB treatment has become more effective, shorter, less bur-

densome for patients, cheaper for both health systems and patients, and saves more lives. When shorter and longer regimens are replaced with BPaL/BPaLM, the savings per patient treated in Pakistan, the Philippines, South Africa, and Ukraine are \$746, \$478, \$757, and \$2,636, respectively for M/XDR-TB. In its Global TB Report 2023, WHO said India has made tremen-

dous progress in improving case detection and reversed the impact of COVID-19 on the TB programme. The treatment coverage has improved to 80% of the estimated TB cases, an increase of 19% over the previous year. It added that the estimated number of drug-resistant TB in India has reduced by 21% from 1.4 lakh in 2015 to 1.1 lakh in 2022.

Despite push for solar energy, India trusts coal for surging electricity demand

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was in the midst of a months-long re-election campaign this April when he took to social media to trumpet a "remarkable feat!" and a "historic milestone" for his country: crossing 1 billion metric tons of coal and lignite production. It was proof, Mr. Modi said, of India's "commitment to ensuring a vibrant coal sector."

A month later, for the third year in a row, his government ordered some coal plants to run at full capacity to meet high electricity demand during the increasingly hot summer months. Even though India has been significantly increasing its renewable energy capacity in recent years, when demand for electricity surges, it still goes back to its most trusted source of power: coal.

For the first six months of this year, India has responded to major energy demand from its growing population and greater cooling needs because of extreme heat, in part due to climate change, by relying on its coal-fired plants. The country also plans to add more coal plants. India's coal demand rose nearly 10% in 2023, or about 105 million metric tons, in the biggest jump by percentage for any country,

according to the International Energy Agency. Demand in China rose 6%.

"We know the Indian government is serious about its climate commitments," said Carlos Fernández Álvarez, the lead author of the IEA report. But he acknowledged the "huge need to ensure people have electricity" in India, and added: "We don't believe that India will be a front runner in the coal transition." More than 70% of India's electricity needs are still met by coal even though renewable energy such as wind and solar power is growing.

India last year became the world's most populous nation with 1.4 billion people. Electricity demand is projected to grow by at least 6% annually for the next few years, according to the IEA. India has millions of people mired in poverty, but millions more who are being lifted from poverty as the country's economy develops. And many of those will be able to afford some relief. "Even if someone gets a fan or an air cooler to make their life a little more comfortable, cumulatively you will see the need for a lot more electricity," said Charith Konda, an energy analyst with the Institute for Energy Economics and Finan-

cial Analysis. He said 7% growth in annual demand "is the bare minimum" he expects.

While renewables are growing, India needs to add a lot of battery storage so that power can replace coal for nighttime needs, Konda said. Electricity demand isn't the only force guaranteeing coal's durability in India. Konda pointed to millions of jobs in coal, including allied sectors such as the railways that control the trains used for transporting coal. One indicator of coal's left: At the height of summer in 2022, the government canceled nearly 2,000 passenger trains so coal freight trains could reach power plants faster.

India's renewable energy capacity India grew its renewable energy capacity by 25 times over the past decade, and now has 195 gigawatts of wind and solar power installed. But it needs to grow faster still. Peak electricity demand reached an all-time high of 250 gigawatts in May, according to a report by the India Energy and Climate Center at the University of California, Berkeley. That demand could go past 300 gigawatts in the next three years, according to the report, which said that would mean power shortages at night.

KALAVIRA ART EXHIBITION AT SALARJUNG MUSEUM OFFERS VISUAL TREAT TO THE ART LOVERS OF THE CITY



'Kalavira' art exhibition, a kaleidoscope of creativity and expression, began at the Salarjung Museum in the city today. Differing from the traditional exhibitions of canvass painting, 'Kalavira' exhibition, comprises of products like sarees, shoes, ties, shirts and the new age lungi. The exhibition was inaugurated by Smt. Shruti Patil, Additional Director General of Press Information Bureau and Central Bureau of Communication, Government of India, in the presence of senior officials of the Salarjung Museum, today.

Speaking on the occasion, Smt. Shruti Patil said, "It's rare to find such kind of art form, whereby, an artist is able to draw, someone else's expressions, feelings and desires, on different products and make them look so special, different and unique. It's heartening to see, different tribal art forms from the regions of Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Odisha and other parts of the country, being depicted on the fabric of different kinds."

While trying the brush on fabric during the workshop at the exhibition, Smt. Patil said "Art is the delicate balance between imagination and reality. It is the silent language that speaks across time and space. In every piece of art, here at the exhibition, artist Ms Shikha, has tried to

transform the ordinary product into the extraordinary."

The 'Kalavira' exhibition, is curated by the artist Ms Shikha Ajmera. It features variety of hand painted products, specially curated for the niche audience. The exhibition features hand-painted sarees that beautifully capture the essence of Odisha's Pattachitra tapestry, Madhya Pradesh's Gond art and Assam's tribal art form. It also features, Agra's Taj Mahal, being beautifully hand-painted on the Saree. South Indian Film Celebrity of Pushpa movie fame, Mr Allu Arjun, is also depicted, in his signature style, on one of the modern day Lungis. There are innovative hand-painted shoes, showcasing themes like 'Agni-Varsha- the two elements of Human Existence' along with a variety of other bespoke creations. Visitors, apart from going through the various art forms, were also seen trying their hands with brush and colors. These products, with a finishing touch from the artist, are available as special gift items for the visitors.

Speaking on the occasion, the artist Shikha Ajmera said "Our 'Kariigarii of colors' is designed to breathe life into clothing, materials, and merchandise. Each creation is meticulously hand-painted, with every brushstroke contributing to a design



that is as intricate as it is captivating. Our mission is to add a personal touch to every creation, infusing it with colors that make it truly special, resonating it with the individual's personality and style."

Shikha Ajmera is a renowned artist and an entrepreneur. Her vision extends beyond artistry to include a deep commitment to supporting national award-winning

artisans from various parts of the Country. Ms Shikha aims to bring the intricate beauty of hand-painted artistry to a wider audience, while also creating meaningful employment opportunities for these skilled craftsmen. 'Kalavira' art exhibition is open for general public till Tuesday, 13th August, at the Salarjung Museum, Hyderabad before being taken to other part of the Country.

Vinesh Phogat disqualified: Noise around Phogat's disqualification shows failure has become verboten in India

The public reaction in India to Vinesh Phogat's exit from the Olympics has been unsettling — not because she left unexpectedly but because statements by political leaders, public personalities, and many people (as spotted on social media platforms) reveal no introspection, and no concern for the wrestlers' conditions in the country. India's administration of wrestling sports has been far from ideal. Recall the wrestlers, especially females, whom the Indian government virtually abandoned ahead of the Asian Games in Hangzhou; Antim Panghal, who could not compete under the Indian flag, despite winning bronze at the World Championships, because of the complacency of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI); the lower funding and vexation of private sponsorships for female wrestlers; and the opacity surrounding the WFI's operations. Also recall the police and government inaction that forced Ms. Phogat et al. to protest in New Delhi, demanding justice over allegations of sexual harassment against former WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh and the subsequent violent crackdown by the police. Succeeding in spite of barriers

The rules that led to Ms. Phogat's disqualification from the 50-kg wrestling contest at the Paris Olympics were always in place. They are not new. Yet they became a problem when she was found to have been 100 grams over the 50-kg limit on the second day of the stipulated requirement for the category. We need actions that could prevent incidents like Ms. Phogat's disqualification in the future by establishing institutions that produce more and more good sportswomen, in healthy, sensitive, and stable conditions, with the goal of consigning the inalienable arbitrariness of competitive sports to the sidelines where it belongs. Instead, we have statements only concerned with the arbitrariness of Ms. Phogat's disqualification and not with the systemic issues that force India to pin all its medal-winning hopes on a few sportspersons — the people who have succeeded in spite of institutional barriers.

Ms. Phogat had once said that Mr. Singh had "mentally harassed and tortured" her after her outing at the Tokyo Olympics. And as Jonathan Selvaraj documented in Sportstar, Ms. Phogat could not compete in the 50-kg category at the Paris Olympics "for reasons beyond her control" and, could not make it to the 53-kg category because Ms. Panghal had already secured that slot. "Phogat desperately asked for trials to determine who would represent India at the Olympics for that weight. The federation didn't budge. If she had to go to the Olympics, [she] had to wrestle at 50 kg or she wouldn't get to wrestle at all." Losing is verboten

But now, just grams away from a silver or gold medal, there are already allegations of a conspiracy from various quarters over Ms. Phogat's exit. Some have advanced less direct but arguably more damaging claims in the form of speculation. Yet others have said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi "let" Ms. Phogat to participate in the Olympics "despite" her involvement in the protests last year and that she has disappointed him and the country by losing. The government of Ms. Phogat's

home State, Haryana, has decided to felicitate her upon her return as if she were a silver medalist. These statements sound at first blush like shows of support — indicating faith in Ms. Phogat's ability to win — but are they? The rhetoric swirling around them is disinterested in actually improving the conditions of Indian women in sports. It is about refusing any outcome other than a podium finish for Ms. Phogat, and the confusion and moral panic over the statements' authors not knowing how to celebrate the efforts of someone who did her best yet still lost in the face of arbitrary but pre-existing rules. People routinely give it their all and still lose. Equally, arbitrariness is part of the foundation of sporting events. (There might be more legitimate questions about the matters to which arbitrariness can be justifiably applied but that is a separate discussion.) Researchers and journalists have exhaustively documented these facts. The real issue is that losing has become verboten in India.

That the country lacks a sporting culture that is not true to its spirit is evident even in its wealthy cricketing realm. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), led by the son of the Union Home Minister, wields considerable political clout and financial muscle to modify tournaments to be most convenient to the Indian cricket team. In the recently concluded men's T20 cricket World Cup, the BCCI arranged for the team to play its warm-up and opening matches at the same ground, avoid night



games (ostensibly to maximise television viewership in India), and to know where its semifinal match-up would be held well in advance. While it is questionable whether these prescience conferred the team with any real advantages, why go to all this trouble to begin with? The antipathy towards losing is not restricted to sports, of course, and has infused many aspects of India under Mr. Modi. They range from the BJP government's claims of being the world's "vishwaguru", a primordial originator of knowledge, to Prime Minister Modi's studied refusal to acknowledge or even talk about several issues that have embarrassed his government over the last decade. Even when he won his third term in

Parliament with fewer seats than expected, observers quickly noticed a change in his body language, his familiar bravado and irreverence in interactions with his colleagues subdued by a more deferential attitude. Many seem eager to celebrate Ms. Phogat's phantom victory without engaging meaningfully with the distal causes of her exit and mitigating the conditions still causing others like her to lose out. In this and many other circumstances, political narratives — and the basest social and political attitudes from which they draw their power — have encouraged us to overlook the travails of those who have lost due to conditions out of their control and fixate instead on winning alone.

WHO lists over 30 pathogens that could potentially start the next pandemic

Reminders that Covid-19 has not gone away pop up from time to time, even if the world seems to have moved on. More than 40 athletes at the 2024 Olympics in Paris have tested positive, highlighting a new global rise in cases, the World Health Organization (WHO) said on August 6. And now, the subgenus Sarbecovirus, of which SARS-CoV-2 is a member, is on the list of 'priority pathogens' in the WHO's recently-released 'Pathogens Prioritization' report.

The report, which is a framework for epidemic and pandemic research preparedness, is the result of work that began in late 2022, involving over 200 scientists from 54 countries who evaluated the evidence related to 28 viral families and one core group of bacteria, encompassing 1,652 pathogens. The final list comprises over 30 'priority pathogens'.

Sarbecovirus is classified as 'high' in the WHO list, for its risk of causing a Public Health Emergency of International Concern or PHEIC. The list also includes Subgenus Merbecovirus, which includes the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV). Both MERS-CoV and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) virus were also listed in the 2017 and 2018 WHO reports, but not their entire subgenera.

On the list of priority pathogens, but

not a new addition, is another virus that India has been dealing with of late: Nipah, a 14-year-old boy died at the Government Medical College Hospital, Kozhikode, Kerala, after contracting it. Both Ebola and Zika virus too, feature on the list, as they did in 2018, with both classified as 'high' for a Public Health Emergency of International Concern or PHEIC risk. Maharashtra is currently grappling with a Zika virus outbreak — reports indicate there have been over 70 cases of Zika in Pune in the past two months and these include 26 pregnant women. Imagine scientists and public health officials as individuals searching for the "lost keys" (the next pandemic pathogen). The area illuminated by the "streetlight" represents the Priority Pathogens. We can expand the lighted area a bit by researching the Prototype Pathogens and using them as pathfinders within Families to expand our knowledge and understanding. Neglecting the "Dark Areas" is not advisable given the uncertainty about which pathogen will indeed cause the next PHEIC or pandemic. Imagine scientists and public health officials as individuals searching for the "lost keys" (the next pandemic pathogen). The area illuminated by the "streetlight" represents the Priority Pathogens. We can expand the lighted area a bit by researching the Prototype Pathogens and using them as pathfinders within

Families to expand our knowledge and understanding. Neglecting the "Dark Areas" is not advisable given the uncertainty about which pathogen will indeed cause the next PHEIC or pandemic. | Photo Credit: WHO, Pathogens Prioritization, June 2024 report The list of priority pathogens, says Chennai-based infectious diseases specialist Subramanian Swaminathan, is a pointer towards the pathogens that governments could allocate resources towards, for surveillance and medical countermeasures. This does not mean all of them are currently a problem, he says, but it means that countries have to monitor these pathogens as they have the potential to turn into a problem.

"Surveillance of these pathogens has to involve multiple aspects — is the pathogen spreading beyond a geographical area, is it becoming more virulent, is its transmissibility increasing, is the clinical manifestation of the disease it causes changing, is it becoming more resistant to known treatment and does it have vaccine escape properties — all of these aspects have to be monitored," he says. What else is new on the list? The dengue virus and the influenza A viruses, including the H5 subtype, which caused an avian influenza outbreak in India and which even affected cattle in the United States are now on the list, along with mpox, which has currently erupted in parts of Africa.

Sheikh Hasina's resignation analysis: Why Hasina fell?

Sheikh Hasina survived the carnage of August 15, 1975 by sheer chance. Ms. Hasina, who was then 28, happened to be abroad when almost all members of her family, including her father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founder of Bangladesh, were killed at their residence in Dhaka by a group of Army personnel. She then spent six years in exile in India. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, she remobilised the Awami League (AL), Mujib's party, which played a crucial role in bringing down the military dictatorship of Muhammad Ershad in 1990. Six years later, the AL, under her leadership, defeated the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) of Khaleda Zia, and Ms. Hasina became the Prime Minister for the first time. She returned to power after an interregnum in 2009. In the subsequent 15 years, Ms. Hasina oversaw economic progress in Bangladesh. The country of 170 million people saw millions being lifted out of poverty. Her government won international praise for hosting millions of Rohingya Muslim refugees who fled violence in neighbouring Myanmar. She set up a war crimes tribunal to hold those who aided the genocide of the 1970s accountable. She won back-to-back elections, the latest victory being in January. Still everything she built came crashing like a castle in the sand on August 5. The 'iron lady' of Bangladesh had to resign and leave the country. She is now in India and is reportedly seeking asylum in a third country. What went wrong for the most powerful Prime Minister Bangladesh had in a generation?

The trigger of the set of events that led to Ms. Hasina's downfall was an unpopular quota system for government jobs that was originally introduced by Mujib after the liberation of Bangladesh. More than 50% of government jobs in Bangladesh were reserved for different sections, of which 30% were for the descendants of freedom fighters. Ms. Hasina had done away with this system in 2018 after protests. In June 2024, the old system was reinstated by the Bangladesh high court. This triggered student protests, first on university campuses.

But Ms. Hasina had another problem — lack of political legitimacy for her government. In Bangladesh the opposition and the government have historically had a hostile relationship. Ahead of the 2018 elections, Ms. Zia, the former Prime Minister and BNP chairperson, was sentenced to a five-year jail term, which was later extended to 10 years. Leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami, the radical Islamist party, were convicted and hanged by the War Crimes Tribunal. The BNP, the main opposition, had boycotted back-to-back elections. And independent analysts had flagged irregularities in the election process. Opposition leaders were routinely harassed. Legal challenges were mounted against the Prime Minister's rivals. The space for opposition politics shrank over the years.

But for large sections of Bangladesh's population, Ms. Hasina was a force of stability, who turned around Bangladesh's economy. The country witnessed sustained

economic growth, a jump in GDP per capita and substantial improvement in social indicators. Poverty declined from 11.8% in 2010 to 5.0 percent in 2022, based on the international poverty line of \$2.15 a day, according to the World Bank. But the economic story faced challenges in recent years, first after the strike of COVID-19 and then the Russia-Ukraine war. Economic growth slowed down. GDP growth plunged to 3.4% in 2020, from 7.9% the previous year, according to the IMF. And the economy is still in a recovery mode. The Ukraine war led to a spike in oil and food prices. Inflation went up to 10%, and the country has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in South Asia — at about 20%. As the economy slowed, employment opportunities in the private sector shrank. And when the high court ordered the reinstatement of the quota system, it angered the already frustrated students. This anger lit the fuse. And the opposition, which has been living under Ms. Hasina's tight grip for over 15 years, joined in. Ms. Hasina erred in understanding the depth of the students' anger. She also miscalculated the strength of her political opponents. She called the protesters 'razakars', a derogatory term which was used to refer to those who helped Pakistani troops during the Liberation War. This inflamed passions. And Ms. Hasina made the mistake which authoritarian rulers always make — bank on excessive force to quell an uprising. She unleashed both police personnel and Awami League activists on the protesters, who were also violent. In July, some 200 people were killed, mostly protesters, in clashes. The government said hundreds of police personnel were wounded.

After the first round of protests, the Bangladesh Supreme Court scaled back the quota system, setting the reservation cap for the descendants of freedom fighters at 5%. The students had won a major victory. But they were not ready to call off the protests. On August 4, they called for another round of protests with a new demand — Sheikh Hasina should go. They also demanded accountability for the deaths of over 200 of their comrades. The Awami League called for counter-mobilisation of its members. Dhaka, a megacity of 10 million people, was set for a major showdown with student protesters, who were backed by the BNP and Jamaat, and the security personnel and Awami League activists. More than 100 people were killed in the ensuing violence on a single day. The government curbed access to communication networks and ordered a curfew. Students urged for more protests for Monday (August 5). By that time it was evident that Ms. Hasina's position had been substantially weakened. The military said it would guard its constitutional obligations but won't use force against protesters. Students had asked the protesters to assemble at Gonobhaban, the official residence of the Prime Minister. In the afternoon on August 5, after holding talks with the security establishment, Ms. Hasina resigned and left the country for India. Ms. Hasina was the second leader in South



Asia who was forced out of power by mass protests. In July 2022, Sri Lanka's elected President Gotabaya Rajapaksa was forced to resign and leave the country amid massive protests triggered by an economic meltdown. The island country, however, saw an orderly political transition. The country's political class backed Ranil Wickremesinghe, a seasoned politician and former Prime Minister, as the new President. Sri Lanka is now preparing for a Presidential election later this year, even though the country is yet to recover from the economic crisis. But the situation in Bangladesh looks gloomier. The Army chief has announced an interim government, which is to be headed by Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus, a key demand from the

students. The President has dissolved parliament and announced that the country will soon have a general election. However, it is not clear what role the Army, which had in the past directly ruled the country, would play during the transition. The interim administration would also find it difficult to bring in order after the chaos of the past month. There are already reports of widespread violence against Bangladesh's minority communities, Ahmedia Muslims and Awami League functionaries. Bangladesh's polity stands broken. Ms. Hasina may be out of Bangladesh, but the Awami League would stay a force in the country. And moreover, the economic woes are looming large over the next government. Tough days ahead for Bangladesh.

CrowdStrike Releases Root Cause Analysis of Falcon Sensor Crash

More than a couple of weeks since the CrowdStrike global outage, the cybersecurity company has published an in-depth report around what exactly went wrong. The analysis finds that a combination of factors caused the Falcon sensor to crash. The Falcon sensor, the firm stated in the report is meant to deliver AI/ML to "protect customer systems by identifying and remediating the advanced threats." But a new feature that intended to increase visibility of "possible novel attack techniques that could abuse certain Windows mechanisms," was added to the sensor earlier in February. This feature was tested by the firm's "standard software development processes," they noted using a pre-defined set of fields for Rapid Response Content to gather data. But this wasn't thorough enough to catch the issue.

"On March 5, 2024, following a successful stress test, the first Rapid Response Content for Channel File 291 was released to production as part of a content configuration update, with three additional Rapid Response updates deployed between April 8, 2024 and April 24, 2024," CrowdStrike said. These "performed as

expected" in production. Then, an update on July 19 was delivered to certain Windows hosts that would "evolve the new capability first released in February 2024," where the sensor expected 20 input fields but the update provided 21 input fields. This mismatch due to an out-of-bounds memory read caused the system crash. The firm has said that based on this investigation, they will update their content configuration system test procedures and upgrade tests for template type development with "automated tests for all existing template types." It will also be adding deployment layers and acceptance checks for the content configuration system. Internally, there have been earlier complaints around the automated updates. To resolve this, CrowdStrike will now offer customers more control over the deployment of Rapid Response Content updates. The company will also be working with "two independent third-party software security vendors" to further review the Falcon sensor code and their quality control and update releases. Cybersecurity experts have praised the company's transparency but underlined the need for them to have robust processes given the critical industries they cater to.