

Lack of knowledge about epilepsy resulting in social stigma, says specialist



International Epilepsy Day is celebrated every year on the second Monday of February to promote awareness of epilepsy around the world. This year, the International Epilepsy Day will focus on the journey of people living with epilepsy who faced challenges in their life. Epilepsy affects almost every aspect of the life of the person diagnosed with the condition. For many people living with epilepsy, the stigma attached to the condition can be more difficult to deal with than the disease itself. The lack of knowledge about epilepsy translates into social stigma and exclusion and leads to the discrimination of people with epilepsy at work, at school or in the community. Stigma can cause serious harm to the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of a person with epilepsy, says an epilepsy specialist.

According to Sita Jayalakshmi, Consultant Neurologist and Epilepsy Specialist, Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS), epilepsy is a neurological disorder in which nerve cell activity in the brain becomes disrupted, causing seizures or periods of unusual behaviour, sensations and sometimes loss of consciousness. "Epilepsy is a treatable brain disease. Epilepsy can develop at any age. However, it is diagnosed most before the age of 20 and after the age of 60. A single seizure doesn't mean you have epilepsy. At least two unprovoked seizures are generally required for an epilepsy diagnosis. Even mild seizures may require treatment because they can be dangerous during activities such as driving or swimming. Treatment with medications or sometimes surgery can control seizures for about 80 per cent of people

with epilepsy. Some children with epilepsy may also outgrow their condition with age," she said. The most important causes of epilepsy include perinatal brain injury, infections, traumatic brain injury, and stroke. All of these conditions are preventable. However epilepsy has no identifiable cause in about 30 per cent of those with the condition. In the other, the condition may be traced to various factors like genetic influence, brain tumours, developmental disorders of the brain.

Speaking about the risk factors for epilepsy, she said certain factors may increase the risk of epilepsy. "The onset of epilepsy is most common during early childhood and after age 60, but the condition can occur at any age. If you have a family history of epilepsy, you may be at an increased risk of developing a seizure disorder." Head injuries are responsible for some cases of epilepsy. One can reduce risk by wearing a seat belt while riding in a car and by wearing a helmet while bicycling, skiing, riding a motorcycle or engaging in other activities with a high risk of head injury. Stroke and other blood vessel (vascular) diseases can lead to brain damage that may trigger epilepsy. The risk of these diseases can be reduced by steps like limiting alcohol intake and avoiding cigarettes, eating a healthy diet, and exercising regu-

larly. High fevers in childhood can sometimes be associated with seizures. Children who have seizures due to high fevers generally won't develop epilepsy, although the risk is higher if they have a long seizure, other nervous system conditions or a family history of epilepsy. The doctor mentioned that flickering lights, lack of sleep, tiredness, stress, excitement, missed meals, high temperature, menstrual periods, missed or late medication can trigger an epileptic seizure.

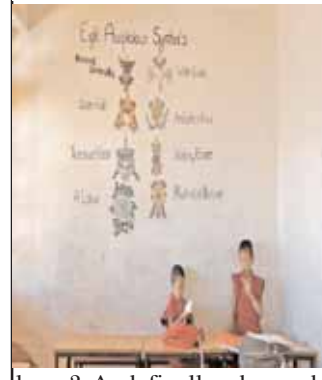
On how to identify the symptoms of epilepsy, the epilepsy specialist explained that temporary confusion, a staring spell, uncontrollable jerking movements of the arms and legs, loss of consciousness or awareness and psychic symptoms can occur during seizures. One must see a doctor if the seizure lasts more than five minutes, if breathing or consciousness doesn't return after the seizure stops, a second seizure follows immediately, if one has high fever, is pregnant or one who has injured himself or herself during the seizure. If you experience a seizure for the first time, seek medical advice, she said. Having a seizure at certain times can lead to circumstances that are dangerous to the person with the condition or others. If you fall during a seizure, you can injure

your head or break a bone. If you have epilepsy, you're 15 to 19 times more likely to drown while swimming or bathing than the rest of the population because of the possibility of having a seizure while in the water. A seizure that causes either loss of awareness or control can be dangerous if you're driving a car or operating other equipment. People with epilepsy are more likely to have psychological problems, especially depression, anxiety and, in extreme cases, suicide. Problems may be a result of difficulties dealing with the condition itself as well as medication side effects. Epilepsy is diagnosed with a good description of the event, home video recording of the event on a mobile phone. The tests usually performed are an EEG test, an MRI of the brain. Seizures during pregnancy may pose dangers to both mother and baby, and certain anti-seizure medications increase the risk of birth defects. "If you have epilepsy and you're considering becoming pregnant, talk to your doctor as you plan your pregnancy. Most women with epilepsy can become pregnant and have a healthy baby. You'll need to be carefully monitored throughout pregnancy, and medications may need to be adjusted. It's very important that you work with your doctor to plan your pregnancy," she explained. She also underlined the need to create awareness

among people on dos and don'ts during a seizure. Medical aid is usually not required except in case of the person being in water and drowning. The duration of the seizure is usually not more than two minutes after which the person enters a state of deep sleep. Most people with epilepsy can become seizure-free by taking one anti-seizure medication. Others may be able to decrease the frequency and intensity of their seizures by taking a combination of medications. More than half those with epilepsy who aren't experiencing epilepsy symptoms may eventually not require medications and live a seizure-free life, after two or more years without seizures. Surgery may help 30 per cent of the people with epilepsy whose seizures are not controlled well in spite of medical treatment. Some of these candidates may be helped by having epilepsy surgery, which involves removing the abnormal or damaged part of the brain without affecting the functions of the normal functioning brain. This is major brain surgery and is performed by specialized centres. Vagus nerve stimulation is a relatively new type of treatment for epilepsy. It aims to reduce the number, length and severity of seizures a person has. It is a treatment for epilepsy where a small generator is implanted under the skin below the left collar bone.

EDUCATION PLUS

Teaching peace to humanity



Why education is more than a way of being — it is an art of becoming. What is the priority of pedagogy for peace in the 21st century? Do we teach cultures and philosophies of peace at schools and universities around the world only to start new wars and conflicts? Is education for peace still a top priority in universities and colleges? And finally, does education help us to live a peaceful life and to bring peace around the world? These questions need to be in our awareness on a daily basis. Only then can we treat people, nature and most life itself in a more empathic manner.

In this light, education by definition is an ethical enterprise. In other words, education is more than a way of being; it is an art of becoming. It is not only a process of nurturing the human soul, as the ancient Greeks understood it through the notion of *paideia*, meaning the acquisition and transmission of excellence, but also what philosopher Bertrand Russell defines as "a certain outlook on life and the world." The ancient Greeks understood *paideia* as the essence of culture and communication in a good society. The aim of *paideia*, Aristotle argues in *Politics*, is to enable members of a community to decide the political organisation of society. Therefore, we need to assess the *paideic* dimension of peacebuilding. This describes the ethical and spiritual foundations of the process of rebuilding peace in or among societies.

Not just about security. As such, peacebuilding is not only about the security-sector reform of a society emerging from conflict; it is the medium- to long-term process of educating humanity with a special focus on the importance of promoting peace. In other words, in a world truly concerned about the happiness of future generations, peace and the process of taming violence in and among societies are continual, concrete, and the daily results of education as a learning process. In this process, the importance of autonomy and the nobility of spirit, which are primarily intellectual virtues, cannot be underestimated. Therefore, the main concern of education is to engender a certain character in human beings and to teach them the nobility of spirit and the moral common ground of actions. If that is the case, the aim of education is not solely an academic pursuit; it is a pursuit of moral wisdom.

Immanuel Kant, in his *Lecture Notes on Pedagogy*, says the aim of education "must be the moralisation of man". The educational theory advocated by him is closely related to his belief in the moral progress of humanity which is a self-articulated and self-realised process of attaining intellectual maturity. However, Kant considers this self-educating process of humanity as a slow and gradual cosmopolitan process. "Our only hope," affirms Kant, "is that each generation, provided with the knowledge of the foregoing one, is able, more and more, to bring about an education which shall develop man's natural gifts in their due proportion and relation to their end, and thus advance the whole human race toward its destiny."

There was a time when education was the highest task of human culture. However, in today's world we have become dulled to what it means to be fully cultured or well-educated. Our modern world is without a vision of human society encompassing these two experiences. Likewise, peace, as a dominant idea for moral education in the past, has gradually experienced its isolation in the two fields of politics and international relations. As a consequence, the peacekeepers of today are diplomats and soldiers. Moreover, the peace education promoted today by institutions such as UNESCO and the UN General Assembly is far from being sufficient to prepare the future generations against war and violence.

As a matter of fact, teachers and educators teach values such as fairness, compassion, truth and freedom to Others, but they also confront these values while transmitting them in classrooms. Furthermore, every form of value education is the foundation for mutual evaluation of moral and social principles. To transmit moral, political and social values from one generation to another is not an ideological process. Schools and universities are not supposed to be ideological institutions where individuals learn to become loyal and obedient. Here resides the difference between Tagore's *Santiniketan* and Hitler's National Socialist German Workers' Party. While Tagore invites us to consider the nature of education through a conscious relationship with nature and creativity, and as a path to bridge the gap between the educated and those who have not been educated, Nazi officers like Adolf Eichmann carried out mass murders while never permitting their consciousness to rise above the level of following rules and obeying orders. Looking for moral leadership

Building peace and transcending regional and global conflicts cannot be left entirely to the action and volition of political leaders. What is necessary herewith is not political governance, but moral leadership. Moreover, moral leadership cannot prevail by instrumental reason, namely, to work with the elements as means to an end. What we need here is a massive pedagogical enterprise as a mode of "cultivation" of humanity. The effort to peacebuilding is, therefore, accompanied with a freedom from prejudice, exclusion and domination. An essential part of a definition and practice of a culture of peace is through education of non-violence that develops the quest for mutual understanding. This raises questions concerning the value of civic upbringing, as an individual process and as a process that a community goes through. Here education is not about learning facts, but to cultivate one's judgment in order to be able to distinguish between the mediocre and the spiritually noble. If this is how things are in the context of the political, then education is not about repeating and imitating the already inherited values that are collectively accepted, but also about being able to create new values and norms in an autonomous way. It is certainly not ideological, but philosophical since it is exploration of constantly new questionings and a reactivation of the process of thinking. Such a process is an effective strategy for peacebuilding in today's world where pedagogy for peace is not something that is currently articulated and practised by the mainstream politicians, practitioners and researchers of international relations.

Apple spend 'millions of dollars a day' training conversational AI

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple is reportedly investing millions of dollars a day in creating multiple artificial intelligence (AI) conversational models, as the generative AI race heats up. According to a report in *The Information*, the tech giant is working on multiple AI models across several teams. "One of its goals is to develop features

such as one that allows iPhone customers to use simple voice commands to automate tasks involving multiple steps, according to people familiar with the effort," the report said late on Wednesday. The technology might allow users to tell the Siri voice assistant on their phone to create a GIF using the last five photos they've taken

and text it to a friend, the report added. Currently, an iPhone user has to manually programme the individual actions. John Giannandrea, Apple's head of AI, had authorised the formation of a team to develop conversational AI, known as large-language models four years back. This was long before ChatGPT came into exist-

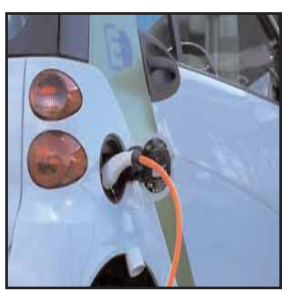
ence. A chatbot is in the works would "interact with customers who use AppleCare" while another may make it easier to automate multistep tasks with Siri. Apple's most advanced LLM, known internally as Ajax GPT, has been trained on "more than 200 billion parameters" and is more powerful than OpenAI's GPT-3.5,



according to the report, citing sources. The tech giant was yet to comment on the report. Apple CEO Tim Cook revealed last month that the tech giant

has been working on generative AI and other models for years. Cook said that Apple views AI and machine learning (ML) as fundamental core technologies. "And they are virtually embedded in every product that we build," Cook told CNBC. "On a research basis, we've been doing research on AI and machine learning, including generative AI, for years," Cook was quoted as saying. Apple does not talk much about generative AI and it was largely missing from its latest quarterly report too.

Industry hails extension of FAME II scheme to bolster EV infra



Industry players on Monday hailed the government's move to enhance the scheme outlay of Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME) India Phase II, saying it will enhance infrastructure, foster widespread adoption and longevity of electric vehicles across the country. The Ministry of Heavy Industries announced that

the scheme outlay of FAME India Phase II has been enhanced from Rs 10,000 crore to Rs 11,500 crore under FAME India scheme Phase II in order to give a further push to clean mobility in the country. The ministry also said that it is a "fund and term limited scheme", which means that the subsidies for demand incentive will be eligible for e-two-wheelers, e-three-wheelers, and e-four-wheelers sold till March 31, 2024 or till the time the funds are available, whichever is earlier. "We applaud the government's decision to enhance the FAME India Scheme Phase II outlay to Rs 11,500 crore. This timely boost in investment is a

shot in the arm for the EV industry, accelerating its growth trajectory and paving the way for a cleaner, more sustainable future," VG Anil, CEO of EV battery manufacturer Arenq. The main objective of the scheme is to encourage faster adoption of electric and hybrid vehicles by way of offering upfront incentives on purchase of EV and also by establishing a necessary charging infrastructure for electric vehicles. "This Rs 1,500 crore boost sends a clear message: India is serious about electrifying its mobility landscape. Lower upfront costs for EVs, coupled with enhanced charging infrastructure, will incentivize riders to choose eco-

friendly travel, accelerating the transition to a zero-emission future," Mayank Bindal, Founder and CEO, Snap E Cabs, told IANS. The number of EV charging stations that are operating in the country has gone up to 12,146 (as of February 2 this year), according to the government data. "The extension of FAME II until the end of March with a substantial outlay of 1,500 crore is a positive move," said Avinash Sharma, Co-Founder of ElectricPe. "This not only strengthens consumer-side subsidies but also enhances infrastructure, fostering widespread adoption and longevity of electric vehicles across the country," Sharma added.

Google announces \$27 mn funding to boost AI training for people in Europe



Google on Monday announced the 25 million euros (\$26.98 million) funding from Google.org to support artificial intelligence (AI) training and skills for people across Europe, with a particular focus on vulnerable and underserved communities. The company announced the funding as part of its AI Opportunity Initiative for Europe. Google will start by dedicating 10 million euros to equipping workers with the skills they need to avoid being left behind. "AI has enormous potential to transform the world for the better. Yet research shows that the benefits of AI could exacerbate existing inequalities -- especially in terms of economic security and employment," Adrian Brown, Executive Director, Centre for Public Impact, which is running the nonprofit scheme alongside Google, said in a blogpost.

"This new programme will help people across Europe develop their knowledge, skills and confidence around AI, ensuring that no one is left behind," he added. The initiative will also include a new series of Google for Startups Growth Academies across Europe, the Middle East and Africa. "The equity-free programme is to support startups using AI to solve society's biggest challenges, in health, education and cybersecurity," Google said. The company is now open for applications for the Growth Academy: AI for Health.

Under the AI Opportunity Initiative, the tech giant is also expanding its AI foundational courses to 18 languages. The courses are free of charge and available to everyone, offering a series of modules on introductory AI skills to help people and businesses get practical skills and knowledge.



INDIA'S FIRST FIRE ENGINE CAR

New Delhi
Participants ride 1914 John Morris, India's first fire engine car, during the 57th edition of the Statesman Vintage & Classic Car Rally, at Connaught Place, in New Delhi, on Sunday.

