

# NEWSREEL WORLD

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**Alanna Leslie:** Hi, I'm Alanna Leslie and welcome to Newsreel World.

Today we're talking about the U.S.A, Pakistan and Nigeria

But first...

The city of Kota in northern India is famous for its exam-preparation industry.

Hundreds of thousands of people visit Kota every year to be coached in the hopes of getting into India's most prestigious medical and engineering schools.

But recently, the city has been grappling with a surge in student suicides.

Ayushi Shah went to Kota to find out more.

**Ayushi Shah:** Nestled along the tranquil banks of the Chambal River, Kota is home to more than 300 coaching institutes that draw students from all over the country.

Every year around 150,000 students arrive here, in the "coaching capital of India", to learn how to pass fiercely competitive entrance exams and secure their place at one of India's prestigious engineering and medical colleges.

But beneath Kota's energetic facade lies a harsh reality. In 2023 alone 27 students have committed suicide, the highest ever recorded in the city.

This is Ankit Aryan. He arrived in Kota in 2017 with the hope of passing his Engineering exams. He told me he remembers feeling guilty for spending time with friends.

**Ankit Aryan:** Missing class created immense pressure. The syllabus moves lightning-fast, making same-day homework a struggle on most days. Now, imagine the hardship of catching up after missing 4 or 5 lectures if there is an emergency.



**Ayushi Shah:** These students are usually between 15 and 24 years of age. Many of these kids are from lower middle-class backgrounds. For them, the pressure is even higher, cracking these exams is their golden ticket to success and a chance to a better life.

Dr. Dinesh Sharma is a psychologist in Kota whose PhD research focuses on the root causes of these suicides.

**Ayushi Shah:** Dr. Sharma, what's driving this alarming surge in suicides?

**Dr. Dinesh Sharma:** There are many reasons but the primary reason pushing students to extremes is the academic pressure combined with the pressure of family expectations. The situation gets even tougher when the kid is constantly considering the heavy financial sacrifices these families have made to send them to the coaching classes. So, the kids feel constant pressure to succeed, even when they're stressed or can't cope.

**Ayushi Shah:** Desperate for solutions, in August, the district administration temporarily halted tests and exams at coaching centres for two months. Kota Police also launched an initiative to identify distressed students and provide them with essential support, counselling, and medical assistance.

While these are promising steps, Dr. Sharma believes a profound transformation of the system is needed. One of the measures he recommends is changing the system of paying hefty upfront fees for an entire year.

**Dr. Dinesh Sharma:** Some students may find that a particular course is not suitable for them within the first few months. In such cases, a quarterly fee system allows them to make informed decisions about continuing their education without financial pressure.

**Ayushi Shah:** In the long run, it is imperative to define success beyond just academic achievements and to foster a supportive, nurturing environment for students, both academically and emotionally.

This is Ayushi Shah, reporting for Newsreel World from Mumbai, India.

**Alanna:** Thanks Ayushi

**Alanna:** Imagine this – you’ve sat down to watch your favourite team play baseball, when you look down and realise there’s an alligator sitting next to you, also watching the game!

That’s what nearly happened in Pennsylvania recently, where security had to turn away a man who wanted to bring his pet alligator named Wally into the stadium.

Joie Henney, a former TV presenter of hunting and fishing programmes, first got Wally as an emotional support animal while he was undergoing treatment for cancer. He says Wally isn’t like any other alligator he’s ever dealt with because he never shows aggression.

Joie also told CNN he assumed it would be okay as he had taken Wally to baseball games before.

**Alanna:** Pope Francis has said he is open to the Catholic Church blessing same-sex couples.

It’s a practice that has already started happening in countries like Belgium and Germany, but the official position of the Roman Catholic Church has remained unclear.

Speaking to senior members of the clergy the Pope said, “we cannot be judges who only deny, reject, and exclude.”

He did maintain, however, that the Church still saw same-sex relationships as “objectively sinful.”

**Alanna:** That was a short clip from a performance by the Pahnji Gang, two siblings who rap together in rural Pakistan.

The brother and sister duo, aged 18 and 22, say that music has allowed them speak out against issues like sexual violence, honour killings and child labour, that are otherwise “conveniently shoved under the carpet.”

**Alanna:** A new generation of artists in Nigeria are experimenting with using artificial intelligence in their artwork.

But as much as they are excited by the possibilities, some are concerned about the ethical implications of machine-generated art to their profession.



Anthonieta Kalunta has this report from Abuja, Nigeria.

**Anthonieta Kalunta:** In Nigeria, a groundbreaking fusion of art and technology is taking centre stage. To get a deeper understanding of this collaboration, I'm here in Abuja's art village, an outdoor space for artists, to meet with young Nigerians leading the way in AI-powered creativity.

**Tobi Adetimehin:** My name is Tobi, Tobi Adetimehin, and I do traditional art. I paint with oils and acrylics.

**Nnamdi Oguejiofor:** My name is Nnamdi Oguejiofor, I'm a multidisciplinary artist.

**Anthonieta Kalunta:** Have you been able to incorporate AI into your art?

**Tobi Adetimehin:** Yeah, I usually will use AI art for references.

**Nnamdi Oguejiofor:** I'm into NFTs, and I have a couple of NFT collections, so yes I have to work with artificial intelligence.

**Anthonieta Kalunta:** Do you believe AI art enhances or diminishes the authenticity of artistic expression?

**Nnamdi Oguejiofor:** Okay yeah, so AI is something like every other tool, it's also like a paintbrush, it's like a cooking utensil, it depends on who's using it and what they can produce with it.

**Tobi Adetimehin:** AI art is not necessarily a bad thing, but when people come up and say, "Oh I am an AI artist," I feel like it just doesn't make any sense to me. It's one thing if you're using AI for your collaborative tool.

**Anthonieta Kalunta:** This blend of art and technology not only challenges the traditional art but sparks key ethical questions. Questions about copyright, authorship, and the very essence of originality in AI-generated art.

Who should be considered the artist when AI plays a significant role in the creative process?

**Nnamdi Oguejiofor:** I think it's the artist because AI is actually taking order from the artist.



**Tobi Adetimehin:** I don't buy into the idea where, you know, people just put the prompt and then you generate the image and you post it online or you put it somewhere as your piece of art.

Yeah, surely with NFTs, like, you could just literally press in prompt and somebody goes online and puts it and they're selling it for thousands of dollars. The computer actually compiles information from works that artists have put online, so basically it's stealing artist's works and then they're never getting anything out of it.

**Nnamdi Oguejiofor:** It's not necessarily stealing because when you think about it, there's nothing that's not already been done. So we artists, even as we...I might tell you I'm painting from my imagination but, trust me, that in my imagination stems from something I saw, another artist on Instagram. We influence each other.

**Anthonieta Kalunta:** In addition to thinking about how AI can change the creative process, Tobi and Nnamdi also have to think about how their audience will perceive AI-generated content.

**Tobi Adetimehin:** I think a lot of people are very accepting of it cos most people that I know who have actual reservations about it are actual artists.

**Nnamdi Oguejiofor:** I think AI is something, on the upside, that shows people that it's possible for them too to be artist.

**Tobi Adetimehin:** It's a very good development if it could just be regulated.

**Anthonieta Kalunta:** With Nigerian artists fearlessly pushing the boundaries of creativity, we're set to witness how far the fusion between the world of art and AI collaboration can take us.

I'm Anthonieta Kalunta, reporting from Abuja, Nigeria, for Newsreel World.

**ALANNA LESLIE:** Thanks Anthonieta! That's all from me today. Speak to you soon, bye!