

# INDIAN CHRONICLE

16 January, 2025 | Thursday | Volume No:12 | Issue No:288

Pages: 8+8

www.indianchronicle.com

Published from : Ranga Reddy (Telangana State)

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## Jungle safari in MCC quarry forests inaugurated

Mancherla: MLA K Premsagar Rao formally inaugurated jungle safari facility introduced in Mancherla Cement Company formerly known as ACC quarry forests at Gadpur village in Hajipur mandal under Luxettipet range on Wednesday. He was joined by Collector Kumar Deepak. Forest officials said that three tracks measuring 20 kilometers were developed covering the dense forests, grasslands, ancient Gandhari Khilla and percolation tanks and a lake formed in an abandoned quarry of Mancherla Cement Company formerly known as ACC, in the forests of Old Mancherla section. The facility was introduced to promote ecotourism in the district.

## Three officials including sub registrar nabbed by ACB while taking bribe in Jagtial

Jagtial: Anti-Corruption Bureau officials on Wednesday arrested the Metpalli sub-registrar, an attender and a document writer for demanding bribe from a land owner. According to ACB, a resident of Thimmapur of Metpalli mandal, Sunke Vishnu approached the sub-registrar Asifuddin to mortgage his 266 yards of land. The official allegedly demanded Rs. 10,000 as bribe and accepted to take Rs. 5,000. Vishnu was asked to meet attender Banothu Ravi, an outsourcing employee. Vishnu then approached the ACB, who laid a trap and nabbed Ravi while accepting Rs. 5,000 amount from the victim in the sub-registrar office. As Ravi took the bribe based on the instructions of the sub-registrar, ACB arrested Asifuddin.

## 'Unwavering commitment to building robust, self-reliant defence sector', PM Modi dedicates naval...

## Supreme Court Declines KTR's Plea, Leaves High Court Orders Intact



GNS News Agency, Jan 15

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday dedicated three frontline naval combatants INS Surat, INS Nilgiri and INS Vaghsheer to the nation after their commissioning at the Naval Dockyard. "The commissioning of three frontline naval combatants will strengthen our efforts towards

being a global leader in defence and augment our quest towards self-reliance," said the Prime Minister. He said that the commissioning of three frontline naval combatants underscores India's unwavering commitment to building a robust and self-reliant defence sector. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Maharashtra Governor C.P. Radhakrishnan, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and two deputy Chief Ministers Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar among others were present on the occasion.

According to the government release, the commissioning of three major naval combatants marks a significant leap forward in realizing India's vision of becoming a global leader in defence manufacturing and maritime security. These combatants have been built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders as a tribute to Atmanirbhar Bharat. Together they embody a credible, cohesive, future-ready and combat-ready force. INS Surat, the fourth and final ship of the P15B Guided Missile Destroyer Project, ranks among the largest and most sophisticated destroyers in the world. It has an indigenous content of 75 per cent and is equipped

with state-of-the-art weapon-sensor packages and advanced network-centric capabilities. INS Surat has enhanced capabilities over previous classes with improved design and advanced weapon systems. It supports various helicopter operations. INS Nilgiri, the first ship of the P17A Stealth Frigate Project, has been designed by the Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau and incorporates advanced features for enhanced survivability, seakeeping, and stealth, reflecting the next generation of indigenous frigates. INS Nilgiri features advanced stealth technologies and reduced radar signatures.

It is designed for multi-role operations with modern aviation facilities. INS Vaghsheer, the sixth and final submarine of the P75 Scorpene Project, represents India's growing expertise in submarine construction and has been constructed in collaboration with the Naval Group of France. INS Vaghsheer is a Scorpene-class submarine, known for its stealth and versatility in missions, including anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare, equipped with advanced sonar and missile systems.



GNS News Agency, Jan 15

In a significant legal setback, the Supreme Court of India refused to interfere with the Telangana High Court's orders concerning BRS leader K.T. Rama Rao (KTR). Facing this development, KTR decided to withdraw his quash petition filed in the apex court. The case pertains to the high-profile Formula E-race scandal, where KTR has been named as Accused No. 1 (A1). Allegations center around financial irregularities and mismanagement of funds during the organization of the event.

With the Supreme Court's decision, KTR is set to appear before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) tomorrow. This appearance is a crucial phase in the ongoing investigation, as the ED intensifies its probe into the case. The political ramifications of these developments are significant, as KTR is a key figure in Telangana's ruling BRS party, and the case is being closely monitored by both legal and political circles.

## Sonia Gandhi inaugurates Congress' new Kotla Road headquarters Indira Bhawan



GNS News Agency, Jan 15

Congress Parliamentary Party chief Sonia Gandhi inaugurated the party's new headquarters located at 9A, Kotla Road here on Wednesday (January 15, 2025), marking a key moment in the history of the grand old party which has operated from the 24, Akbar Road premises for the last 47 years. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, former party chief Rahul Gandhi, Congress general secretaries Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and K.C. Venugopal, among other senior party leaders, were present on the occasion. Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi inaugurates the new All India Congress Committee (AICC) headquarters, in New Delhi, on January 15, 2025. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and party MP Rahul Gandhi are also seen. Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi inaugurates the new All India Congress Committee (AICC) headquarters, in New Delhi, on January 15, 2025. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and party MP Rahul Gandhi are also seen. The event saw party leaders hoist the party flag at the new headquarters and the singing of Vande Matram and the national anthem. Sonia Gandhi then inaugurated the building, asking Mr. Kharge to join her in cutting the ribbon at the entry of the building. The new state-of-the-art AICC headquarters — Indira Gandhi Bhawan — symbolises the Congress party's continuing mission to uphold the vision of its stalwarts, the party had earlier said. "It is time for us to move ahead with the times and embrace the new," AICC general secretary, organisation, Venugopal had said.

## CHANGE OF NAME

I, **IMRAN CHAUSH ASLAM CHAUSH S/O ASLAM CHAUSH** (old name) born on 02-05-1991 at Kinwat earlier was Holding Passport No. Y3053195 DT: 22-05-2024 hereby changing my Name and henceforth in future I would be known as **IMRAN CHAUSH S/O ASLAM CHAUSH** (new name) H.No. 3-4-136/3, Thatiguda Adilabad -504001, Telangana State.  
**DECLARANT.**  
**IMRAN CHAUSH**  
**S/O ASLAM CHAUSH**  
**Place: Adilabad**  
**Date: 12-01-2025**

## Denied entry to Mohan Babu University, Manchu Manoj meets Nara Lokesh



GNS News Agency, Jan 15

Tirupati: Actor Manchu Manoj was stopped from entering Mohan Babu University by police here on Wednesday amid the feud with his father and veteran actor Manchu Mohan Babu. After landing at Renigunta Airport from Hyderabad, Manoj and his wife Monika drove to Mohan Babu University in a huge rally. However, police stopped them from entering the university, citing court orders.

Police personnel were deployed at the university following information that Manoj would be arriving there. Manoj later went to Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's native village Naravaripalli and met his son and State Minister Nara Lokesh. The actor and his wife were with the minister for 20 minutes. From there, the couple headed to A. Rangampeta to participate in an animal fair.

Manoj's aides said he planned to visit the university in the evening to pay tributes to the grandparents at their samadhi. Police have taken precautionary measures to prevent any untoward incident as Mohan Babu and his other son and actor Manchu Vishnu were already in the university. Mohan Babu and Vishnu have been staying in Tirupati for the last few days to participate in Sankranti festivities. The family of the veteran actor has been witnessing a feud for more than a month. There was a clash at the family house in Jalpally in Hyderabad on December 10. The veteran actor, who is also a former member of Rajya Sabha, had landed in further trouble attacking a television reporter after snatching the mike from his hand. Mohan Babu was booked for an attempt to murder. Mohan Babu and his sons were booked under BNS sections 329 (4) (criminal trespass and house trespass) and 115 (2) (voluntarily causing hurt) r/w 3 (5) in connection with the incidents that occurred at the house. Vishnu, who is backing his father and Manoj had separately appeared before Rachakonda Police Commissioner Sudheer Babu in response to the summons issued to them.

## Delhi liquor policy case: Centre's nod to ED to prosecute Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia

GNS News Agency, Jan 15

New Delhi: The Centre has given the go-ahead to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to prosecute Aam Adami Party convenor and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a money laundering case, sources have said, adding that it has also okayed the agency's prosecution push in the case against senior AAP leader and former Deputy CM Manish Sisodia. The Union Home Ministry has granted permission to the ED to prosecute Kejriwal under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) for alleged money laundering connected to the 2021-22 liquor scam case. The policy was later scrapped by the then-AAP government led by Kejriwal.

The move comes after the Supreme Court in November 2024, ruled that the ED also has to take prior sanction like the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for prosecution under section 197 (1) of the Criminal Procedure Code (now section 218 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita) in money laundering cases. A special PMLA court in Delhi had paused framing of charges against Kejriwal after he moved the Delhi High Court challenging the trial court to take cognisance of the charge sheet in the absence of specific sanction for prosecution under PMLA. Lieutenant Governor V.K. Saxena last month gave the nod to the agency to prosecute Kejriwal. The CBI, which has filed a charge sheet under the Prevention of Corruption Act, got the requisite sanction in August 2024 in its parallel corruption case related to the excise policy. The ED arrested Kejriwal, who is out on bail and named him in a charge sheet claiming that bribes were



taken for favouring certain liquor traders for AAP's Goa election campaign. The probe agency had said that Kejriwal was ultimately responsible for funds being used and generated as the national convenor and member of AAP's national executive. Sisodia, who was the Excise Minister when the policy was framed, was also arrested in the money laundering case. Kejriwal and AAP have been accused of receiving bribes from the 'South Group', a cartel that controlled the sale and distribution of liquor in the national capital and allegedly benefitted from the excise policy framed by the Delhi government for 2021-22. Both Kejriwal and Sisodia are currently out on bail. They have trashed the charges against them and have accused the BJP of using probe agencies to harass political rivals. The two leaders are now campaigning for the February 5 election in the national capital. Kejriwal has said he would be filing his nomination on Wednesday from the New Delhi constituency.

## Army has brought glory to India on global stage: Rajnath Singh



GNS News Agency, Jan 15

New Delhi: Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh lauded the Indian Army on the occasion of the 77th Army Day, highlighting its "indomitable courage, valour, and selfless service" in safeguarding the nation's security and integrity. He stressed that the armed forces have brought "glory to India on the global stage" through their exceptional commitment and professionalism. Army Day, celebrated every year on January 15, marks the establishment of the Indian Army and symbolises India's military independence. The day commemorates the historic moment in 1949 when General Sir Francis Butcher, the last British Army Chief of India, handed over command to Field Marshal Kodandera Madappa Cariappa, who became the first Indian Chief Commander of the Legion of Merit.

This year's celebration is themed "Samarth Bharat, Saksham Sena." In his message, Singh extended his greetings to the soldiers, officers, and their families, noting that the day offers an opportunity to honour their bravery and dedication.

"On this auspicious occasion of Army Day, I extend my heartfelt greetings to all the brave soldiers, officers of the Indian Army, and their families. This day provides us an opportunity to salute their indomitable courage, valour, and selfless service for our security and national integrity," he stated. He underlined the Army's vital role not only in guarding India's borders but also in contributing to disaster management, peacekeeping, and humanitarian assistance. "The Indian Army is not only at the forefront in guarding the bor-

ders of the country but is also making unparalleled contributions in the field of disaster management, peacekeeping, and humanitarian assistance. It is a symbol of pride and confidence of every Indian," the statement read. Acknowledging the Army's contributions to nation-building, the Defence Minister said it remains one of the most important pillars of India's security. "The Indian Army is one of the most important pillars of national security, and its role in nation-building is incomparable. I am happy that the Indian Army is not only always ready to deal with all types of threats, traditional and indirect, but is also playing a vital role in the country's emergence as a Viksit Bharat," he noted. Singh also praised the Army's rapid strides in adopting modern technology and promoting self-reliance in defence production. "The Indian Army is also moving at a rapid pace in the process of change and adoption of modern technology and is promoting indigenisation by adopting the path of self-reliance. The efficiency, discipline, and patriotism of our Army have brought glory to India on the global stage. The sacrifices and services of our brave soldiers can never be forgotten. The people of the country are grateful to them," he said. Paying tribute to the soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice, Singh expressed the nation's gratitude. "On this day, we also pay tribute to the brave soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice to protect the country."

## CM Revanth Reddy Extends Greetings on National Army Day

GNS News Agency, Jan 15

Hyderabad: Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy extended his heartfelt greetings to the soldiers of the Indian Armed Forces on the occasion of National Army Day. Acknowledging their unwavering dedication and heroic sacrifices, CM Revanth Reddy lauded the armed forces for safeguarding the nation with unmatched valor and courage. "The soldiers of our tri-services have been protecting the country as vigilantly as an eyelid guards the eye. Their bravery and selfless service inspire the entire nation," he stated.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

This to inform to the general public at large that, Kumbhar Pavan Kumar s/o Late K Ashok, has inherited the plot No. 2 in Sy No. 41/A situated at Mavala Dist. Adilabad, within the limits of Adilabad Municipality. That, the original Sale Deed registered document No. 1896/2007 and its link document No. 885/2002, 82/2000 and 377/94 are lost. If any one has any claim, right, title or interest of any kind in the said property, they may contact the undersigned within 7 days of the publication of this Notice, with all documents of claim and title. If no objection is received within 7 days, then the bank will proceed to complete the other formalities for the mortgage and for any claim and objection arise, it shall be deemed to have been waived.  
**Bipin Kumar Patel**  
Advocate,  
ADARSH Building,  
N.H.No.44, Adilabad 504001  
Cell: 9440005500  
Dt:13-01-2025

## Karnataka HC likely to give verdict today on petition seeking CBI probe

GNS News Agency, Jan 15

Bengaluru: The Karnataka High Court Dharwad Bench is most likely to pronounce judgment on the petition seeking the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) scam on Wednesday. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is named as the prime accused in the case. His wife Parvathi is the second and his brother-in-law Mallikarjuna Swamy is the third accused.



# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## India's dope shame

Doping continues to cast a long shadow on sports in India. The country has earned the dubious distinction of being second among nations with the most number of athletes currently ineligible to participate in international events. Adille Sumariwalla, outgoing president of the Athletics Federation of India (AFI), believes there is a silver lining to this dark cloud — more cheats are getting caught because greater testing is being done. However, the risk of being named, shamed and penalised is not outweighing the temptation to enhance one's performance fraudulently. The level of deterrence remains low, even as unscrupulous elements keep trying out new ways to game the system.

It's not enough for the national federation to have zero tolerance for doping. Strictness and transparency must percolate down to the district level, where the menace widely persists. If Sumariwalla is to be believed, district coaches are themselves supplying banned substances to up-and-coming players for short-term gains. It is commendable that the Haryana Sports Department, roused to action by

The Tribune's damning report on drug use during a boxing championship in Hisar, has warned that federations or associations would be suspended if doping occurs at any event organised by them. The message is loud and clear: sports bodies must face the music if they fail to weed out the black sheep. Unfortunately, once sports persons get used to taking drugs and getting away with it, they rarely try to mend their ways. Hard work and self-belief — two of the most potent tools to excel in sports — are sacrificed at the altar of unfair means. The state of affairs can improve if the evil is nipped in the bud; the earlier the clean-up happens, the better. A country aspiring to host the Olympics can't afford to suffer the fate of Russia, which has become a global outcast in the sporting arena mainly due to rampant doping.

## India's first robotic system performs complex cardiac telesurgeries



GNS News Agency, Jan 15

New Delhi: The made-in-India surgical robotic system SSI Mantra has successfully performed two robotic cardiac surgeries via telesurgery over a distance of 286 kilometres. The surgeries were performed remotely by Dr Sudhir Srivastava from Gurugram to Manipal Hospital Jaipur, using the SSI Mantra 3 Surgical Robotic System. The Telerobotic-assisted Internal Mammary Artery Harvesting procedure was conducted remotely in just 58 minutes. The surgery demonstrated exceptional precision with an incredibly low latency of just 35-40 milliseconds (1/20th of a second). This groundbreaking procedure was followed by another world-first, a robotic beating heart totally endoscopic coronary artery bypass (TECAB) — a procedure known as one of the most complex cardiac surgical procedures. This was also performed via telesurgery, connecting from Gurugram to Jaipur, with an incredibly low latency of just 40 milliseconds. "We are extremely thrilled to have advanced surgery capabilities to benefit humanity, especially in areas that need it the most. By enabling telesurgery, we can bridge gaps in access to medical expertise and deliver the highest standard of care, regardless of geographical barriers. For a country like India, with its vast rural population and significant healthcare disparities, this innovation is transformative," said Dr Sudhir Srivastava, SS Innovations founder, chairman, and CEO.

This groundbreaking inter-state robotic cardiac telesurgery marks a significant leap in enhancing patient care through innovation. The remote robotic-assisted CABG on an elderly patient from Jaipur exemplifies how technology is bridging geographical gaps to provide accurate and timely medical interventions," said Dr Lalit Malik, chief of cardiac surgery at Manipal Hospital, Jaipur. Developed by SS Innovations, the SSI Mantra 3 Surgical Robotic System is the only robotic system in the world to have received regulatory approval for telesurgery and tele-proctoring. The recent approval of SSI Mantra 3 by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) opens the door to remote surgeries and medical education, enabling healthcare professionals to collaborate across distances. -IANS

## Aspirants who dropped out between Nov 5-18, 2024 eligible for JEE-Advanced

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday allowed petitioners, who dropped out from their courses between November 5 and November 18, 2024, to register for Joint Entrance Examination (JEE)-Advanced.

A bench of Justices BR Gavai and Augustine George Masih passed the order while hearing the pleas against bringing down from three to two, the attempts given to JEE-Advanced aspirants. The apex court noted the joint admission board (JAB), entrusted to conduct the JEE-Advanced exam, had issued a press release on November 5 last year which said students who appeared for the class 12 examination in academic years 2023, 2024 and 2025 would be eligible to appear for the JEE-Advanced. The bench further said on November 18, 2024, another press release was issued restricting the eligibility only to two academic years — 2024 and 2025.

"If the students, acting on the said representation (of November 5), have dropped from their course with an understanding that they would be entitled to appear for JEE examination, the withdrawal of the promise on November 18, 2024 cannot be permitted to act to their detriment," the bench held.

## After two postponements in maiden space docking mission, Isro says it will now 'dock and inform'



GNS News Agency, Jan 15

With the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) SpaDeX space docking experiment missing two publicly announced schedules on January 7 and January 9, the space agency has decided to complete docking before making a public announcement. Isro had earlier announced that the docking would be a public event but after two consecutive postponements, a senior Isro official said that the docking "is on track" but the space agency will now "dock and inform" the public about the exercise. The postponement of the SpaDeX docking schedules has come amid the announcement of a change of guard at Isro with the Centre announcing V Narayanan as the new Isro chairman. Current Isro chairman S Somanath is set to hand over charge of the space agency to the new chairman on January 14. The SpaDeX (Space Docking Experiment) mission is intended to be a technology demonstrator for the docking of two small spacecraft launched by the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) on December 30. Space docking is considered essential technology for India's space ambitions such as bringing back a sample from the moon (2027-28), the building of a space station — Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS) — and a possible human landing on the moon. Isro launched two small spacecraft — SDX01 (the Chaser), and SDX02 (the Target) — in a low-Earth circular orbit on December 30 and set them apart at a distance of around 20 km in space to facilitate a gradual rendezvous through the closing of the distance for a final docking.

## 'Paper kite gift kit' infused with tulsi seeds adding magical green twist to Makar Sankranti

GNS News Agency, Jan 15

As the vibrant harvest festival of Makar Sankranti falls on January 14, sustainable gifting ideas are adding a refreshing twist to the celebrations. Araatrika, a Pune-based start-up, has come with a 'paper kite kit' giving a green twist to the traditional Sankranti gift box that is exchanged by married women at the time of the festival that is also marked by kite-flying. Designed in the shape of a kite, the paper kit infused with Tulsi (basil) and marigold seeds contains biodegradable haldi-kumkum (turmeric and vermilion) shells made of vegetable protein.

As the gift kits mostly come in boxes made of plastic and synthetic materials, Araatrika founder Jagruti Jain says her products are affordable and totally environment friendly to the extent that the kits once thrown to the soil germinate into tulsi and marigold saplings. "With the increasing use of plastic and synthetic materials during Sankranti has been an increasing carbon footprint. To address this we have designed Tulsi seed-infused 'plantable kites' which can be planted after use. The bio-degradable haldi-kumkum shells dissolve in water and are crafted to prevent littering of plastic containers. These pocket-friendly green products can be used as a giveaway alternative," said Jain, an architect-turned-eco-entrepreneur. Araatrika was started in 2017 to promote sustainable living through eco-friendly products. "To encourage 'vocal for local' all our products are made in-house. The production is carried out majorly by women from Pune's under-sourced communities who work from their

As part of the mission, after the initial 20 km inter-satellite separation, the Chaser spacecraft will approach the Target spacecraft by reducing the distance to five km, 1.5 km, 500 m, 225 m, 15 m, and 3 m before the ultimate docking of the two spacecraft. "After successful docking and rigidization, electrical power transfer between the two satellites will be demonstrated before undocking and separation of the two satellites to start the operation of their respective payloads for the expected mission life of up to two years," Isro said ahead of the launch of the mission.

After the successful launch and release of the two SpaDeX spacecraft into orbit, Isro had initially reported that the docking would take place on the morning of January 7. The agency, however, announced a postponement on January 6 saying, "The SpaDeX Docking scheduled on 7th is now postponed to 9th." The space agency said on January 8 that it had "initiated the drift on the Spacecraft to move closer from 500m to 225m." On January 9, the space agency announced that "the drift has been arrested and spacecraft put in a slow drift course to move closer to each other. By tomorrow, it is expected to reach initialisation conditions." Isro officials said that following the two postponements of the publicly announced docking exercise, the agency has decided to finalise the exercise before making any announcement.

"The docking experiment is called for on account of many reasons. The immediate one is Chandrayaan 4 but later for the space station planned for India," a former Isro official said. The Chandrayaan 4 mission involves several docking and undocking exercises both in the Earth orbit and the lunar orbit. "Two modules launched by two launch vehicles will dock in the GTO and both modules will travel together to the moon and one of the modules will stay in the moon orbit and the others will go to the moon's surface and collect the sample." One of the modules that lands on the moon will also take off from the moon to the lunar orbit and will dock with the module that is parked in the lunar orbit," P Veeramuthuvel, Isro scientist and project director on the successful Chandrayaan 3 moon landing mission from 2023, said in October 2024 at the International Astronautical Conference in Milan. "The samples collected will be transferred from the ascent module to the transfer module and finally the ascent module will get undocked and the transfer module will come out of the sphere of influence of the moon and travel to re-enter the Earth's orbit through a trans-Earth injection. Finally, the transfer module will eject the re-entry module and only the re-entry module will return to the Earth's atmosphere to a targeted landing site," he added.



homes," noted Jain, explaining her commitment towards reducing carbon footprint. Araatrika also has other customisable eco-friendly products such as seed pencils, upcycled diaries, seed raakhis, calendars with plantable papers, khunn toran and zero-waste birthday gifts among others. Sankranti traditions Makar Sankranti is celebrated as a harvest festival that marks the transition of the Sun into the Capricorn zodiac (Makara Rashi). It marks the end of winter and the start of longer days with the Sun moving northwards. The celebrations are deeply rooted in traditions, such as the exchange of sesame seeds (til) and jaggery (gud), kite flying and 'haldi-kumkum' gatherings, where married women exchange turmeric and vermilion powder as a gesture of goodwill and social bonding.

## Delhi airport's T2 to be closed for over 4 months for major refurbishment



GNS News Agency, Jan 15

Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) has unveiled an ambitious plan to refurbish Terminal 2 or T2 of the National Capital's Indira Gandhi International Airport which was built by the Airports Authority of India (AAI) four decades ago. T2 will undergo a comprehensive refurbishment to prepare for projected growth in air travel demand, said officials. The refurbishment work is set to commence in the 2025-26 financial year, with completion targeted by the second quarter, said officials. During the renovation, T2 will temporarily close for four to six months, with operations shifted to the newly expanded Terminal 1 to minimise disruption. With domestic air traffic witnessing unprecedented growth, the renovation will ensure that T2 meets increasing demand while enhancing passenger experience through better infrastructure, design and operational efficiency. The refurbished terminal will see six new Passenger Boarding Bridges (PBBs) sourced from South Korea which will be operated with autonomous docking technology for the first time in India. These bridges will also have elevated ramps for wheelchair accessibility, swing doors for better operator safety, and cushioned side covers for added aesthetics and safety. Additionally, significant upgrades to heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems and fire safety mechanisms will ensure security throughout the terminal. Aesthetic improvements to T2 will include the installation of modern ceilings and skylight designs, contributing to a more welcoming ambience, said officials. Smart washrooms, advanced flooring, and enhanced road connectivity will further bolster passenger con-

venience. Canopies in the forecourt area will provide protection from adverse weather. Operationally, T2 will see improved real-time flight tracking capabilities with the installation of high-resolution Flight Information Display Systems (FIDS) alongside revamped signage for clearer communication, particularly for persons with reduced mobility. Simultaneously, airside and apron refurbishments will address infrastructure wear from four decades of service, ensuring smooth operations for increased traffic volumes, said officials. Airport aprons are areas where aircraft is parked, unloaded or loaded, refuelled, boarded, or maintained. The airside of an airport is the area where aircraft operate and passengers go after passing through security. Videh Kumar Jaipuria, DIAL CEO, stated, "The refurbishment of the four-decade-old Terminal 2 is the need of the hour. We, at DIAL, are committed to enhancing the overall passenger experience by upgrading key infrastructure, improving operational efficiency, and elevating passenger comfort. These enhancements will be critical as we approach peak passenger capacity by 2025-26, driven by rapid growth in domestic air travel."

## Aarogyasri, EHS, JHS services halted in Telangana over Rs 1,200 cr pending bills

GNS News Agency, Jan 15

Hyderabad: Aarogyasri healthcare services, Employee Health Scheme (EHS) and Journalists Health Scheme (JHS) in mid-sized private hospitals in Telangana State were suspended on Friday due to pending medical bills amounting to Rs 1,200 crore. The members of Telangana Aarogyasri Network Hospitals Association (TANHA), consisting of hospitals with 100 to 400 beds and serving Aarogyasri patients across districts, appealed to the State Health Minister, Damodar Raja Narsimha to intervene and clear the pending medical bills.

## 'Zombie journey': Week after Delhi-Pune Air India Express flight was delayed by 10 hours, passengers recount ordeal

GNS News Agency, Jan 15

What began as a normal Delhi to Pune journey for passengers aboard Air India Express (AIX) flight IX 1176 last week, slowly turned into a nightmare as they were left waiting for over 10 hours in cramped seats, denied basic facilities and subjected to what they called "inhumane" treatment by the airline crew before finally taking off. The flight, scheduled to depart at 9.40 pm on January 3, took off at 8.10 am the following day. During the extended delay, passengers were kept onboard without food, water, or proper communication. A week has passed since and passengers continue to demand a written apology from the pilot and crew members of the flight for their ordeal.

"My hands and feet were swollen so badly. I was not able to walk. The moment I landed, I rushed to the Command Hospital in Pune to take an injection. I'm on medication though," said Hema Chhimwal, an autoimmune disease patient from Pune who was traveling with her daughter. Chhimwal, who was traveling from Jammu to Pune via Delhi, called her experience an "unforgettable zombie journey" and said, "You can imagine sitting, hanging your legs down all the time."

She added that after an entire night of sitting like that, she joined the queue of passengers in the hope of boarding an alternative aircraft. "Abruptly, we were asked to walk again to the security checkpoint, take off our jackets, shoes, and everything, only to return to the same aircraft," she said. "It was a quarter to six when we were deboarded and underwent security checks again. That wasn't enough — we still didn't fly after that," said Hema's daughter Gauri Shashikant, who was unwell for the next four days due to exhaustion. Geeta Arora, a banker from Delhi who was traveling to Pune for a meeting at her office headquarters, complained that as soon as she reached, she had to head to the meeting and join it without a break. "The aircraft was literally on the runway the whole night and when we asked about food, the crew member was clueless...citing a certain timeline to distribute food. After some time, when an old woman shouted, they served biryani in the morning at around 4," Arora said.

Chhimwal recalled the chaos on the aircraft, with children crying and aged passengers coughing. She said that after around four hours onboard, an elderly passenger who protested the lack of facilities was reprimanded by the crew. "He was coughing and asked for help, but the air hostess shouted at him. They refused to offer anything, citing company policies," she said. Shashikant added that she could not bear to see her mother's condition, knowing how serious it was. "The pilot was too rude. He threatened us with blacklisting and security action. We understand their pressure, but they come from a hospitality background. The treatment was inhumane," she said. Chhimwal said that after much confrontation, a crew member approached the pilot, who shouted from the cockpit: "Now this flight is not going to go ahead. We are going to call security." "How can they bully us in the name of security personnel? What were the crew members fighting with us for? Just because they have a weapon called 'security'?" she asked. Showing her frustration, Arora told the crew that since they belonged to the service sector, they should have humanity. "The pilot and the other crew members were rude. It was surprising that the pilot was yelling at the public from the cockpit. He didn't have the courtesy to show up and say that 'yes they are with us'...nothing," she added. Shashikant also pointed out the unhygienic condition of the lavatory, saying it was "not meant for such a long duration." She added, "I had to reach my college by 9 in the morning to attend important lectures. I missed them, and was on bed rest for the next four days."

The three women said they were not demanding compensation for their mental and physical exhaustion but wanted a written apology and an investigation into the airline's handling of delays and treatment of passengers. When contacted, an Air India Express spokesperson clarified that the situation was caused entirely by poor weather conditions and stated that a meeting would be conducted and a follow-up carried out in the wake of the allegations. Low visibility in Delhi caused by adverse weather conditions has resulted in the cancellation or delay of several flights for various airlines travelling to and from the national capital in recent days.

## Meerut murders: Family of five wiped out, children's bodies found in bed box

GNS News Agency, Jan 15

Five members of a family, including three children aged eight, four and one whose bodies were stuffed in sacks and kept in a bed box, were found killed in their home, police said on Friday (January 10, 2025). Two persons were detained for the sensational murders that shocked this Uttar Pradesh town. Several suspects have also been taken into custody for the killing that came to light on Thursday (January 9, 2025) night. The bodies of the parents were wrapped in bedsheets. And all five had deep head injuries and slash marks on their necks.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Vipin Tada said, "Based on a complaint filed by the relatives of the deceased woman, a case has been registered against three named accused and some unidentified persons. Two named suspects and several others have been taken into custody for questioning. Police said the bodies of the husband and wife were found wrapped in bedsheets, while those of their three children were stuffed in the storage compartment of a bed at the family's home in the densely populated Suhail Garden neighbourhood in the Lisari Gate police station area. Tada added that one named suspect is absconding, and police teams have been deployed to arrest him. "All pieces of evidence are being gathered, and the case will be solved soon," he said. The deceased were identified as Moin alias Moimuddin (52), his wife Asma (45), and their daughters Afsah (8), Aziza (4), and Adeeba (1). The bodies of the children were found stuffed in sacks and hidden in the bed's storage, the police said, adding all the victims had deep head injuries and slash marks on their necks. According to the Lisari Gate police, Asma's brother, Shamim, lodged a formal complaint late at night. He accused Asma's younger sister-in-law, Nazrana, and her two brothers of involvement in the suspected murders. The SSP, who visited the crime scene Thursday night along with other senior officers, said the family's house was locked from outside when locals and neighbours checked it in the evening. "After gaining access through the roof, they found the bodies," Tada told reporters. "The manner in which the house was locked suggests that the individual involved in the crime may have been someone known to the family."



# Mega dams and Indigenous communities



GNS News Agency, Jan 15

Media reports on China's bid to build a big dam over the Chinese part of Brahmaputra, and India's exploration of the development of a large hydropower dam and reservoir on Siang River in Arunachal Pradesh "to mitigate the adverse impact of the Chinese dam projects" have raised much concern among environmentalists.

The news of China building new dams in Tibet on the Yarlung Zangbo River and on a tributary of the Ganga, close to the tri-junction of its borders with India and Nepal, that could be used to control the flow of water downstream has been published in news outlets since the last few years. Finally, on 25 December 2024, putting all doubts to rest, the Chinese government approved the construction of a hydropower project in the lower reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo River, the Tibetan name for the Brahmaputra, raising concerns about the displacement of communities in Tibet and environmental impacts downstream in India and Bangladesh.

India has expressed concerns that the dam could give China control over the river's flow and allow it to release large amounts of water in times of conflict, potentially flooding border areas due to the scale of the project. China defended its decision. The \$137-billion project, touted as the world's largest, is being constructed in the ecologically fragile Himalayan region along a tectonic plate boundary. Although the Chinese authorities have stressed that the Yarlung Zangbo project would not have a major environmental impact, they have not indicated how many people it would displace. The Three Gorges Dam required the resettlement of 1.4 million people. It is learnt that China has built several dams in Tibetan areas — a contentious subject in a region tightly controlled by Beijing ever since it was annexed in the 1950s. Tibetan activists have termed these dams as the latest example of Beijing's exploitation of Tibetans and their land. Chinese researchers have also flagged concerns that such extensive excavation and construction in the steep and narrow gorge in the eco-sensitive Tibet region would increase the frequency of landslides. Siang Indigenous Farmers' Forum has alleged that India's proposed hydropower dam on Siang River will render over 1,00,000 members of the Adi tribe landless. Despite the competitive showdown of building mega dams on the river that flows from Mount Kailash through Tibet to India and Bangladesh, changing its names, both India and China established the Expert Level Mechanism (ELM) in 2006 to discuss issues related to trans-border rivers under which China provides India with hydrological information on the Brahmaputra and Sutlej rivers during the flood seasons. Data sharing of trans-border rivers figured in the talks between India and China Special Representatives (SRs) on December 18.

India is all set to build an 11,000 Mw hydropower project on the Siang River in Arunachal's Upper Siang district. According to strategic analysts, India's move comes in response to China's plan to build the world's largest hydropower project. China has a history of using its dams to carry out transnational aggression. It is to be noted that in 2021, China cut the water flow of the Mekong River by 50% for three weeks without any warning. The flow was cut ostensibly for power-line maintenance but this affected millions of people living along the waterways in the Southeast Asian countries of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.

The hydropower project India is building on Siang includes a "buffer storage" of over 9 billion cubic metres of water during peak monsoons. This would act as a reserve when water flow is reduced. It will also act as a buffer for downstream areas of Arunachal and Assam if China releases sudden water. However, the proposed Siang mega dam in Arunachal Pradesh, a bordering State to China, has been a subject of organised protest and resistance from the indigenous communities residing in the region like the Tibetans in China. The Siang Indigenous Farmers' Forum has alleged that the project would render over 1,00,000 members of the Adi tribe landless, threatening their survival and forcing them into poverty. These local communities view the dam as a potential disruption to their traditional governance systems and community-based ways of life. Local community leaders argue that the Siang River holds immense ecological significance, and its alteration could jeopardize the fragile balance of the region's biodiversity. The Brahmaputra basin has an area of 5,80,000 sqkm, which covers China (50.5%), India (33.6%), Bangladesh (8.1%) and Bhutan (7.8%). The length in India is 916 km. The Brahmaputra basin spans the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, West Bengal, Meghalaya, Nagaland and the whole of Sikkim in India. This means that China does not contribute more than 50 per cent to the Brahmaputra flow. If it is so, the Chinese intervention in the water flow of Brahmaputra may affect only half. The fear of Bangladesh, the lowermost riparian country for the part of Brahmaputra, being affected by at least two mega dams — one at Tibet in China and the other one at Arunachal Pradesh of India — should also be considered while we study Brahmaputra.

Climatic change plays a crucial role in affecting the basin hydrology. Throughout the year, there is a significant rise in hydrograph, with a broad peak between July and September. The river flow is strongly influenced by snow and melting of the glaciers, which are located mainly in the eastern Himalayas regions in the upstream parts of the basin. The contribution of the snow and glacier melt to the total annual runoff is about 27%, while the annual rainfall contributes to the remaining amount. All these factors must be considered before hurriedly jumping to a conclusion. For both India and China, the focus should be on the benefits of mega dams vis a vis environmental challenges and their effect on the local communities, their livelihood tradition and culture. The local Indigenous communities should not fall victim to the competitive building of mega dams on rivers across the LAC which ultimately benefits big power companies and big businesses. The dispute between countries over the sharing of river water is nothing new. These should be resolved through dialogue, sharing of river data and involving the local communities of the regions with a practical scientific perspective. Political play infused with ultranationalism and big business interests should not intervene in the conflict-resolving mechanism.

# Jimmy Carter laid to rest after dual funeral services in Washington and Georgia

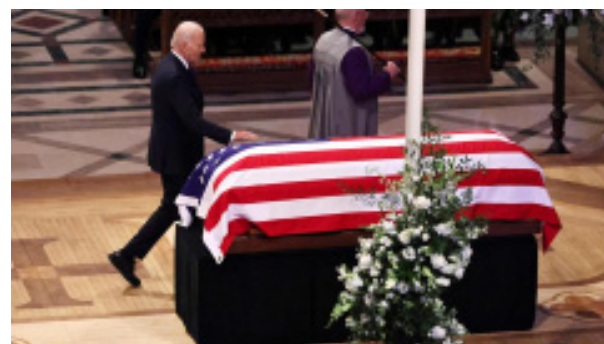
GNS News Agency, Jan 15

Jimmy Carter was celebrated Thursday (January 9, 2025) for his personal humility and public service before, during and after his presidency in a funeral at Washington National Cathedral featuring the kind of pageantry the 39th U.S. president typically eschewed. It was followed by an intimate hometown funeral near where he was born a century ago. All of Carter's living successors attended in Washington, with President Joe Biden, who was the first sitting senator to endorse his 1976 run for the White House, eulogising his longtime friend. Mr. Biden and others took turns in the morning praising Carter's record — which many historians have appraised more favourably since he lost his bid for a second term in 1980 — and extolling his character.

The dual ceremonies in Washington and Plains, Georgia, provided a moment of national comity in a notably partisan era and offered a striking portrait of a president who was once judged a political failure, only for his life ultimately to be recognized as having lasting national and global impact. "He built houses for people who needed homes," said Joshua Carter, a grandson who recalled how Carter regularly taught Sunday school in Plains after leaving the White House. "He eliminated diseases in forgotten places. He waged peace anywhere in the world, wherever he saw a chance. He loved people." Jason Carter, another grandson, wryly noted his grandparents' frugality, such as washing and reusing Ziploc bags, and his grandfather's struggles with his cellphone.

"They were small-town people who never forgot who they were and where they were from, no matter what happened in their lives," said Jason, who chairs the Carter Center, a global humanitarian operation founded by Jimmy and his late wife, Rosalynn Carter. Former presidents in attendance at the national service, former President Barack Obama and President-elect Donald Trump, who have mocked each other for years going back to Trump fanning conspiracy theories about Obama's citizenship, sat next to each other and talked for several minutes, even sharing a laugh. Former President Barack Obama talks with President-elect Donald Trump as Melania Trump listens and as former President George W. Bush, Laura Bush, Vice President Kamala Harris, and second gentleman Doug Emhoff arrive, before the state funeral for former President Jimmy Carter. Former President Barack Obama talks with President-elect Donald Trump as Melania Trump listens and as former President George W. Bush, Laura Bush, Vice President Kamala Harris, and second gentleman Doug Emhoff arrive, before the state funeral for former President Jimmy Carter | Photo Credit: AP

As Mr. Trump went to his seat, he shook hands with Mike Pence in a rare interaction with his former vice president. The two split over Mr. Pence's refusal to help Mr. Trump overturn his election defeat to Mr. Biden four years ago. Karen Pence, the former second lady, did not rise from her chair when her husband did so to greet Mr. Trump. Vice President Kamala Harris, who lost to Mr. Trump in November, entered afterward and was not seen interacting with



At the national service, former U.S. President Barack Obama and President-elect Donald Trump sat next to each other and talked for several minutes, even sharing a laugh

him. Former first lady Michelle Obama did not attend. All politics were not left outside the cathedral, though. Mr. Biden, who leaves office in 11 days, repeated several times that "character" was Carter's chief attribute. Mr. Biden said Carter taught him that "everyone should be treated with dignity and respect." "We have an obligation to give hate no safe harbor," Biden said, also noting the importance of standing up to "abuse in power." Those comments echoed Mr. Biden's typical criticisms of Mr. Trump. Eulogies

In Plains, Carter's personal pastor, Tony Lowden, touched on the political as well, saying Carter was "still teaching us a lesson" with the timing of his death as a new Congress begins its work and Mr. Trump prepares for a second administration. Lowden, who did not name Mr. Trump or others, urged the nation to follow Carter's example: "not self, but country." "Don't let his legacy die. Don't let this nation die," Lowden said. "Let faith and hope be our guardrails." The funeral procession of former President Jimmy Carter passes by on January Carter died December 29 at age 100, living so long that two of Thursday's eulogies were written by people who died before him — his vice president, Walter Mondale, and his presidential predecessor, Gerald Ford. "By fate of a brief season, Jimmy Carter and I were rivals," Ford said in his eulogy, which was read by his son Steven. "But for the many wonderful years that followed, friendship bonded us as no two presidents since John Adams and Thomas Jefferson." Carter defeated Ford in 1976, but the presidents and their wives became close friends, and Carter eulogized Ford at his own funeral. Days of formal ceremonies and remembrances from political leaders, business titans and rank-and-file citizens have honored Carter for his decency and using a prodigious work ethic to do more than obtain political power.

# Bradman and Bowral — an enduring legacy



GNS News Agency, Jan 15

The journey to Bowral is a leap back in time. The train swerves past rolling hills, scythes through jungle, slithers into tunnels, weaves across undulating plains with cattle grazing and horses stomping, tiny stations blur on the window, and the odd country home pops into view. Two hours away from Sydney, the Australian hinterland is even more pretty. Ancient churches, gnarled trees and the old post office are part of the mix. And Bowral, the land of Sir Don Bradman, is high on aesthetics and staggering history, all centred on one man with a Test average of 99.94, an Everest that can never be scaled. Past Cashmere Essentials and a bakery where the town's people gather for coffee, pies and gossip, the road turns left. Every step retraces a past when a lad hit a cricket ball and then became a colossus in the cricketing universe. "He used to smack the ball all over the park, didn't he?", an elderly gentleman pipes up.

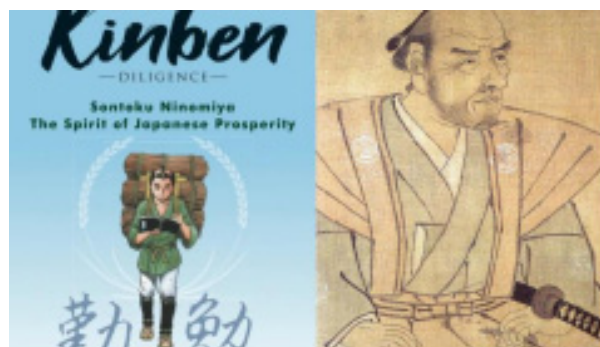
Hearing a 'who?', he says: "Bradman, who else?" Every individual seems to have a Bradman connection; in a sense they all own him, nurse his memory passed by awe-struck grandparents, and they are mighty proud of him. All

roads lead towards the Bradman Oval, the turf where the great man worked on his craft and became so good that his name had to be embossed on the venue. Inside, a lady walks her dog, two youngsters sprint, a few mimic the cover drive and pose for pictures, some make video calls back home. The ground is tree-fringed and in the distance, a green hill looms. The pavilion is woody and stately while Bradman's statue in the back garden, is charming. And just around the corner is the Bradman Museum.

This is not a place focussed on one man even if the name suggests that. It is a spot that celebrates cricket, that old game accidentally shaped by bored shepherds striking a ball with a clump of wood in the English countryside. Yes, the hat-tips to Bradman are there, his life and career are chronicled. There are old photographs, scorecards, a video on the Bodyline series and references to the squads he played in. Yet, there is no hint of narcissism. The history of the game, the Kerry Packer years, Ashes, the evolution of cricket gear, the laws of the sport and the mighty players all find space. On the walls, Sunil Gavaskar, Viv Richards and many others stare back. A section is earmarked for women cricketers. And in crisp videos, Ian Chappell, Dennis Lillee, Sachin Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid speak about the game, its past, the present and the road ahead.

Cricket's financial angle is touched upon too as one wall has a collage of advertisements featuring players hyping commercial products, be it a soft drink or protective sporting gear. It also reveals fashion trends of the past, crowbar moustaches and side whiskers, big collars and flared trousers. There are second-hand books to be picked, memorabilia to buy, and in this temple of cricket, one wall is extra special as it has pictures of the volunteers, who helped in the evolution of this museum. That human touch matters. It always does. And the man, who passed away in 2001, aged 92, endures. His is a legacy that would remain undimmed.

# Lesson from Japan: A model for a hero in Indian textbooks



GNS News Agency, Jan 15

Most Japanese learn about Sontoku Ninomia in school. His statues are common in front of elementary schools in Japan and show him carrying firewood but reading a book. From business through health, Japanese concepts often enlighten and set the course for nations and cultures across the world. Japan's success in post-war reconstruction has led many to see pathways for their own potential success in the Japanese. Therefore these concepts come attached with much value.

Among the more recent ones is Ikigai — based on a book that spotlighted long living Okinawans. But Mayuko Kataoka, former journalist and presently in charge of international publishing at IRH Press Co. (Happy Science Group) of Japan, disputes that ikigai is central to Japanese life. "Kinben which stands for hard work and diligence is more basic to the Japanese. The kinben spirit helped Japan become industrialized," she says. Symbolizing the kinben spirit is Sontoku Ninomia, a peasant leader of early 19th-century Japan. Most Japanese learn about Sontoku Ninomia in school. His statues are common in front of elementary schools in Japan and show him carrying firewood but reading a book. Happy Science Group has a stall at the ongoing Chennai Book Fair where Sontoku Ninomiya: The Spirit of Japanese Prosperity, a manga comic, is a key feature. The book drives several messages: thrift, family values, community spirit, resilience and so on. Sontoku grew up poor. His father was too generous with giving away his wealth and went bankrupt when a flood destroyed his crop.

Poverty forced the Sontoku family to separate. He was raised by a mean uncle who refused to buy oil that he needed to light a lamp for studying at night. Sontoku grew rapped, exchanged it with oil at the shop, and studied. Mean relatives, mean and indolent villagers, mean co-workers and mean climate — Sontoku's life was about overcoming adversity but standing tall by not considering anyone his enemy. Acquiring small things eventually makes him accomplish big tasks. Bigger responsibilities come to him at various points in his life.

# Why geography matters to Abraham Verghese, author of The Covenant of Water

Physician and author Abraham Verghese often says that every change in geography has shaped his destiny. His parents moved from Kerala to Ethiopia, where he was born. Later, as there was civil unrest in Ethiopia, he followed them to the United States, where he practises medicine, teaches, and writes. Verghese's ancestry and his experiences in the two countries where he has lived have formed the basis of his four critically-acclaimed books.

In his fourth and latest work, The Covenant of Water, published last year, Verghese narrates an epic story spanning three generations in Kerala. Oprah Winfrey has bought the rights to adapt the book into a film. Ahead of The Hindu Lit for Life 2025, which the author will inaugurate in Chennai on January 18, Verghese discusses why he always wanted to write fiction and the difficulty of mining one's own life for material. Edited excerpts from an email interview:

You have written two memoirs. Why did you feel the need to document your life?

In the mid-1980s, when I was living in a small town in Tennessee, working as an infectious diseases specialist, I saw more patients with HIV than was predicted for a rural town of 50,000. I realised I had stumbled onto an American paradigm of migration: young men who had left their small towns because they were gay were now returning decades later, having contracted the virus, and having cared for partners who had passed. At the time, AIDS was considered an urban phenomenon. I wrote a scientific paper describing the paradigm, but I felt it never quite captured the heartache of their journey, or the grief of their parents, or my own grief at seeing this again and again. I became a writer to tell that

story — through fiction, or so I thought. But it turns out that non-fiction is much more in demand by publishers than fiction, because non-fiction sells predictably: if something really happened, we all have an inherent interest. So that story became my first book, My Own Country (1994). I thought I was telling the story of the small town and HIV, but inevitably, since I was a character, it was also a memoir.

At the time I was writing the book, I was also living through an experience with one of my medical students, another extraordinary true story. Publishers were anxious for me to write another non-fiction book when I finished the first one, and the story that became The Tennis Partner (1998) seemed an easy way to do so. However, I really always wanted to write fiction, so after two memoirs I have not gone back to non-fiction. It isn't easy to mine your own life for material. Memory is a tricky thing. In memoir writing, how do you ensure that you have got things right, especially when you're writing about emotional episodes from your life? I think readers understand that memory is unreliable, and that all writing is in a sense a kind of artifice. If you confine yourself not to your memories but to what can be documented to have happened, and only to dialogue exactly what was said... well you have a very dry book, or else it is a newspaper account. Instead, just as when you are sitting with friends and recounting what happened to you, your listeners get your best recollection and they know it comes with all your biases, and with your propensity to exaggerate or else to under-report. You often talk of how every change in geography changed your destiny. What other factors do you think changed your destiny? And can destiny be changed at all? Geography matters greatly.



## From Rs 500 to earning lakhs now — a medical student's journey to being a businesswoman



GNS News Agency, Jan 15

A medical student who had taken her NEET exam and was on a steady path to become a doctor never thought she would become a businesswoman. When Yamini Singla, 27, a resident of Sector 27 A, Chandigarh, first discussed with her family about her business idea, she was under immense pressure to prove within six months that she can establish a business, else she would be married off. And in six months, there was no looking back for this only girl in the family. Such is the state of affairs that now the family insists on getting a studio for her decor and gifting venture. Beginning with just Rs 500 to making lakhs now with over 3,000 orders every now and then, Yamini set up a gifting and decor business "Uphaar", which does decor and gifting for prominent places and clubs. For next two days too, she has 10 orders to decor for various wedding venues. "Though I pursued medical studies and later completed my BSc from GGDSD College, I always knew my heart craved for something creative," said Yamini.

For Yamini, the turning point came during the lockdown in 2020. "Being confined at home gave me time to reflect on how deeply people struggled to express their feelings for one another... and gifting is the key way for that. This inspired me to launch 'Uphaar by Yamini Creations' in September 2020," she said. However, starting out wasn't easy. "Convincing my family, especially my father, was challenging given my political and academic background. However, I was determined to turn my creative passion into something meaningful—not just a hobby. Looking back now, as Uphaar by Yamini Creations enters its fourth year with over 500 SKUs, I fondly remember my first creation: a scrapbook I made for my best friend. That small beginning fuelled the dream I'm living today," she added.

How did this idea strike you, and when?

During the Covid lockdown, being at home gave me time to observe how businesses were evolving. I realised there was a significant gap in the market for meaningful, personalised gifts. While there were products available, they were often too standardised, impersonal, and overpriced. For me, creativity had always been a passion, and I wanted to craft something that would allow people to express their emotions in a deeply personal way. My goal was to make each gift tell a unique story — something that truly reflects the sender's feelings for the recipient. That's where Uphaar by Yamini Creations found its purpose, and it has been my mission ever since to create gifts that touch hearts.

How far has she taken this idea to?

When I started Uphaar by Yamini Creations, it was with a modest approach, but the journey has been nothing short of remarkable. Growing organically has been our strength, with a loyal base of repeat customers and strong engagement on social media. Our clientele is diverse, ranging from corporate gifting to personalised creations for couples, birthdays, and anniversaries. The combination of quality, personalised service, and timely delivery has been instrumental in achieving over 500 products and 2000+ creations annually. Then I thought let's expand beyond gifting so we've recently ventured into wedding and party décor, adding a whole new dimension to what we offer. This parallel vertical aligns beautifully with our ethos of making special moments memorable. We also aim to grow steadily, expand our footprint nationally.

## In race for Ludhiana mayor, ruling AAP walks a tightrope; here's what rules say

GNS News Agency, Jan 15

With the results for Ludhiana Municipal Corporation delivering a hung house verdict with no party winning a clear majority, all eyes are now on the process to elect the new Mayor. Even though AAP has won the highest number of seats, it could still be anybody's game in Ludhiana MC. Of 95 wards in Ludhiana, AAP won 41, Congress 30, BJP 19, SAD 2 and 3 others have been won by Independents. AAP is seven seats short of the half-way mark. However, apart from the 95 councillors who are the elected members, Ludhiana MC also has seven urban MLAs as ex-officio members, all of them currently belong to the AAP (north, south, east, west, central, Atam Nagar and Sahnewal).

According to the Punjab Municipal Corporation Act, 1976, ex-officio members of the House "comprise the members of the Punjab Legislative Assembly representing the constituencies in which the City or any part thereof falls." However, AAP would still be walking the tightrope even if votes of seven MLAs are added to its kitty. According to experts, if all 95 elected councillors along with 7 MLAs are present on the day of voting for the Mayor, the total members would be 102, and the votes of at least 52 members would be required to elect the new Mayor, while AAP's total votes would be 48. In the other possible scenario, things can become easier for AAP if some members from other parties give voting day a miss. In yet another possibility, Congress with 30 seats, BJP with 19, SAD with 2 and 3 independents (total 54) can get together to keep ruling AAP out of the race for Mayor's post.

Ashok Bajaj, former additional director (local government) who has also served as Ludhiana MC joint commissioner and legal advisor for the civic body, said that as per rules, what matters is not the overall majority but the number of votes secured by the mayoral candidate on the voting day. "The candidates who get the highest votes will be elected mayor, the senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor. For instance, even if only 40 members vote that day, the candidate with the highest number of votes will win. So a lot depends on how many members are present on voting day. The ex-officio members (MLAs) are also allowed to vote as per the rules," said Bajaj. Rules for electing a Mayor in Punjab

According to The Punjab Municipal Corporations Mayor, Senior Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayor Election Rules, 1991, "A meeting of the [members and ex officio members] of a Municipal Corporation shall be convened by the Divisional Commissioner to elect a Mayor, Senior Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayor." The rules add that there would be no election in case there is only one candidate proposed for Mayor's post but there would be a proper elec-

What can Chandigarh do to retain its talent or make people stay here?

Chandigarh has always been admired for its charm and quality of life. However, I feel, while it stands tall as a political capital, its potential as an economic hub remains underutilised. Industries and job opportunities in the city haven't grown in step with its aspirations, leading to an exodus of young talent in search of better prospects elsewhere. Even businesses like ours face limitations in market reach, often considering expansion to other cities for growth. I think to reverse this trend, Chandigarh needs to focus on becoming a centre for economic activity. Encouraging industries, promoting start-ups, and creating platforms for local businesses to thrive could make a significant difference. Sectors like IT, tourism, and creative industries hold immense promise, and strategic policies to support them could unlock the city's true potential. With its infrastructure and resources, Chandigarh has all the ingredients to retain talent and attract new opportunities — it just needs the right push to match the aspirations of its people.

What help you feel should be given by the govt to give more impetus to such start-ups?

For businesses like us, the government could also establish dedicated start-up hubs or incubation centres in cities like Chandigarh, where businesses like ours can access mentorship, training, and collaboration opportunities. Platforms to showcase our work — both locally and at national trade fairs — would significantly enhance visibility and market reach. With targeted policies and support, businesses like ours can thrive and contribute to the economy while staying rooted in cities like Chandigarh.

What do you do in your free time?

In my free time, I love meeting people and socialising — it's always inspiring to connect with different perspectives and energies. These interactions that I have often spark new ideas and help me explore creative concepts for my business. I also enjoy taking time to brainstorm and experiment with fresh ideas, whether it's for product designs, packaging, or new services. Free time for me isn't just about relaxation; it's about fuelling my passion and staying connected to what I love doing.

How do you de-stress? What are your hobbies?

To de-stress, I love painting and crafting — something I do just for myself. It's my way of expressing creativity without any expectations, and it helps me feel calm and happy. I also enjoy spending time at Sukhna Lake. A quiet walk by the water or just sitting there helps me relax. On the fun side, I like going on gedis around Chandigarh — it's a great way to enjoy the city and take a break. These little things help me stay refreshed and inspired.

What message you'd like to give to budding entrepreneurs?

My message to budding entrepreneurs is simple: Believe in your vision and stay persistent. The journey won't always be easy, and there will be challenges, but don't let them discourage you. Keep learning, stay adaptable, and trust the process. Also, never underestimate the power of authenticity. When you build something with passion and true intent, it will resonate with people. Surround yourself with a strong support system, be open to feedback, and most importantly, enjoy the journey. Success comes from both hard work and staying true to what you love.

One thing you like and one thing you want to change about Chandigarh

I truly love everything about Chandigarh. Its beauty lies in its simplicity — whether it's the peaceful green spaces, the structured layout, or the calm vibe of the city. There's a unique charm here that makes it feel like home. If I had to change anything, perhaps it would be to see more support for small businesses and start-ups. With more opportunities and resources, Chandigarh could truly become a thriving hub for entrepreneurs. But overall, I wouldn't change much because the city's essence is perfect as it is.



With no party getting clear majority, here's why it could be anyone's game in Ludhiana

tion if there is more than one candidate, and the one getting the highest votes would be declared the winner. "In the case of election to the office of the Mayor, - (i) if there is only one candidate he will be declared to have been elected; (ii) if there are more than one candidate, the candidate who obtains the largest number of votes shall be declared to have been elected," reads the rule.

Bajaj added that while 1991 rules said that the election for three posts should be conducted via secret ballot papers, this was amended in 2001. "The election is now held by show of hands as per the amendment notified by Punjab government on April 19, 2001. It is not even binding on all members that they must vote, it's their choice and they can even opt out," he added. A legal expert in civic affairs, said that the AAP can now try to bring three Independents on their side, or enter "arrangements" with councillors of other parties to ensure that they do not attend the voting. If AAP proposes their Mayoral candidate, and Congress-BJP-SAD together propose theirs, the one getting the highest votes will win. Sanjay Talwar, Congress's district president for urban Ludhiana, said that they can consider going with the BJP to propose a Mayoral candidate. He said that AAP was already trying to lure their elected councillors with posts but "none of them want to go with them."

"Our councillors want to go with BJP. AAP has disrespected every opposition party, so we can go with the BJP and SAD but will never support AAP," he said. AAP MLA Madan Lal Bagga said: "The divisional commissioner will be inviting us to propose Mayor candidate as we have the highest numbers and MLA votes." Rajnish Dhiman, district president, BJP said that they can ponder over going with the Congress "for the betterment of Ludhiana city and its people." "We can go with the Congress if our high command allows but won't be supporting AAP," he said.

## Illegal high-rise buildings, officers who allowed construction under scanner



GNS News Agency, Jan 15

After the collapse of a multi-storey building at Sohana village, the illegally constructed high-rise buildings and the role of the officials who let the rampant construction happen have again come under the scanner. At Sohana alone, at least 10 buildings have about seven to eight storeys each. Locals said that officials of the Municipal Corporation (MC) allowed the construction to happen in the area due to which hundreds of paying guest houses had come up in the area and illegal buildings housing gyms, grocery stores and hotels. Sarbjit Singh, a local resident, said that due to the proximity of Sohana with Mohali city, their village had seen an uneven growth of high-rise buildings in the past few

years. He added that the water pumps operate illegally and paying guest (PG) accommodations are running without registration. "Who would take action against this illegal business? Many high-rise buildings house PGs," Sarbjit added. Former sarpanch of Sohana Parwinder Singh Sohana said that he had raised the issue in the MC house meetings but in vain.

Municipal Commissioner T Benith told The Indian Express that they had already conducted a survey in the city to identify the illegally constructed high-rise buildings and the process to seal these buildings to be carried out with immediate effect. "We have identified the PGs and the illegally constructed hotels. Soon, we will be sealing all these buildings," the Commissioner added. While taking stock of the post-rescue operation activities in the late evening, Deputy Commissioner Aashika Jain said that the district administration will ensure justice to the deceased, Drishti and Abhishek, who lost their lives due to gross human negligence. She said that stringent steps would be taken to ensure no excavation in the district is to be conducted without appropriate precautions. The competent authorities will monitor the situation so that any such tragedy may be averted from occurring in the future. She assured that the magisterial probe would be conducted in a time-bound manner.

## A First Since 1996: In major fairs in Kolkata, omnipresent Bangladesh traders missing this year

GNS News Agency, Jan 15

For the first time, stalls from Bangladesh are missing in two of Kolkata's major fairs — the International Kolkata Book Fair and the Bidhannagar Mela Utsav, which is organised by the Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation (BMC). Every year since 1996, when the Sheikh Hasina government came to power in Bangladesh, the neighbouring country has featured in every edition of the city's book fair. In 1999, Hasina herself attended the fair when Bangladesh was the theme country.

Even when Bangladesh was governed for five years by Begum Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party and was then under military rule between 2001 and 2008, there was no break in tradition. Last year, the Bangladesh pavilion was around 2,500 sq ft with over 50 stalls each. Guild President Tridib Chatterjee told The Indian Express, "Given the current geo-political situation between the two nations: until we get a go-ahead from the Ministry of External Affairs, we cannot allot any stalls to Bangladesh. Till now, the Ministry has not given any go-ahead in this matter."

Chatterjee said that if there is any breach of law and order, such as any attack on a stall of the neighbouring country, then the Guild would be held responsible. With 1,050 stalls, the countries participating in the book fair this year include UK, USA, Russia, Iran, Japan, France, Spain, Peru, Italy, Argentina, and Colombia — with Germany as the focal theme. Meanwhile, the annual Bidhannagar Mela Utsav held at the Salt Lake Central Park fairground started without any stalls from Bangladesh. Every year, around six to seven stalls of Bangladeshi Dhakai and Jamdani sarees would draw large crowds. According to sources, the agency managing the stall and pavilion booking for the fair had decided to refund the advance paid by Bangladeshi traders.



According to the official, this decision was reached to "prevent any untoward incident or law and order situation" with the current tension between the two countries. Stalls from countries like Turkey and Afghanistan are already ready. Sources in the BMC said that asking the Bangladesh traders not to come was a "precautionary step" as their presence "may create trouble". According to sources in the agency who allot stalls, many Bangladeshi national traders are interested in setting up stalls and do not want a refund. Around 500 stalls are being set up at the Bidhannagar Mela Utsav this time, including the food court and amusement rides. This year, Bangladesh did not have any representation at the 30th International Film Festival in Kolkata as well due to visa problems. A two-day Bengali literary festival at Visva-Bharati University's Bangladesh Bhavan also saw no participation from Bangladesh this year. This was after several poets and writers from Bangladesh were reportedly denied visas amid rising political tensions between India and the neighbouring country. Sources from the programme organiser, Khowai Sahitya Samiti, said that almost 20 poets and writers wanted to attend the festival.

## Behind AAP's decision to field sitting councillors, push to solve civic issues

GNS News Agency, Jan 15

For next year's Delhi Assembly polls, AAP has fielded many new faces across the 70 constituencies to beat anti-incumbency — including those associated with the Municipal Corporation of Delhi. Seven of them are sitting councillors and at least 20 others have close familial ties to individuals currently serving or previously associated with the civic body. Like every other candidate, AAP sources said these 27 were chosen based on popularity and winnability. When the second candidate list was announced on December 9 — five sitting councillors made it to the list — AAP Delhi Convener Gopal Rai had said: "Councillors actively working in constituencies were chosen based on their performance, as the party has been consistently gathering micro-feedback from the public in every seat... Based on public feedback and the positive performance of these councillors, the party has decided to field them as candidates."

Among the sitting councillors, prominent names include Leader of the House Mukesh Goel who is contesting from Adarsh Nagar. Rakesh Jatav Dharamarakhak, currently Deputy Chairman of Rohini Zone, will represent Mangolpuri. Pradeep Mittal, councillor from Rohini A ward; Punardeep Singh Sawhney, representing Chandni Chowk; and Prem Chauhan, councillor from Dakshinpur Extension and a member of the Standing Committee are among others. Then there are candidates whose spouses currently hold significant municipal roles. For instance, Mundka candidate Jasbir Karala's wife, Manisha Jasbir Karala, is the sitting councillor from Rani Khera. Similarly, Ramesh Pehelwan, a former BJP member now contesting from Kasturba Nagar, is married to Kusumlata Ramesh, the councillor from Kotla Mubarakpur. Naveen Chaudhary, representing Gandhi Nagar, is backed by his wife, Somwati Chaudhary, the Gokalpuri councillor.

Even late changes to the candidate list reflect this trend, as seen in Mahender Chaudhary's nomination from Mehrauli. His wife, Rekha Chaudhary, is a councillor from the Mehrauli ward. However, the list isn't limited to sitting councillors and their husbands. Veteran leaders like Shoaib Iqbal, a six-time MLA and the party's candidate from Matia Mahal, whose son, Aaley Iqbal, recently served as the Deputy Mayor of the MCD, is in the race. The AAP's two-year tenure in the MCD though has not been smooth; since coming to power in 2022, it has locked horns with the Opposition BJP over Mayoral polls as well the Standing Committee elections. Multiple attempts to form the Standing Committee — an 18-member body that manages the purse strings of the corporation, without whose approval no civic services costing over Rs 5 crore can be approved — have failed, leading to civic issues going unaddressed and discontent among residents. Asked how the party is going to address potential anti-incumbency caused by stalling of municipal services, an AAP source said, "Our teams are on the ground; in every ward, there is a team collecting data on civic issues being faced. We then categorise them: 'severe' for issues that would take a long time to resolve such as the existence of a landfill in the area's vicinity, issues that can be solved within a week like broken roads, or within 24 hours such as garbage piles on roads. We are then directing the agency concerned to resolve it within the stipu-



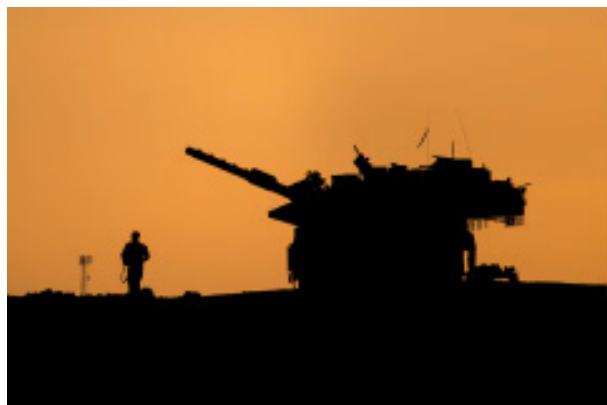
lated period." In a statement, the AAP also blamed the BJP and its dirty politics for trying to delay and obstruct certain projects. "However, (AAP chief) Arvind Kejriwal personally ensured their completion at record speed. Roads are being repaired on a war footing, the issue of medicine shortage has been resolved, and water supply problems have been addressed," it said. Asked if he will face issues during campaigning, Mukesh Goel said, "Everyone knows, the whole of Delhi knows, how work in the municipal corporation has been stopped due to planning and plotting by the BJP. So, I think, we are unlikely to face issues." Prem Chauhan said: "We have deployed some of our own workers, along with the MCD staff, to get the work done. The MCD's basic task is sanitation and we are focusing on that. I am a two-time councillor and I have managed to get all the work done in my ward." Chauhan is a former leader of the opposition and has been fielded from Deoli.

## Sebi suspends trading in Bharat Global Developers over financial misrepresentation

New Delhi: Markets regulator Sebi on Monday suspended trading in Bharat Global Developers Ltd (BGDL) for financial misrepresentation, misleading disclosures, price manipulation, and offloading shares at inflated prices. Additionally, the regulator has barred the company, its managing director Ashok Kumar Sewada, CEO Mohsin Shaikh and directors — Dinesh Kumar Sharma and Nirali Prabhathbai Karetha — and several preferential allottees of shares among the 18 entities from the securities market. Also, Sebi, in its interim order, has frozen illegal profits to the tune of Rs 271.6 crore made by preferential allottees through the sale of shares. This came after the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) initiated an investigation into Bharat Global Developers following social media posts and a complaint on December 16, 2024. The inquiry was triggered by a dramatic 105-fold increase in BGDL's share price, which surged from Rs 16.14 in November 2023 to Rs 1,702.95 in November 2024. The regulator examined the matter to determine whether the company violated securities laws, including the Sebi Act.



# Inflation, elections and war dominated 2024



Angered by the hefty ramp-up in prices for everything from eggs to energy over the past few years, they punished incumbent parties at almost every opportunity. The pain of inflation lingers, and ruling parties took the blame in election after election.

In the United States, higher costs helped Donald Trump win a second term as president four years after he was voted out of the White House and then falsely claimed election fraud. His supporters failed in their bid to overturn Trump's defeat by storming the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. This year, they made their voices heard at the ballot box, ushering in a new American leadership likely to test democratic institutions at home and relations abroad. The infla-

tion-driven anti-incumbent sentiment also ushered in new governments in Britain and Botswana, Portugal and Panama. South Korean voters put the opposition into power in its parliament, a check on President Yoon Suk Yeol. In early December, the president imposed martial law, a move the National Assembly quickly reversed. Elections also shook up France and Germany, and Japan and India. One place there was no change: Russia, where Vladimir Putin was re-elected president with 88% of the vote, a record in post-Soviet Russia. Moscow continued to prosecute its war against Ukraine, grinding out notable territorial gains. The big question is what impact Trump's return to the White House will have on the conflict. He has promised to end the war in a day. Many in Ukraine and elsewhere in Europe fear that will mean siding with Putin and freezing the status quo. In the Middle East, Israel continued its war against Gaza and extended it to Lebanon, where it left Iran-backed Hezbollah damaged and in disarray. In Syria, a well-coordinated collection of rebel groups toppled Bashar al-Assad and now seeks to run the country. In business, companies around the world grappled with how to adapt to artificial intelligence. The dominance of tech companies for investors can be summed up in this simple fact: seven tech firms — the so-called Magnificent Seven — now account for more than one-third of the S&P 500's market cap. Elon Musk, who runs one of those companies, Tesla, is an adviser and financial backer to President-elect Trump. Looking ahead, that combination of tech bro mojo and political power could well define 2025.

# Trump threatens to retake control of Panama Canal

WEST PALM BEACH, Florida, President-elect Donald Trump threatened to reassert U.S. control over the Panama Canal on Sunday, accusing Panama of charging excessive rates to use the Central American passage and drawing a sharp rebuke from Panamanian President Jose Raul Mulino. Speaking to a crowd of supporters in Arizona, Trump also said he would not let the canal fall into the "wrong hands," warning of potential Chinese influence on the passage.

After the event, he posted an image on Truth Social of an American flag flying over a narrow body of water, with the comment: "Welcome to the United States Canal! Has anyone ever heard of the Panama Canal?" Trump said at AmericaFest, an annual event organized by Turning Point, an allied conservative group. "Because we're being ripped off at the Panama Canal like we're being ripped off everywhere else." Trump's comments were an exceedingly rare example of a U.S. leader saying he could push a sovereign country to hand over territory. They also underlined an expected shift in U.S. diplomacy under Trump, who has not historically shied away from threatening allies and using bellicose rhetoric when dealing with counterparts. "It was given to Panama and the people of Panama, but it has provisions," Trump said of the canal, which was once owned by the United States but was handed over to Panama decades ago. "If the principles, both moral and legal, of this magnanimous gesture of giving are not followed, then we will demand that the Panama Canal be returned to us, in full, quickly and without question." In a recorded message released by Panama's President Mulino on Sunday afternoon, the nation's leader said that Panama's independence was non-negotiable and that China had no influence on the canal's administration. He also defended the passage rates Panama charged, saying they were not set "on a whim." The United States largely built the canal and administered territory surrounding the passage for decades. But the United States and Panama signed a pair of accords in 1977 that paved the way for the canal's return to full Panamanian control. The United States handed over control of the passage in 1999 after a period of joint administration. "Every square meter of the Panama Canal and the surrounding area belongs to Panama and will continue belonging (to Panama)," Mulino said in his statement, which was released on X. Trump then responded to Mulino: "We'll see about that!"

The waterway, which allows up to 14,000 ships to cross



per year, accounts for 2.5% of global seaborne trade and is critical to U.S. imports of autos and commercial goods by container ships from Asia, and for U.S. exports of commodities, including liquefied natural gas. It is not clear how Trump would seek to regain control over the canal, and he would have no recourse under international law if he decided to make a play for the passage. This is not the first time Trump has openly considered territorial expansion. In recent weeks, he has repeatedly mused about turning Canada into a U.S. state, though it is unclear how serious he is about the matter. During his 2017-2021 term, Trump expressed interest in buying Greenland, an autonomous territory of Denmark. He was publicly rebuffed by Danish authorities before any conversations could take place. Trump repeated the idea on Sunday, in a statement announcing his pick for ambassador to Denmark, Ken Howerly, a former ambassador to Sweden. "For purposes of National Security and Freedom throughout the World, the United States of America feels that the ownership and control of Greenland is an absolute necessity," he wrote on Truth Social. Reporting by Gram Slattery in West Palm Beach, Florida, and Alexandra Ulmer in Phoenix; Additional reporting by Diego Ore in Mexico City and Elida Moreno in Panama City; Editing by Ross Colvin, Mark Porter, Lisa Shumaker and Michael Perry. Washington-based correspondent covering campaigns and Congress. Previously posted in Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo and Santiago, Chile, and has reported extensively throughout Latin America. Co-winner of the 2021 Reuters Journalist of the Year Award in the business coverage category for a series on corruption and fraud in the oil industry. He was born in Massachusetts and graduated from Harvard College.

# Israeli order to evacuate Gaza hospital 'next to impossible' to obey, say medics

CAIRO, GNS News Agency, Jan 15 Israel ordered the closure and evacuation on Sunday of one of the last hospitals still partly functioning in a besieged area on the northern edge of the Gaza Strip, forcing medics to search for a way to bring hundreds of patients and staff to safety. The head of the Kamal Adwan hospital in Beit Lahiya, Husam Abu Safiyya, told Reuters via text message that obeying the order to shut down was "next to impossible" because there were not enough ambulances to get patients out.

"We currently have nearly 400 civilians inside the hospital, including babies in the neonatal unit, whose lives depend on oxygen and incubators. We cannot evacuate these patients safely without assistance, equipment, and time," said Abu Safiyya. "We are sending this message under heavy bombardment and direct targeting of the fuel tanks, which if hit will cause a large explosion and mass casualties of the civilians inside," he said.

The Israeli military did not respond to a request for comment on Abu Safiyya's remarks. It said that on Friday it had sent fuel and food to the hospital and helped evacuate more than 100 patients and caregivers to other Gaza hospitals, some in coordination with the Red Cross, for their own safety. The hospital is one of the few still partially functioning in the once crowded northern edge of Gaza, an area under intense Israeli military pressure for nearly three months in one of the most punishing operations of the 14-month-old war. Abu Safiyya said the military had ordered patients and staff to be evacuated to another hospital where conditions are even worse. Photos from inside the hospital showed patients on beds crammed into corridors to keep them away from windows. Reuters could not immediately verify those images. Israel says its operation around three communities on the northern edge of the Gaza Strip - Beit Lahiya, Beit Hanoun and Jabalia - is targeting Hamas militants. Palestinians accuse Israel of seeking to permanently depopulate the area to create a buffer zone, which Israel denies.

FIGHTING AT CLOSE QUARTERS Hamas released a video on Sunday that it said had been filmed in northern Gaza. It showed fighters positioned in blown-out buildings and in piles of wreckage, clad in civilian clothing and firing projectiles at Israeli forces. The Israeli military said on Sunday forces operating in Beit Hanoun had struck Hamas militants and infrastructure. Hamas and the allied Islamic Jihad



"We currently have nearly 400 civilians inside the hospital, including babies in the neonatal unit, whose lives depend on oxygen and incubators.

group said they caused casualties among Israeli soldiers. Separately, Israel allowed the Catholic bishop of Jerusalem, the Latin patriarch, into Gaza on Sunday, according to a statement on the Latin Patriarchate website and COGAT, the Israeli defence agency that coordinates with the Palestinians, after Pope Francis said on Saturday that the patriarch had not been allowed in. Elsewhere, Israeli military strikes across the Gaza Strip killed at least 29 Palestinians, eight of them - including some children - at a school sheltering displaced families in Gaza City, medics said. Two children were killed in another airstrike that hit an Israeli-designated humanitarian zone in southern Gaza, killing a total of at least five, medics said. In both those incidents, the Israeli military said it had targeted Hamas militants operating from within those areas and that it had taken precautions to reduce risk of harm to civilians. Hamas denies it operates among civilians. Mediators have stepped up efforts in recent weeks to secure a ceasefire in Gaza after months when talks were frozen. Israel began its assault in Gaza after Hamas-led fighters attacked Israeli communities on Oct. 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people and taking more than 250 hostages, according to Israeli tallies. Around half of the 100 hostages still being held are believed to be alive. Authorities in Gaza say Israel's campaign has killed more than 45,200 Palestinians. Most of the population of 2.3 million has been displaced and much of the coastal enclave is in ruins.

# South Korean opposition threatens to impeach Han over martial law counsel



SEOUL, GNS News Agency, Jan 15 South Korea's main opposition party threatened on Monday to impeach acting president Han Duck-soo if he failed to proclaim a law to launch a special counsel investigation into President Yoon Suk Yeol's failed bid to impose martial law. Prime Minister Han has taken over from the suspended Yoon, who was impeached on Dec. 14 and faces a Constitutional Court review on whether to oust him.

With a majority in parliament, the opposition Democratic Party passed a bill this month to appoint a special counsel to pursue charges of insurrection, among others, against the conservative Yoon and to investigate his wife over a luxury bag scandal and other allegations. The party,

which has accused Han of aiding Yoon's martial law attempt and reported him to police, said it would "immediately initiate impeachment proceedings" against the acting president if the legislation was not promulgated by Tuesday. "The delays show that the prime minister has no intention of complying with the constitution, and it is tantamount to admitting that he is acting as a proxy for the insurgent," Democratic Party floor leader Park Chan-dae told a party meeting, referring to Yoon. Han is a technocrat who has held leadership roles in South Korean politics for 30 years under conservative and liberal presidents. Yoon appointed him prime minister in 2022. Han's office could not immediately be reached for comment. He has previously said he had tried to block Yoon's martial law declaration, but apologised for failing to do so. Park also accused Yoon of hampering the Constitutional Court trial by repeatedly refusing to accept court documents.

"Any delay in the investigation and impeachment trials is an extension of the insurrection and an act of plotting a second one," Park said. A joint investigative team including police and the Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials has made a second attempt to call Yoon in for questioning on Dec. 25, though it was unclear whether he would appear. Woo Jong-soo, investigation chief of the national police agency, told parliament on Monday that police had tried to raid Yoon's office twice but the presidential security service denied them entry. Woo said his team sent a request to preserve evidence, including a secure phone server.

# Makers of Taiwan's 'Zero Day' TV series set around invasion fear backlash from China

GNS News Agency, Jan 15

TAIPEI, A Chinese war plane goes missing near Taiwan. China sends swarms of military boats and planes for a blockade as Taiwan goes on a war footing. Panic ensues on the streets of Taipei. The premise of "Zero Day", a new Taiwan TV drama envisioning a Chinese invasion, is a topic that has for years been considered too sensitive for many Taiwan filmmakers and television show creators, who fear losing access to the lucrative Chinese entertainment market. But as China steps up military threats, including the large massing of naval forces last week and daily military activities close to the island, the upcoming drama confronts the fear by setting the 10-episode series around a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. "We thought there is freedom in Taiwan but in film and TV production we are restricted by China on many levels," said Cheng Hsin Mei, the showrunner on "Zero Day". China, which claims Taiwan as its own territory over the objections of the government in Taipei, is a much larger market for film and television. Taiwanese entertainers are popular there partly due to language and cultural similarities. Cheng said creators in free and democratic Taiwan, however, are indirectly confined by Beijing's powerful state censorship. Beijing has regularly called out Taiwanese artists seen as violating China's political ideology and has threatened to blacklist those unwilling to cooperate. China pressured a popular Taiwanese rock band to make pro-China comments ahead of Taiwan's presidential vote early this year, sources told Reuters. Beijing denied pressuring the group Mayday. China's Taiwan Affairs Office did not respond to a request for comment.

For the "Zero Day" crew, confronting such a sensitive topic means facing difficulties, from funding and casting to finding places to film. Cheng said more than half of the "Zero Day" crew asked to remain anonymous on the crew list, and some people including a director pulled out of the production at the last minute, due to worries it might jeopardise their future work in China or concerns about the safety of their families working there. "Our freedom is hard-earned," Cheng said, adding people should not give in easily due to



fears over China. "The People's Liberation Army has launched substantial incursions against us and they are getting closer and closer," she said. "We should look at this directly rather than pretending that it is not happening." The show, which is set to be broadcast online and on yet-to-be announced television channels next year, is already creating buzz in Taiwan after the extended trailer went online in July. The drama focuses on several scenarios Taiwan might face in the days leading up to a Chinese attack, including a global financial collapse, the activation of Chinese sleeper agents and panicked residents trying to flee the island. "Without freedom, Taiwan is not Taiwan," the actor who plays a fictional Taiwan president says in a televised speech, urging unity after declaring war on China, in the show's trailer. The live broadcast then gets abruptly cut off, replaced by a feed of a Chinese state television anchor calling for Taiwanese to surrender and to report "hidden pro-independence activists" to Chinese soldiers after their landing in Taiwan. Milton Lin, a 75-year-old Taipei resident, said he was grateful the TV series was putting a spotlight on the threats by China. "It helps Taiwanese to understand that we are facing a strong enemy trying to annex us and how we should be on guard with unity to face such an invasion."

# Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai to visit native Pakistan for girls' summit

GNS News Agency, Jan 15

Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Malala Yousafzai will attend a summit on girls' education hosted by her native Pakistan, where she was nearly killed by militants as a schoolgirl. Ms. Yousafzai was evacuated from the country in 2012 after being shot by the Pakistan Taliban, who were enraged by her activism, and she has returned to the country only a handful of times since. A spokesperson for the Malala Fund charity confirmed Yousafzai will attend the conference in person.

"I am excited to join Muslim leaders from around the world for a critical conference on girls' education," she said Friday in a post on X. "On Sunday, I will speak about protecting rights for all girls to go to school, and why leaders must hold the Taliban accountable for their crimes against Afghan women & girls." Pakistan's neighbour Afghanistan is the only country in the world where girls and women are banned from going to school and university.

Since returning to power in 2021, the Taliban government has imposed an austere version of Islamic law which the United Nations has called "gender apartheid". Girls are only allowed to attend primary school, while women are largely restricted to working in segregated environments in health or education. The Taliban administration claims that Islamic law "guarantees" the rights of Afghan men and women.

The two-day summit will be held in Pakistan's capital Islamabad on Saturday and Sunday, focusing on girls' edu-



cation in Muslim communities. It will be inaugurated by Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and bring together ministers and ambassadors from 44 countries as well as representatives from the UN and World Bank. The summit will confirm "the shared commitment of (the) Muslim community to empower girls through education", according to a government statement. Ms. Yousafzai became a household name when she was attacked in 2012 by Pakistani Taliban militants on a school bus in the remote Swat valley near the border with Afghanistan. Militancy led by the Pakistani Taliban erupted in the region as the war between the Afghan Taliban and NATO forces raged across the border. She was evacuated to the United Kingdom and went on to become a global advocate for girls' education and the youngest ever Nobel Peace prize winner at the age of 17.

# India retains title of world's fastest-growing large economy with growth projected at 6.6 pc says UN

WESP said that India's economy would be bolstered by "strong export growth in services and certain goods categories, particularly pharmaceuticals and electronics". United Nations: "India would again be the fastest growing large economy in the world" with a projected annual growth rate of 6.6 per cent, according to Hamid Rashid, the UN head of Global Economic Monitoring. He was speaking at the release of the UN's flagship report, World Economic Situation and Prospects 2025, (WESP) on Thursday, which projected the gross domestic product (GDP) to grow slightly faster at 6.8 per cent next year. WESP said that India's economy would be bolstered by "strong export growth in services and certain goods categories,

particularly pharmaceuticals and electronics." "Robust private consumption and investment" would boost the nation's economy and "capital expenditure on infrastructure development is expected to have strong multiplier effects on growth in the coming year," the report said. On the supply side, expansion in the manufacturing and services sectors will keep driving the economy throughout the forecast period," it added. There was good news on the agriculture front also: "Favourable monsoon rains in 2024 have improved the summer-sowing areas for all major crops, boosting agricultural output expectations for 2025," WESP said. India's growth projection for this year fell marginally from last year's 6.8 per cent last year



## Adani Green says Gautam Adani, nephew Sagar Adani not charged with violation of US anti-corruption law

AGEL in a separate filing said, "The indictment does not specify any quantum of any fine / penalty." Following the AGEL's clarification, its shares were trading at Rs 933.45 a share, up 3.79 per cent on the BSE in morning trades. Adani Enterprises was up 3.53 per cent and Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone gained 1.26 per cent. Adanis not charged in more serious counts: Senior lawyer Mukul Rohatgi

Rohatgi said Tuesday that Gautam Adani and Sagar Adani have not been charged in the more serious counts one and five of the five-count indictment in the US. Count one pertains to an alleged conspiracy to violate the FCPA, and count five pertains to the allegations of conspiracy to obstruct justice. Rohatgi, who said he was giving his personal views as a lawyer, also said that US prosecutors' indictment does not mention specifics of the alleged bribery scheme, specifically who all were purportedly bribed and in what manner. "It is very important to note that count one and count five are more important than the others. But...neither in count one nor in count five is Mr Adani or his nephew charged," said Rohatgi, while clarifying that he was not a spokesperson for the Adani group but has represented the conglomerate in a few cases. "So, count number one contained in para 124 onwards of the indictment is against certain other persons, minus the two Adanis...that is the conspiracy to violate the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act...It is somewhat similar to the Prevention of Corruption Act in India... In the last count, which is a very important count, it is a count relating to obstruction of justice. In that count, namely, count number five, the Adanis are not named...their officers are not named, but certain other people are named, including a foreign party," Rohatgi said. To be sure, while the indictment does not specifically name the Adanis in counts one and five, the opening paragraphs of all the counts has the statement: "The allegations contained in paragraphs 1 through 123 (all the paragraphs in the indictment preceding the five counts) are realigned and incorporated as if fully set forth in this paragraph." Those specifically named in counts one and five are individuals who were associated with Azure and CPDQ. The three counts in which Gautam Adani, Sagar Adani, and Vneet Jaain are directly named pertain to alleged securities fraud and wire fraud conspiracies.

I would like to say something which has been troubling me. When you look at a charge sheet, you have to be specific to say that so and so has done such and such act. So and so has bribed certain individuals, because this is the charge sheet alleging that these people, including Adanis, have bribed Indian officials in Indian entities relating to supply and purchase of power. But I do not find a single name or a single detail in the charge sheet as to who has been bribed, in what manner has he been bribed, and the official belongs to such and such department," Rohatgi said. "This charge sheet is completely silent. I don't know how one can respond to these kinds of charge sheets, but I'm sure the Adanis will take legal opinion, including from American lawyers, etc.," the senior lawyer added.

## So many days lost at the doctor's office

Deana Hendrickson sometimes feels daunted by the demands of the medical system. "Every body part has a doctor," she lamented. "I hate it." Hendrickson reeled off a long list of her health care providers: a primary care doctor; a cardiologist because she has mild heart disease and a concerning family history; a lung surgeon and a pulmonologist who oversees an annual scan because of her family history of lung cancer. Plus an ophthalmologist, a gynecologist, a urologist, a podiatrist, a gastroenterologist — "and I just came back from the dentist."

She estimates that with scans, imaging, and tests, she spends two dozen days a year engaged with some sort of provider. Most of them, she added, practice in Santa Monica, California, where she used to live, now an hour's drive from her home. At 65, providing five-day-a-week care (with her husband) for three grandsons under 5, she's reasonably healthy and active. But her regimen "makes me feel like a sick person," Hendrickson said. "I'm like an older car that always needs more maintenance. There's so many other things I'd rather be doing." Researchers call such encounters "healthcare contact days," and they are starting to quantify their toll on older adults.

"More people are thinking about time and health care," said Dr. Ishani Ganguli, a physician and researcher at Harvard Medical School. "It identifies a key way we ask a lot of patients." Doctors, she added, "underestimate the burdens and negative trade-offs of health care." Analyzing data from traditional Medicare for 2019, her team reported that beneficiaries older than 65 averaged about 17 contact days that year for ambulatory care, which included doctors' visits, tests, imaging, therapy, and procedures — but not time spent in hospitals or nursing homes. (And not dentistry, since Medicare rarely covers it.) "More people are thinking about time and health care," said Dr. Ishani Ganguli, a physician and researcher at Harvard Medical School. "It identifies a key way we ask a lot of patients." "More people are thinking about time and health care," said Dr. Ishani Ganguli, a physician and researcher at Harvard Medical School. "It identifies a key way we ask a lot of patients." However certain groups of seniors spent considerably more time with the medical system. Among those with 10 or more chronic conditions — an eye-opening 14% of the total — contact days for ambulatory care rose to 30 a year. Eleven percent of patients clocked 50 such days or more. "My clients are going to doctors two or three times a week," said Kathleen Carmody, who owns Senior Matters Home Care and Consulting in Columbus, Ohio. "Physical therapy. Follow-up appointments. Blood draws." For both her clients and the caregivers who accompany them, she said, "it can be exhausting."

The understanding that medical care can become a wearying treadmill for older patients has led researchers to look more closely at the consequences of the so-called burdens of treatment. Patients can experience treatment cascades, for instance — a series of if-this-then-that results in which "the downstream care is even more burdensome," Ganguli said. She recently wrote in *The New England Journal of Medicine* about an example in her own family, after her father agreed to prostate cancer screening at 79. "My heart sank," she said in an interview, noting that "there's a reason that test is not recommended" at advanced ages. "More often than not, it leads to diagnostic testing and treatment whose harms outweigh the good." Indeed, her father later began radiation for prostate cancer, scheduled five days a week for eight weeks. Generally, prostate cancer is slow-growing and may never trouble older patients if it goes undetected, but testing for it can contribute to a cascade of contact days. Then "there are the opportunity costs," Ganguli said. "You'd rather be spending time with friends or going for a walk." Treatment burdens can also lead people to abandon remedies that prove too demanding, ultimately harming their health.

"The work of being a patient is a massively long list, and it continues to expand," said Dr. Victor Montori, an endocrinologist and researcher at Mayo Clinic. He ticked off tasks like preparing for, confirming, attending, or rescheduling appointments; taking and refilling prescriptions; monitoring insurance paperwork; and perusing nutrition labels at the supermarket. "You don't have infinite time, energy, and attention," he said, and as the challenges add up, "some treatments that are helpful you will discontinue or delay because it is simply overwhelming." But slowing the health care



treadmill — an approach Montori has called "minimally disruptive medicine" — is possible. "If doctors and clinics and health care systems paid attention to ways to lessen the burden, we'd all be better off," Ganguli said. "And some are fairly simple." One strategy: reducing what experts call "low-value care." Her research has confirmed what critics have pointed out for years: Older people receive too many services of dubious worth, including prostate cancer screening in men older than 70 and unneeded tests before surgery. Decreasing them would save patients time and energy, prevent treatment cascades, and reduce spending, including out-of-pocket charges. "I'd encourage patients to bring it up," Ganguli said. If I follow this treatment plan, how many days would I have to go to a facility? If this medication requires regular lab testing, is there a less taxing alternative?

And why can't providers, particularly in larger healthcare systems, coordinate and consolidate care? Office visits, lab tests, and vaccinations could be scheduled on the same day. "It's thinking about the person holistically: Let's be efficient and get this done while they're here," Ganguli explained. David Gans, 71, a musician and author in Oakland, California, has spent months coping with "mild but intractable" urinary tract infections, as well as surgery to repair the fistula (an abnormal connection between body parts) that apparently caused them. "I've probably had 20 or 30 urine tests in the last two years," he said. But he's a member of Kaiser Permanente, the highly integrated health organization that pays its doctors salaries, reducing the incentives to add low-value services. The urologist, the surgeon, and the infectious disease specialist Gans saw were all Kaiser doctors who coordinated visits. "I didn't have to call another practice and do intake," he said. He had access to a test lab whenever he experienced symptoms, without appointments. "I walk in, show them my card, they hand me the jug," he said. While there, he can pick up medications at the Kaiser pharmacy or receive them by mail within two days. And he can take advantage of walk-in clinics for flu shots and COVID-19 vaccines. "My friends keep talking about what a pain health care is, but I'm a happy customer," Gans said. More care could shift to patients' homes, too. More than 17% of older Medicare beneficiaries report difficulty traveling to doctor's offices, and more than half of those beneficiaries are accompanied by someone else — doubling the burden. Home care, hospital-at-home programs, and telehealth eliminate some of the inconvenience. Telehealth spiked during the early COVID years: In 2020, almost half of traditional Medicare beneficiaries had at least one telehealth visit. By late last year, less than 13% did — still a higher proportion than before the pandemic. But without congressional action, some of Medicare's policies expanding telehealth will expire Dec. 31. Healthcare systems themselves have a major role to play in reducing treatment burdens. They could put specialists in the same building, for example, and adopt payment models that reduce incentives to schedule additional visits and tests. In the meantime, Deana Hendrickson is looking for ways to preserve her health while cutting back on burdensome care. She tries to schedule two appointments on the same day and sometimes succeeds. She sees her cardiologist twice a year instead of four times. The other day, at the pharmacy, she bought a home kit for testing her hemoglobin A1C level. Hendrickson had been going to a lab every three months for that test. (A1C testing is recommended every year or two for prediabetics.)

## Trump picks another China sceptic for key role, taps Jamieson Greer as trade representative

US President-elect Donald Trump has named another China sceptic, Jamieson Greer, as his choice to take charge of a key role of the US Trade Representative (USTR). Greer, a former officer in the armed forces and an international trade attorney, would oversee Trump's tariff battles, as he has indicated extensive use of tariffs in his second term, starting with China, Mexico, and Canada on his first day in office. This announcement comes amid speculation that Trump's tariff war architect, Robert Lighthizer, could have a second term as USTR.

However, Greer, known as Lighthizer's protege, is expected to play a similar role as he served as the chief of staff to Lighthizer during Trump's first term. Lighthizer was the USTR in Trump's first term. "Jamieson will focus the Office of the US Trade Representative on reining in the country's massive trade deficit, defending American manufacturing, agriculture, and services, and opening up export markets everywhere," Trump said on Tuesday. He added that Greer "played a key role during my first term in imposing tariffs on China and others to combat unfair trade practices, and replacing the failed NAFTA deal with USMCA, making it much better for American workers." Greer has long believed that China stole American intellectual property rights (IPR) to build a manufacturing base in China, which resulted in loss of American jobs and that "Chinese ambitions are existential threat to the US." "I view Chinese ambitions — as currently articulated and pursued — as an existential threat to the American way of life: our physical safety, our personal privacy and freedom, our economy and jobs, and even our system of government," Greer had said in a written testimony to the US House of Representatives Judiciary Committee last year.

According to his testimony, Greer believes the United States must find a constructive way to coexist with China, which will involve continued trade in certain sectors. "But everyone needs to work from a set of common facts to

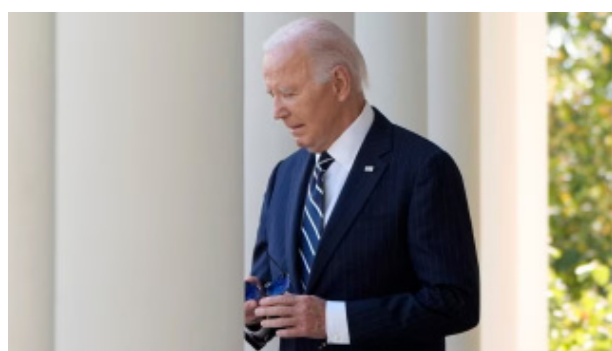


develop good policy responses," he said. "I am concerned that a powerful Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and a powerful People's Liberation Army — fuelled by access to Western technology — are using and will continue to use their power not only to limit US influence abroad but also to eliminate our key industries and economic strength here at home," Greer added. Greer has previously asserted that the US has lost billions due to intellectual property (IP) theft by China. Citing the Huntsman Commission on the theft of American intellectual property, Greer noted that the US annually loses \$225 billion to counterfeit goods, pirated software, and trade secret theft, with estimates reaching as high as \$600 billion. "Manufacturing tends to be the hardest-hit sector when intellectual property is stolen or otherwise obtained through force or non-market means. Manufacturing and IP go together. It should come as no surprise that, after China joined the WTO in 2001, corporations took advantage of a Chinese economy with permanent access to the US and other Western markets and invested heavily in the country," he said. The Economic Policy Institute reports that the United States lost approximately 3.7 million manufacturing jobs to China in the years following China's accession to the WTO, and the towns and regions hardest hit by this have not recovered, he added.

## Novo Nordisk shares rise as Biden proposes obesity care coverage

Shares of Danish weight-loss drug maker Novo Nordisk rose 1.3% on Tuesday as US President Joe Biden proposed expanding coverage of anti-obesity drugs for millions on Medicare and Medicaid. "This is an important step forward for patients," Novo Nordisk said in a statement commenting on the proposal, adding that the coverage could become effective in 2026.

The stock pared initial gains of as much as 4.9% to trade 1.3% higher at 1236 GMT. Current rules for the Medicare and Medicaid government health insurance programmes cover the use of drugs such as Mounjaro, Ozempic and Wegovy for certain conditions like diabetes, but not for obesity as a condition on its own. The White House said in a statement the proposal could lower out-of-pocket costs for weight-loss drugs by up to 95%, expanding access to millions of Americans. Nordnet analyst Per Hansen said Novo's share move came on the back of the proposal, with US peer Eli Lilly also rising in premarket trade. Separately, a would-be challenger in the fast-growing obesity therapy market, Amgen, said its experimental drug MarTide led to an average weight loss of up to 20% in a mid-stage trial with overweight or obese participants. Amgen's shares were down nearly 8% ahead of the US market open, however, as the data fell short of investor expectations.



Shares of Danish weight-loss drug maker Novo Nordisk rose 1.3% on Tuesday as US President Joe Biden proposed expanding coverage of anti-obesity drugs for millions on Medicare and Medicaid.

## It might be time for a dress code overhaul in sports

What do Serena Williams' catsuit, Magnus Carlsen's jeans, and the Norwegian beach handball team's shorts rebellion have in common? No, it's not a new Netflix drama, though it could be. They all exemplify athletes confronting outdated, often bizarre, and occasionally discriminatory dress codes in sports. From pristine tennis whites to buttoned-up chess suits, the rules governing athletic attire often seem like relics from an era when corsets were considered workout gear. Imagine enduring the heat of competition under glaring lights or braving the elements, only to have your outfit spark more controversy than your performance. The world of sports isn't solely about physical feats and strategy; it also involves navigating a tightrope of social norms, cultural politics, and power dynamics. Some of these rules are as rigid as the starched collars they enforce.

Recently, the spotlight fell on world chess champion Magnus Carlsen, who was disqualified from the World Rapid and Blitz Championships for wearing jeans—a garment deemed unfit for the "gentleman's game." This incident has reignited debates about the relevance of dress codes and their impact on sportsmanship and inclusivity.

Chinese grandmaster Zhu Jiner (right) lost to India's R Vaishali in the quarterfinals of the FIDE Women's World Blitz Championship. Photo: Michal Walusza/FIDE) Carlsen's disqualification wasn't the only controversy at the recent Blitz. Zhu Jiner, a Chinese Grandmaster, was fined 0 for wearing boots during the same tournament

Origins of dress codes in sports According to Mehendi Sharma, Assistant Professor of Fashion Design at Pearl Academy, sports dress codes often arise from practicality, tradition, and, at times, prejudice. She says, "Tennis whites symbolised purity in Victorian England, while gymnastics leotards prioritised movement. Chess adopted semi-formal attire to project its image as a refined and intellectual pursuit." However, these codes frequently uphold exclusivity and rigid traditions. "Like museum exhibits, dress codes preserve the past while questioning the present. Are they about discipline, or do they silently referee culture?" Sharma asks. Carlsen's jeans scandal drew global attention not because dress code violations are rare, but because Carlsen is the "Messi of chess," as Grandmaster Subbaraman Vijayalakshmi observed. Woman International Master Bommini Mounika Akshaya concurred, saying, "There are always many incidents related to dress code at the World Rapid and Blitz championships. Sometimes, even Grandmasters were not allowed to play the game because they



did not follow the dress code." Carlsen's disqualification wasn't the only controversy at the recent Blitz. Zhu Jiner, a Chinese Grandmaster, was fined \$200 for wearing boots during the same tournament. In a public letter, she said the incident disrupted her focus and cost her a match. Sexism continues to cast a long shadow. Are these dress codes perpetuating systemic biases? Take Serena Williams, for instance—an icon not just for her storied career but also for her battles against discrimination, on and off the court. At the 2018 French Open, her choice of a functional catsuit designed to prevent blood clots post-pregnancy faced public criticism and an outright ban by the French Tennis Federation. The backlash carried racial and gendered undertones, sparking global outrage. Williams and her sister Venus Williams have faced relentless scrutiny over their attire, which many argue reflects implicit racial bias rather than genuine concern for the game's decorum. Sexism continues to cast a long shadow over the world of sports, shaping dress codes that often prioritise optics over equity. At the 2021 Tokyo Olympics, the German women's gymnastics team made a powerful statement by donning full-length unitards, rejecting the sport's traditional leotards, often criticised for their overly sexualised designs. Meanwhile, the Norwegian women's beach handball team protested against mandatory bikini bottoms in 2021, further spotlighting the gendered double standards embedded in athletic attire. A 2020 study published in *Psychonomic Bulletin and Review* found that the type of clothing worn—revealing versus concealing—can significantly affect women's performance on cognitive tasks. Furthermore, a 2024 study published in *Sport, Education and Society* revealed that 75 per cent of women surveyed had witnessed girls dropping out of school sports due to concerns about uniforms or body image.



## A riveting Ram Charan anchors a middling Shankar showreel that needed more upgrades



while. Oh yes, the story... An IAS officer takes on the corrupt political class, represented by Mopidevi (the inimitable SJ Suryah) and Manikyam (a funny Jayaram forgetting that he deserves better). There is a flashback that connects all of them, which is quite impressive for the narrative turns it takes, and the results it delivers. However, this flashback is bookended by the clashes between Ram and Mopidevi that threatens to snowball into something very sinister and diabolical, but is content in just being a shouting match, and a quick class on political etiquette and the powers of India's bureaucracy. Ram Charan and SJ Suryah in Game Changer Ram Charan and SJ Suryah are pitted against each other in Shankar's Game Changer

Just like how a lot of scenes are cramped in the name of elevation, the flashback is also too rushed to register a solid impact. Even before we can understand the magnitude of a sacrifice, we are thrown back into the present. It is disappointing to see Ram Charan and Suryah give it all for the portions that don't do justice to their histrionics. Also, their tug of war gets stale too soon because the chips are never really down for Ram, and the dialogues and expressions of Mopidevi are more menacing than his actions.

In such commercial potboilers, the melodrama is an integral part of the narrative. And despite a few scenes that had the potential to be much more, Shankar reins it all in, and these feel like mere afterthoughts rather than a soul-crushing experience. Also, many strong actors like Naresh and Achyuth Kumar are criminally wasted in the film. Even Sunil, who gets a rather interesting character trait, isn't allowed to go bombastic with the idea, and is underutilised. Also, it is disappointing how this trait is 'funny' in Sunil's case, but when it is an important facet of another character, we are expected to empathise. Why? How? Why this confusion? How do we deal with this dichotomy?

Despite the film blowing hot and cold with an erratic consistency, Game Changer is truly held together by consistently good performances. Ram Charan as Appanna and Ram Nandan is wonderfully earnest, and delivers an impressive performance in a role that definitely needed more layers. Anjali also gives all in a role that doesn't give her much. On the other hand, Kiara, with an impressive lip sync, manages to get an important character in Game Changer that cannot be brushed off as just 'hero's support system.' She does well too, but again, after a while, is underserved by writing that conveniently forgets her. I quite enjoyed Srikanth's arc, but it needed more space for it to become the emotional anchor between the timelines. Also, it is painful that Ram's 'family' doesn't get to do anything, except in the starting when his mother says, "You have become IPS, IAS... but when will you get married?" Come on! Oh, apart from the performance, another striking aspect of Game Changer is Thaman, who ensures there is never a moment where we are not invested in the proceedings, and the visuals of Tirru, which not only fits the world of Shankar but elevates it. Ram Charan and Kiara Advani in Game Changer Kiara Advani plays Deepika, a doctor, and the love interest of Ram Charan in Game Changer

Even if the writing falters, which it does in quite a few places, Thaman shifts gears to bring us back right into the groove. But even Thaman, Tirru, and the starcast lead by Ram Charan can only do so much when Shankar's writing doesn't follow his own rules of his own world, and showcases a final act that is outlandish even for his standards. It gets too verbose after a while that it almost undoes the goodwill the film received for its dialogues till then. Even the action sequences, which were measured and to the point, get all loud and too over the top. I can forgive Ram Charan dangling from the helicopter or slashing the ropes of henchmen tied to the track just before an incoming train zooms past them. But a line must be drawn somewhere, right? Right? It is intriguing how Shankar, who remains steadfast in his belief that songs must be a visual spectacle, and even delivers like few filmmakers can, didn't trust his instincts about other scenes. Shankar has been criticised for his previous films, and worked on the feedback to deliver a film that might be right on a few levels. In fact, for all intents and purposes, it is fair to call Game Changer his comeback of sorts. However, the OG game changer of Indian cinema, finds himself facing his biggest dilemma — to go with his gut instinct or what he thinks/is told works with the audience today? In this case, wanting to please both, he has ended up cooking a film that might be a lot of things, but it is no game changer.

Game Changer Movie Review & Rating: When one looks at Shankar's filmography, it is interesting how his mind doesn't gravitate towards the easiest way to elevate the hero. Almost all of his leading men could have been typical straightforward police officers who take on the system. But instead, he makes them a small-time entrepreneur moonlighting as a Robin Hood, a young lover fighting for his love, an old revolutionary who wants to eradicate corruption, a journalist who becomes the chief minister, an NRI who returns to his homeland to weed out societal ills, and even a robot. But never a cop.

In a way, it is to remove the idea of servitude among his heroes or have them play characters that might still be part of the system, but be above it. It is almost like nothing can stop his heroes from delivering the utopia people crave to see unfold on the biggest of screens. Not even logic. But the law of averages caught up with Shankar, and despite his brand of cinema still making waves across the country, he seemed to have lost the touch. Probably why, his hero in Game Changer is a lot of things. He is a young lover changing his core behaviour to win his love. He is a small-time reformer and a revolutionary who goes against the might of the system and wants to eradicate corruption. He is an IPS officer. He is an IAS officer. He becomes involved in electoral politics. It is almost like seeing a Shankar showreel, albeit with the magnetic presence of a star like Ram Charan, who could be all of these things, and a lot more in a film that allows him to be anything he wants to be.

Game Changer is essentially a lot of nice segments that are stitched together in the hope that it would make a good film. Now, individually, these segments have a sense of purpose, but together, they sometimes become incoherent due to the lack of focus. For instance, the entire relationship arc between Ram Charan's Ram Nandan and Kiara Advani's Deepika is quite impressive. But the way the story unfolds and how it saunters around for a while before randomly becoming important all over again isn't good enough. However, when these portions work, they are actually pretty impressive. In fact, both Kiara and Anjali get wonderful scenes, and powerful dialogues that shape the journey of the two Ram Charans in the film.

Shankar's brand of films is all about instant justice. In fact, Deepika tells Ram Nandan to not become an IPS officer because his anger would mean extra-judicial killings would become commonplace. But, as an IAS officer, Ram's actions are instant too. One sign, and the corrupt official is vacuumed out of his position and thrown into the stratosphere. One gesture, and entire malls come crashing down. One stroke, and he eradicates corruption surrounding ration shops. One monologue, he changes the mind of an entire village to not vote for money. Honestly, most of these segments are interesting because he goes about all of this by the book, but let's be honest, cynicism has crept into the society. We want to see utopia, but one that appears possible. Here, one man changes everything, but the irony is... throughout Shankar's filmography, such solo warriors have constantly been changing society, and if another solo warrior in 2025 is again going to eradicate the same problem that was taken care of in 1993, 1996, 1999, and 2007, then it is less utopia, and more of just a gag. That is the real problem of Game Changer because the hangover of Shankar's filmography weighs too much on the film, and even an energetic Ram Charan can only shoulder it for a

## Neena Gupta recalls how aunt kicked her out of the house in middle of the night: 'I had nowhere to go, had a baby with me'



Neena Gupta moved from Delhi to Mumbai in the early 1980s and after living in a shared apartment for some time, Neena bought her first apartment with some help from her parents. Neena revealed in a recent interview that she never rented houses after that and kept buying flats one after another.

Neena Gupta moved from Delhi to Mumbai in the early 1980s and after living in a shared apartment for some time, Neena bought her first apartment with some help from her parents. Neena revealed in a recent interview that she never rented houses after that and kept buying flats one after another. The Saans actor said that as she would make more

money, she would sell her existing apartment, add more money and buy her next apartment. Once, when she was in the middle of switching apartments, she started living with her aunt who threw her out in the middle of the night.

In a chat with the YouTube channel Housing.com, Neena said that she had booked a new 3-BHK flat in a reputed builder's new apartment building. She had already sold her existing house and put in the money for her next house, so she did not have much money on her. While she was still in this process, she moved in with her aunt and uncle. "I shifted to my aunt's house where I had stayed before. I thought I stay there so much of the time and I just come back to my house to sleep. Since Masaba was little then, my aunt used to help in looking after the baby," she shared.

Neena said that things changed drastically after her aunt kicked her out one day. "But one day, she threw me out in the middle of the night, she kicked me out." Neena shared that since she did not have any money on her, she was homeless. "I had no money left. There was this one night where I had nowhere to go with a baby," she recalled. While she was still figuring out her living situation, her uncle had a change of heart and allowed her to live in an unoccupied flat in Juhu. "Before shifting with them, I had already told both of them that I am now going to be without a house so are you okay with me moving in? They said yes then. Now uncle felt very bad so he shifted me to his mother-in-law's house in Juhu which had been shut for 20 years. There were cobwebs in the house, it looked rusty. I went there and I cleaned that house with a small baby. But soon, I was asked to leave that house as well," she recalled.

At this point, Neena had no place to live so she went to the builder she had already paid money to and told him about her circumstances. She requested that he return her money so she could buy a house that was ready. "I asked him if it was possible to get my money back, I don't want that house. He gave me money back, didn't even deduct a penny," she shared.

## Anupam Mittal instructs Shark Tank India 4 pitcher to 'show some respect' to Varun Dua, tells him his 'business is dead'



A pitcher who has already raised Rs 16 crore in funding faced universal rejection on the latest episode of Shark Tank India, which debuted its fourth season this week. Entrepreneur Nitin Chawla from Ghaziabad pitched his one-stop complaint registering app, OneDios, to a panel of five 'sharks' — Anupam Mittal, Aman Gupta, Vineeta Singh, Peyush Bansal, and Varun Dua, who has experience in the field of warranties and insurance, as CEO of Acko. Nitin asked for Rs 75 lakh in exchange of 1.5% equity, valuing his company at Rs 50 crore.

He told the 'sharks' that he's projecting revenue of around Rs 7 crore this year, but is still operating in losses. The 'sharks' were interested in learning more about Nitin's services, but didn't seem to understand what he was saying. Nitin introduced OneDios as a platform that decreases

the amount of time that a customer spends registering complaints with a company, and promised that they would be able to register complaints within 60 seconds on his platform, regardless of which company they purchased their faulty product from. He then said that he also sells extended warranties on his platform, and also earns from the brands that have registered with him.

Varun said that as someone with first-hand experience in this field, he has 'burned a lot of money' on the extended warranty business. "There are too many variables in this, what you're saying is oversimplified," he said. But Nitin had an answer for everything. Anupam, however, seemed to catch onto his schtick. He said, "You are taking us all over the place without getting to the point. When one of us tries to dig deeper, your attitude suggests that you're laughing on the inside and waiting to put us in our place, as if we don't know what we're talking about. Show Varun some respect," and added, "If you want to continue lying to yourself, go ahead. But your business is over, it's been killed by AI. Have you heard the saying, 'If you can't convince them, confuse them'? I'm not confused, and I'm certainly not convinced. I'm out."

With Anupam out, the remaining 'sharks' also expressed their disinterest in Nitin's pitch. He left without a deal, and in his post-pitch interview, said that he needs the money to advertise his brand. "I've faced over 200 rejections, one more isn't going to bother me," he said. Meanwhile, the 'sharks' discussed the pitch among themselves, and Anupam said, "All his life he's been doing sales; he's a sales guy." And Vineeta replied, "But you can sell without lying."

## Tarak Mehta Ka Oolta Chashma actor Gurucharan Singh is 'facing financial difficulties, wants to die': Bhakti Soni

Gurucharan Singh, best known for playing Sodhi in the popular TV show Tarak Mehta Ka Oolta Chashma, was recently admitted to a hospital in Mumbai. Now, his friend Bhakti Soni has revealed that Gurucharan has stopped eating and is "very weak." Bhakti said, "I have been trying to get in touch with him and his family for the last couple of days, but their phones are switched off. So, right now, I don't have an update on his health. Three days ago, when he was hospitalised, I spoke to his mother. Gurucharan se meri koi baat chit hui nahi hai abhi (I haven't spoken to Gurucharan). I don't know what's happening with him, but from what I heard last, he is not even able to talk. He is very weak, I think."

Bhakti Soni revealed that Gurucharan Singh had stopped eating solid food three months ago and was only consuming a liquid diet. "He had stopped eating ever since he got back (home) three months ago. I don't exactly know when he did. He had stopped eating; he was not consuming a solid diet. After that, in the last few days, he did not have any water either, so he fell unconscious. Anyway, he had stopped eating food. He was only on some liquid diet, some milkshakes, coconut water type... He has been following this diet for some time," she said in an interview with SCREEN.

Bhakti also mentioned that Gurucharan's family had asked her to request him to have water at least, but he was not listening to anyone. "Even though doctors prescribed medicines, he seems to not have had any medicines. I don't know. But he was given a drip as he was unconscious. Apparently, the doctors said that he was taken to the hospital at the right time, and that if the family had waited for a couple of more days, then he wouldn't have survived." When asked if stress led to Gurucharan Singh's condition, Bhakti Soni revealed that he was facing financial difficulties and property issues. "He was going through some stress when he went missing. There is some property issue, and he needs help. I have also lent him Rs 30 lakh. It's not a small



amount. But a lot of his friends came forward to help him as well. He is not a married man, but in this legal case that he has (property-related legal case), he only spent money for that. He has a lot of financial responsibilities. His nephews go for court hearings, but he has paid for all the legal action, and that way, he has exhausted all his savings," she said.

Bhakti also revealed that Gurucharan's family had stopped valuing him since he was not earning. "His family also doesn't value him now that he is not earning. When he used to earn, his family valued and respected him. After his situation became bad, his family members stopped contacting him. None of his close ones are standing with him at this moment. He is upset that he is not getting any support from his family members. It was the same issue when he left without telling anyone (a few months ago)." Bhakti Soni further rubbished reports suggesting that Gurucharan Singh wants to take sanyaas and run away. "It's wrong. He wanted to become a sanyaasi (hermit) and run away a few months ago, when it was reported that he went missing. He wanted to go to the Himalayas and become a hermit. Right now, it's not that. He is unwell and has given up food and all because he wants to die," she concluded.

## Bodyguard Yusuf Ibrahim recalls Shah Rukh Khan's 'mad' Ajmer Sharif dargah's visit: 'Log hume dhakka maarke andar legaye'

It is a popularly known fact that wherever King Shah Rukh Khan goes, there's always a sea of fans around him, curious to get a glimpse of the actor. It can become quite a task for SRK's security team to control the excited crowd. Yusuf Ibrahim, a famous security consultant, who has been providing protection to many A-listers, including Alia Bhatt and Varun Dhawan and many others, since the beginning of their careers, recalled such an incident about SRK from years ago.

During an interview with Siddharth Kannan, Yusuf revisited the time when Shah Rukh wanted to visit the Ajmer Sharif Dargah and was mobbed by fans. "During the IPL, Shah Rukh sir wanted to go to Ajmer Sharif dargah. We reached there and the day we selected was wrong, a Friday, and the time was also not right, at 12:30, ekdum peak namaaz ka time. At any given time if you go there on Friday, there will be 10-15K people," he shared.



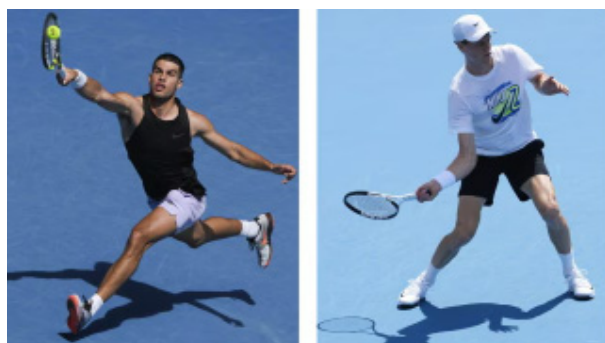
He further added, "When we went there, the whole town of Ajmer knew that Shah Rukh was coming to the Dargah. There was so much public, that we were literally standing there, logon ne humko dhakka maarke dargah legaye and dhakka maarke apne aap gaadi mai laake baitha diya (We didn't walk, people pushed us to the Dargah and then back to the car)." Yusuf also revealed that SRK is generally calm and composed in such situ-

ations. "It was a difficult experience, police had to do lathicharge to disperse them from there. There was so much madness. It was a lifetime experience for me. When such situations happen, he is damn cool about it. Shah Rukh is damn cool when such situations happen, he knows that it's not anyone's fault — neither staff nor fans. It's just the excitement of his fans, so everyone knows this is what hap-

pens. The temperament is always cool, nice and easy going," he said. When asked about what is the sweetest thing Shah Rukh Khan has ever said to him, the bodyguard expressed, "When he met my mom and dad, Shah Rukh sir said that he is a hardworking kid and cares a lot for me. That meant everything to me what he said. My mom and dad got emotional. Shah Rukh Khan was appreciating their son, it's not a joke."



## Time to put past behind, Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner are men's tennis's new protagonists



GNS News Agency, Jan 15

If Jannik Sinner, the 23-year-old World No. 1 and heavy tournament favourite, defends his Australian Open title this month, he will become only the third player in the Open Era – after Roger Federer (06-07) and Novak Djokovic (15-16) – to win three consecutive hard court Majors. If Carlos Alcaraz, already the second most successful active men's tennis player at 21, lifts the season-opening Major trophy, he will become only the sixth player to complete the career Grand Slam – winning all four Major titles at least once – in the Open Era.

The narrative of Djokovic, with former rival Andy Murray now in his camp, attempting to script more history and continue to keep his place among tennis's elite at the age of 37, may dominate headlines. But there is little doubt that Alcaraz and Sinner are the main protagonists of the men's draw in Melbourne this month. Nostalgia can be a powerful tool for keeping sport relevant. But the record-breaking success of Alcaraz and Sinner, who swept all four Majors last year, has ushered in the new guard seamlessly despite coming on the heels of the most universally adored generation of tennis players. They are doing it in a style that is earning them a reputation of being dominant-yet-popular athletes; they have built a resonant inter-personal rivalry that has produced some of the best tennis in recent years; they have, in a sense, deemed nostalgia redundant. The now retired, much loved duo of Federer-Nadal must make way for the emerging Sinner-Alcaraz rivalry. The previous generation, outside of the still-active, still-enthralling Djokovic, now belong to the priceless vault of internet compilations. Their presence is of more value to the statesman-like addresses they will make at public appearances than to modern-day tennis. Perhaps, in a slice of fortune for the sport, Alcaraz and Sinner have allowed that transition to be smooth rather than awkward. Leading the tour

It may be a product of the eccentric tennis ranking system that Sinner and Alcaraz are not the top two seeds at the Australian Open, but they proved in 2024 that they are a league above the others in the matches that matter. Being on opposing sides of the draw opens up the possibility of them extending their already famous rivalry by facing

off in a Major final for the first time. It is not a stretch to say the duo have produced the very best that men's tennis has to offer, arguably playing out the match of the year in each of the last three seasons. Their contrasting approaches and personalities have made for plenty of enthralling contests already.

Sinner comes into the tournament with uncertainty persisting over a potential ban. The Italian was exonerated after failing two doping tests in March after he successfully appealed his case of accidental contamination, but the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has appealed to the Court of Arbitration of Sport (CAS), the hearing for which is yet to be scheduled. The storm that has swirled around him has not been a deterrent to his form on the court. He put together one of the greatest seasons of the ATP era last year after winning two Majors, six other titles including the year-end Finals and a title defence at the Davis Cup, and finishing his year with a whopping win-loss percentage of 92.4%. He arrives in Melbourne as the big tournament favourite again, even if he has a slightly tricky route, with a first-round encounter against the big-hitting Nicolas Jarry, against whom he has struggled in the past. A potential quarterfinal against home favourite Alex de Minaur also awaits.

Sinner's refined aggressive baseline playing style may be dominant, but it is a subtler niche compared to the overwhelming version of it played by Alcaraz, who is all energy, elasticity and charisma. Alcaraz's ever-expanding highlight reel gained him a hefty fan following even before he followed it up with four Majors, but he lacks consistency. The Spaniard had a banner year in 2024 – finishing with the French Open-Wimbledon double and silver medal at the Olympics – but he ended it on a tame note with early losses at the US Open and ATP Finals. Alcaraz may seek Sinner's steadiness, but the high points in his game – the ceiling of the level he can produce – are considerably higher than that of his Italian counterpart. That is part of the reason why Alcaraz leads their head-to-head 6-4, winning each of their three encounters last year; and why the Spaniard has won Majors across the three surfaces. The Spaniard has a history of peaking on the big stage, and if he is seeking time to get match sharpness and fitness before the business end of this tournament, he may be blessed with an easier route to the second week in Melbourne, where a lurking Djokovic may await in a potential blockbuster quarterfinal. Djokovic is entering what could be the most intriguing phase of his career – having established himself as the best of the previous generation, he wishes to be an equal of this one. His favourite tournament may be the perfect venue to rebuild himself after a poor 2024, but his path, as the seventh seed, is a perilous one. Promising Czech Tomas Machac, big-serving Reilly Opelka who just beat him in Brisbane, and old foe Grigor Dimitrov are waiting before he may face the Spaniard. For the Serb to extend his record to 25 Majors, it looks likely that he will have to go through at least one, if not both, of Sinner and Alcaraz. No player on tour, not even a history-maker like him, has looked capable of doing so recently.

## Varun Aaron, who once grabbed headlines for breaking Stuart Broad's nose with bouncer, retires from 'representative cricket'



GNS News Agency, Jan 15

Varun Aaron retirement Due to as many as eight back stress fractures and three foot fractures, Aaron could only represent India for just 9 ODIs and 9 Tests, snapping up 29 wickets in both formats. (File) Once regarded as one of India's fastest bowler before injuries curbed his promise, Varun Aaron on Friday announced his retirement from 'representative cricket'. "For the past 20 years, I have lived, breathed, and thrived on the rush of bowling fast. Today, with immense gratitude, I officially announce my retirement from representative cricket," Aaron posted on Instagram.

"Over the years, I've had to push both my physical and mental limits to recover from numerous career-threatening injuries, having to come back time and again, this was only possible thanks to the relentless dedication of the physios, trainers, and coaches at the National Cricket Academy," he continued.

## Rahul likely to skip white-ball series at home against England

New Delhi: India batter KL Rahul is likely to be rested for the white-ball series against England beginning in Kolkata on January 22. The home series comprises five T20s and three ODIs which will be more significant considering it precedes the Champions Trophy starting February 19. However, Rahul will be available for selection for the Champions Trophy. India will play all their games in Dubai while the rest of the matches will be held in host nation Pakistan.

"He has sought a break for the England series but he will be available for selection for Champions Trophy," a BCCI source said. While the high-profile India batting crumbled in the Test series in Australia, Rahul was among the few batters who got runs. He was the third highest run getter for India with 276 runs in 10 innings at an average of 30.66. Though ahead in the pecking order, Rahul is fighting for the wicketkeeper batter's slot in the Champions Trophy squad alongside Rishabh Pant and Sanju Samson. Rahul had also sought rest from Karnataka's matches in the Vijay Hazare Trophy. Their quarterfinal will be played over the weekend. It remains to be seen if he will be available for Karnataka's Ranji Trophy campaign with head coach Gautam Gambhir highlighting the need to play domestic cricket for all India cricketers post the series loss in Australia.



## LA Lakers head coach JJ Redick reveals family evacuated after wildfires; Clippers star Kawhi Leonard leaves team to be with family



Golden State Warriors head coach Steve Kerr said the wildfires in California, started by Santa Ana winds, had a "terrifying impact" and was quoted as saying by CNN that that his mother was forced to evacuate her home in Pacific Palisades. Kerr also said team video assistant Everett Dayton, who grew up in Pacific Palisades, lost his family home in the fire. CNN wrote that: "While the Palisades fire has been growing at a rate of about five football fields a minute, two other fires have also erupted in Los Angeles County: the 500-acre Hurst fire north of San Fernando and the Eaton fire in Altadena, which grew to 1,000 acres in a matter of hours. More than 200,000 homes and buildings are currently without power in LA county."

"Everything I'm seeing and reading is just terrifying, what's happening down there," Kerr told reporters. "So, just wanted to send thoughts to everyone who's going through the devastation of the fire." Elsewhere speaking to reporters before his team's 118-97 defeat to the Dallas Mavericks on Tuesday, LA Lakers head coach JJ Redick revealed that his family has also been affected by the fires.

"I just want to acknowledge and send thoughts and

prayers to everyone in the Palisades right now," Redick said. "It's where I live, my family and my wife's family, my wife's twin sister, they've evacuated. I know that a lot of people are freaking out right now, including my family. From the sound of things, with the winds coming tonight, I know a lot of people are scared." Earlier, Los Angeles Clippers star Kawhi Leonard had left the team ahead of Wednesday's game in Denver to return to California, and head coach Tyrone Lue told reporters that the six-time All-Star is back with his family. "You definitely have to take care of home. ... Totally had my support 100%," Lue said. "Going back, checking on his family and kids, making sure they're well. And he got back, and they're doing okay, so just happy and thankful for that. We know we have a task at hand, but you know a lot of people are affected by what's going on," Lue said. "We know we have a game that we have to play that we wanna win. And so, just give everything we got you know despite. It's hard to put things like this behind you when so many people are affected. But it's something we gotta try to do tonight. It's gonna be tough. I'm not sure if we'll be able to do it or not. But we gotta go out there and compete at a high level and give everything we got."

## 'Let's go May!!!!' – How PV Sindhu and Ratchanok are geeing each other up as young generation stomps on

GNS News Agency, Jan 15

A pair of 29-year-olds, who last won the World Championship titles 12 and 6 years ago, they might be. But Ratchanok Intanon who first hit headlines at 17 as a world champion in 2013, and PV Sindhu whose world title came in 2019, are defying age-related concerns to keep pushing for performances on the Tour. Playing in the season opener, Super 1000 (like one of four Grand Slams of tennis) at Kuala Lumpur, Ratchanok Intanon defeated Indonesian upcoming Putri Kusuma Wardani 21-13, 15-21, 21-16 with a hard fought entry into the semifinals. At 29, battling injuries and fitness worries, the elegant Thai player, who remains mesmeric in her strokemaking, is hitting second wind and was a fighter against the 22-year-old opponent, ranked one spot above her at 16. Sindhu, who will kickstart her season at the India Open next week, was all encouragement and hood vibes when sending out a social media message to Ratchanok. "Let's go may!!!!" she wrote, May being Ratchanok's nickname.

Ratchanok has 728 matches as against Wardani's 173, and is nearing the 500 win mark, currently on 489. She had lost to Wardani at Malaysia Masters last May, but fought back after being pushed into a decider on Friday. PV Sindhu hasn't had a great time on court with results, but has spoken about being determined to continue and push for the big titles, expected to be back on court within a month of her gorgeous Udaipur wedding.

## How Andy Murray was persuaded to coach Novak Djokovic 20 minutes after telling golfing partner, 'can't think of anything worse than coaching to do right now'

Novak Djokovic and Andy Murray first crossed paths as 12-year-olds, but one coaching the other wasn't in anyone's wildest imaginations. Murray in fact said he had waved aside the idea just 30 minutes before taking up the Djokovic offer in November. Speaking at length to BBC Sport, Murray recalled, "I was playing golf, and we'd been exchanging messages. Novak had messaged me, just wanting to chat. Then I was on the 17th hole of the golf course and the guy I was playing with said: 'Do you know what's next?'. I was like: 'No, not really'. He said: 'Do you have any plans to do any coaching?' And I said, 'Honestly, I can't think of anything worse to do right now'."

Adding he just could not turn down the unique opportunity to coach long-time rival at the upcoming Australian Open, he told BBC: "Then 30 minutes later, I was in the car and called Novak, and we had a conversation." The duo would trial out the arrangement at Spain in December before Melbourne this week. "It made sense to trial it and see if it works. And then we said we'd make a more definitive decision after the tournament," said the 37-year-old Scotsman speaking for the first time about the gig to BBC. This is how the conversation went as narrated to BBC: "Novak asked if I would be interested in helping, which I obviously wasn't expecting. I said to him: 'Look, I need to think about it and talk to my family.' So I spoke to them, and after a couple of days, I thought that it was a pretty unique opportunity and experience. I thought it would be a good idea to

try it." Murray retired last year after the Paris Olympics, while the Serbian legend is aiming to win a record-extending 11th Australian Open title, as well as a 25th major which would put him ahead of Australia's Margaret Court in terms of all-time victories. It wasn't expected to be all joy and fun given the two intense personalities, and BBC wrote, "There will be little, if any, japing around in Melbourne. Murray, otherwise known for his quips, got a little grinchy when asked if there would be lots of laughs. He told BBC: "At times it's very enjoyable. But high performance is not supposed to be laughs and jokes and messing around. In all the times I've been on tour, I haven't seen that from any of the best players in the world. I've seen it from some of the lower ranked players, and that's one of the reasons why they're not there." BBC noted that "during Djokovic's open practice sessions against Carlos Alcaraz, Jack Draper and Arthur Fils on Rod Laver Arena, Murray watched every movement intently. Stood close behind Djokovic and sometimes in the doubles alley, Murray constantly offered feedback, shouted praise after winners and made notes during the practice sets. "Expected to work alongside Boris Bosnjakovic, who runs Djokovic's training centre in Belgrade, Murray told BBC: "It's about making small changes to things and trying to help him and improve with the whole team." He expects tempers to flare. "I know it's not easy out there – it's stressful and at times he's going to want to vent towards his team and his box. Providing that he's giving his best effort and trying as hard as he can,



The All England remains the holy grail, for both 29-year-olds. Ratchanok was battling in a draw with 6 shuttlers, all under 25, except Beiwen Zhang at the year's first Super 1000. Ratchanok scribbled back, saying, "We have to earn more and more haha... Thank for listening and sharing life with me... this is really hard life... @pvsindhu." Earlier, the grand old fighter of the circuit, American Top 15er Beiwen Zhang was forced to retire in her match against An Se-young. Ratchanok's style-alikes Tai Tzu-ying and He Bingjiao have retired, while the others from golden generation Chen Yufei, Akane Yamaguchi were not present at Kuala Lumpur. Fellow 29-year-old Nozomi Okuhara lost early. But the May-Sindhu friendship and their determination to continue fighting stays undiminished.