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Another Telangana farmer ends life after missing out on crop loan waiver, this time in Jagtial

Jagtial: A farmer Pittla Linganna alias Thokala Linganna (42) died by suicide in Ibrahimpatnam mandal. Linganna, who attempted suicide by consuming pesticide in his agricultural field a week ago, died while undergoing treatment in a private hospital in Metpalli on Monday. According to family members, Linganna took the extreme step as his crop loan was not waived and he was unable to get financial assistance from the government to take up sowing. Linganna, who had borrowed about Rs 15 lakh from banks and private money lenders, was reeling under debts. The non-waiver of his crop loan and lack of financial assistance for sowing added fuel to his troubles.

Telangana CM Receives Warm Welcome at Zurich Airport Ahead of WEF Summit

GNS News Agency, Jan 20

Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy arrived in Zurich to attend the prestigious World Economic Forum (WEF) Summit, receiving a grand welcome at the airport. Accompanied by Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu and a team of senior officials, the Chief Minister was greeted enthusiastically by members of the Telugu diaspora settled in Zurich, who turned out in large numbers to convey their appreciation and support.

In a notable moment at Zurich Airport, Chief Ministers Revanth Reddy and Andhra Pradesh's N. Chandrababu Naidu met cordially. Their discussion reportedly touched upon various developmental projects and investment opportunities in both states. Union Minister Rammohan Naidu, Minister Sridhar Babu, and Andhra Pradesh Minister Nara Lokesh were also present during this interaction. On the first day of the WEF Summit, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is scheduled to meet several global industrial leaders. With a strategic vision to position Telangana as a prime destina-



tion for international investments, the state delegation is keen to showcase Telangana's growth potential and its investor-friendly policies. This visit highlights Telangana's commitment to fostering global partnerships and solidifying its presence as a hub for innovation and development on the international stage.

Supreme Court declines to entertain PIL to establish dedicated ministry for senior citizens

GNS News Agency, Jan 20

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking direction to the Union government to establish a dedicated ministry for 'senior citizens'. A bench of Justices P.S. Narasimha and Manoj Misra, told petitioner-advocate G. Priyadarshini, represented by senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, to better approach the Central government with a representation at first. Ultimately, the Justice Narasimha-led Bench granted liberty to file a representation and allowed the withdrawal of the petition.

The PIL, filed through advocate Rahul Shyam Bhandari, said that the unprecedented rise in the ageing population of the country, if not categorically handled by an exclusive ministry/specific department, will have detrimental implications in health, economy and in the societal structure at large. It added that 'senior citizens' being a 'vulnerable class' in itself, come under the constitutional prism of Article 21 owing to the unique and myriad challenges they suffer such as health, societal structure, financial instability and dependence.

"Article 21 of the Constitution is a harbour of human dignity to all but what should be the necessary attributes of life to be dignified at old age will depend upon the legitimate needs of old age. The younger population that is working incessantly today for the progress of the nation, will become



part of the elderly population in future. Therefore, the efforts that they put forth must be recognised and respected, once any human enters the dependent phase of life," stated the petition. India has 10.4 crore 'senior citizens' constituting 8.6 per cent of the total population, as per the census of Year 2011, and according to recent data, there are 149 million persons aged 60 years and above in 2022 (as on July), comprising around 10.5 per cent of the country's population (which amounts to 14.9 crore). By 2050, the share of older persons will double to 20.8 per cent, with the absolute number at 347 million (34.7 crores), said the petition, adding that it is therefore imperative to have an exclusive ministry/department that can cater to the policies, schemes, financial assistance, health care requirements, pension, etc.

RG Kar verdict: Mamata unhappy with 'life imprisonment' for convict, says 'death penalty was sought'



GNS News Agency, Jan 20

Kolkata: As a special court in Kolkata on Monday sentenced Sanjay Roy, convicted in the case of ghastly rape and murder of a junior women doctor of the state-run R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital within the hospital premises in August last year to life imprisonment, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee expressed her displeasure and dissatisfaction over the quantum of sentence. "We demanded 'death penalty' for the convict. I don't know how... had the case been in our hands (state police or Kolkata Police), the death sentence would have been pronounced much earlier," the Chief Minister told mediapersons just after the sentence was pronounced by the special court.

However, when specifically asked whether the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had failed to carry out the investigation properly, thus leading to just "life imprisonment" and not the "death penalty", the Chief Minister refused to make any direct comment. "I do not want to say anything on these lines. All I can say is that recently in the three cases of similar rape and murder which were handled by the state police, the 'death penalty' was pronounced within a much shorter period," the Chief Minister said. BJP's IT Cell chief and the party's central observer for West Bengal Amit Malviya issued a statement that the verdict by the special court must be appealed and the Chief Minister should stop shielding the criminals. "Agencies also need to investigate the role of the then Kolkata Commissioner and the Chief Minister in the destruction of evidence. Justice must not only be done but must also be seen to be done," Malviya's

statement read. Senior advocate of Calcutta High Court and CPI-M Rajya Sabha member, Bikas Ranjan Bhattacharya, however, said that in his opinion, life imprisonment for Roy is quite a strong punishment. "Personally, I feel that in a civilised country, 'death penalty' should not prevail," he said. While pronouncing the quantum of sentence on Monday afternoon, the judge of the special court Anirban Das, also made it clear that the CBI's contention that Roy's offence in the matter was "the rarest and rare crimes" was not tenable.

Tension prevailing in Mylaram over mining exploration

GNS News Agency, Jan 20

Nagarkurnool: Tension prevails in Mylaram village under Balmoor mandal since Monday morning after farmers and villagers launched a relay hunger strike against the mining exploration in the vicinities and with police arresting the residents. The otherwise serene ambience in the village was reverberating with screams of women and arguments between the police and farmers and villagers.

It is learnt that a woman lost consciousness in the melee between the police personnel and the villagers. A woman also tried to consume pesticide and commit suicide but was stopped by the villagers, according to reports. As a means to prevent mining and vehicles passage, the residents even fenced the roads leading to the village with thorny bushes. Since the last few months, farmers and residents have been opposing the mining exploration in the locality, citing adverse impact on nature, their lives and livelihood. Amidst the stiff opposition, a few persons under the influence of a few local elected public representatives were trying to explore mining in the area. Intensifying their demands, the villagers on Monday launched a relay hunger strike under the aegis of Mylaram Grama Parirakshana Samithi. However, the police arrived in the village in large numbers and arrested the villagers and farmers. Irked over the police action, the villagers raised slogans against the police department and the Congress government. The villagers also demanded the police to release all those, who have been arrested immediately, failing which they threatened to consume pesticides.

Couple from Patancheru dies in road accident in Andhra Pradesh, children injured

Sangareddy: A couple from Patancheru died in Andhra Pradesh after a private bus hit their car at Railway Kodur in Annamayya district on Monday. The couple's three children sustained serious injuries in the road mishap. The condition of the eldest of the three children is said to be critical. The couple Sandeep Shah (45) and his wife Anjali Devi (40) were on a pilgrimage to Tirupati. The incident happened when they were on their way back to Patancheru. Shah was also the president of the North Indians Welfare Association, Patancheru. Since he also used to move closely with Patancheru MLA Gudem Mahipal Reddy, the MLA expressed shock over the accident and sent a condolence message to the bereaved family members.

Telangana delegation led CM lands in Davos, meets AP CM Chandrababu Naidu

GNS News Agency, Jan 20

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu, Andhra Pradesh IT minister Nara Lokesh, Telangana Industries and IT Minister D Sridhar Babu and Union Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu in Davos, Switzerland prior to the World Economic Conference-2024, on Monday (January 20, 2025). Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu, Andhra Pradesh IT minister Nara Lokesh, Telangana Industries and IT Minister D Sridhar Babu and Union Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu in Davos, Switzerland prior to the World Economic Conference-2024, on Monday (January 20, 2025). |



The 'TelanganaRising' delegation led by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy landed in Zurich, Switzerland on Monday (January 20, 2025) morning after their successful visit to Singapore. The Telangana diaspora accorded a warm welcome to the delegation at the Zurich airport. The delegation will participate in the World Economy Forum (WEF) annual conference at Davos starting from January 20. The Chief Minister is accompanied by the State IT and Industries Minister D. Sridhar Babu and senior officials of the Industries Department. The Andhra Pradesh delegation led by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu also reached the airport at the same time when Mr. Reddy's team landed. The two Chief Ministers and Ministers had a brief interaction. Mr. Reddy and the delegation is scheduled to

meet several industrialists on the first day of the Davos Conference. They were focussed on generating huge investments in Telangana from industry leaders worldwide and projecting Telangana State to the world as an international investment destination. As part of that, the Chief Minister's team will hold discussions with representatives of several global giant companies. Last year, Telangana attracted 740,000 crores in investments and most of those investments are now grounded. According to the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), the target this year is 1 lakh crore and the officials have lined meetings in accordance with the plan. They are confident of touching the target and emerge as the biggest beneficiary among the six Indian states that have sent delegations to the Davos meeting.

KTR vows to fight for unorganised sector workers' rights

GNS News Agency, Jan 20

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao emphasised the need to build a strategic pressure on the Congress government to deliver its pending promises to workers in unorganised sectors including auto-rickshaw drivers and gig workers among others. He vowed to fight for the rights of the workers in all sectors especially unorganised sector. "The BRS may have lost power, but not its fighting spirit," he declared, while releasing the BRS Karmika Vibhagam (BRSKV) calendar at Telangana Bhavan on Monday.

Addressing the gathering, Rama Rao declared that the BRS would not rest until the Congress delivered on its 420 promises over the next four years. He urged the BRSKV to spearhead campaigns highlighting the plight of auto-rickshaw drivers, gig workers, and others. He called for regular programs every 15 days leading up to Labour Day on May 1, to raise awareness and demand justice for workers. The BRS working president criticised the Congress for failing to include welfare measures for workers in the State budget. "The welfare boards and programmes for workers must be assured in the upcoming State budget," he said, urging auto drivers, gig workers, hamalis, and other workers in unorganised and organised sectors to unite in building pressure on the government.

He reminded about former Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao's initiatives for worker welfare, includ-



ing tripling GHMC workers' salaries, supporting migrant labourers during the Covid-19 pandemic, and increasing Anganwadi teachers' salaries to Rs 13,500. He contrasted this with the Congress government's alleged inaction, pointing to municipal workers not being paid for three to four months and government contract and outsourcing employees waiting eight months for salaries. "The Congress government has failed to honour its promises, and the current state of affairs is unacceptable," he said, charging the Congress government with using force against ASHA workers and neglecting labour issues. He announced plans to form proactive committees of BRSKV across all districts, to take up a collective fight against the Congress. "Telangana achieved statehood through collective struggle, and the same spirit should guide us now," he declared.

Convict Sanjay Roy pleads innocence in RG Kar case, prosecution pushes for death penalty



GNS News Agency, Jan 20

Kolkata: With final statements of the convict and prosecutor in the case of R.G. Kar rape and murder of a woman doctor over at around 1.10 p.m. on Monday, the judge of the special court, Anirban Das, will pronounce the sentence at 2.45 p.m. Immediately after the final statement proceedings process was over, the judge directed that his courtroom be vacated immediately since he needed some time to pen the final order of sentence. During the 40-minute hearing, the sole accused in the case Sanjay Roy, an erstwhile civic volunteer attached to the state police, continued to claim innocence. He even claimed that he was beaten up and forced to sign a written statement.

On the other hand, the counsel of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) claimed that since Roy's offence was among the "rarest of rare crimes", and demanded that he should be accorded the highest punishment which is the 'death penalty'. Already on January 18, the day when Roy was convicted in the case, the judge of the special court had made it clear that the maximum punishment in the case could be the "death penalty", while the minimum punishment in the matter could be "life imprisonment". The body of the victim doctor was recovered from the seminar hall within R.G. Kar premises on the morning of August 9 last

year. The initial investigation into the matter was started by a special investigation team of Kolkata Police, who arrested Roy. However, the CBI started an investigation five days from the date of the crime following an order of the Calcutta High Court and thereafter Roy was handed over to the central agency officials by the city police. The trial process in the matter started on November 11 last year, 59 days after the body of the victim was discovered. The conviction process was completed on January 18. Now, the sentence will be pronounced at 2.45 p.m. on Monday exactly 164 days from the date of the crime.

Three arrested in Hyderabad for involvement in crime against children

GNS News Agency, Jan 20

Hyderabad: Three persons from Hyderabad were nabbed by the Cybercrime police for their involvement in crime against children, which included downloading, viewing and sharing of child pornographic content.

The cases were registered based on inputs received from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) portal, an exclusive platform for addressing crimes against children. The arrested suspects had downloaded child pornographic content from various adult sites, watched and also shared it with their friends through social media platforms.

According to the cybercrime officials, preliminary verification was conducted using leads such as IP addresses, mobile numbers, and email IDs, tracing the suspects to various locations in Hyderabad. The inquiry report, along with supporting documentation, has been forwarded to the NCMEC ID of the Cybercrime Unit for further legal action.

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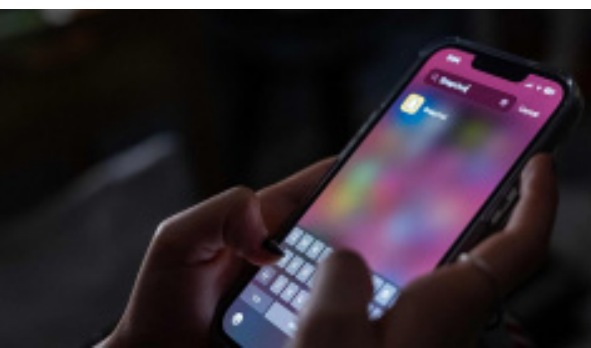
Custodial hell

THE conviction of IGP Zahur Haider Zaidi and seven other policemen in a custodial death case serves as a grim reminder of the tragic events that unfold when cops take the law into their own hands. The Kotkhai gangrape-murder of a schoolgirl had jolted the peaceful hill state of Himachal Pradesh in 2017. The horrifying crime led to a public outrage that prompted the state government to set up a Special Investigation Team (SIT) headed by Zaidi. The SIT managed to arrest six suspects but it came under sharp scrutiny itself when one of them died in police custody. Now, a special CBI court has found the probe team's members guilty of murder, torture in police custody for extracting a confession, fabrication of evidence and other serious offences.

Under pressure to produce 'quick results', the SIT crossed one red line after another. It's true that public anger over the gruesome gangrape-murder had reached a crescendo, but this was not reason enough for the cops to resort to 'instant justice'. This is a cautionary tale for police personnel around the country who let their overzealousness get the better of them during investigations. They are emboldened by the acceptance of violence as par for the course at police stations. A suspect in a lock-up often finds himself at the receiving end of police brutality. In 2021, then Chief Justice of India NV Ramana had rightly stated that police stations posed the biggest threat to human rights as custodial torture and police atrocities were prevalent despite constitutional guarantees.

Several states and UTs continue to drag their feet on implementing the Supreme Court's order about installing CCTV cameras at police stations. The onus is on the respective police top brass to ensure that there is no laxity on this count. It is a must to crack down on cops who brazenly abuse their authority. At stake is the credibility of the law enforcers.

Social media firms largely compliant with Indian grievance panel rulings, officials say



The GACs were set up under the Information Technology Rules, 2021, with a mandate to hear appeals from Indian users against social media firms who have more than 5,00,000 active Indian users.

Social media companies are working smoothly with the Grievance Appellate Committees (GACs) that hear appeals against content complaints and takedowns, offering little resistance to GAC rulings, a top IT Ministry official and a member of one GAC told.

The GACs were set up under the Information Technology Rules, 2021, with a mandate to hear appeals from Indian users against social media firms who have more than 5,00,000 active Indian users. The committees can rule on whether content has to be taken down or reinstated. In the months leading up to the formal constitution of three GACs, each with three members, social media firms and online intermediaries reportedly worried that these bodies could overrule their community guidelines. 'Cooperative'

In practice, firms like Meta Platforms Inc, which owns Facebook and Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter), have largely been cooperative with the GACs and comply with their orders. GACs have received 2,454 appeals since October 2023, and have disposed of 2,347.

In six transparency reports published by Meta for the period between June and December 2024, the firm said it complied with 100% of the 271 orders it received from the GAC. Google also reported complying with all appeals except one, though the firm has yet to disclose data beyond September 2024. (In the one exception, "the GAC's directions could not be complied with whilst also preserving Google's position as an intermediary under Indian law," the firm said, without providing any details). X has not yet disclosed any statistics on appeals from the GAC. Ashutosh Shukla, a retired IPS officer who is a member of the second GAC — which he says has handled the majority of complaints filed so far — told The Hindu that social media firms "generally comply" with the GAC's orders. Union Secretary for Electronics and Information Technology S. Krishnan said in an interview with The Hindu that the GACs have had "a fairly good dynamic", and that the system has been working smoothly to redress users' complaints.

Impersonation, hacking complaints The number of appeals has been rising exponentially, Mr. Shukla said. While GAC members work remotely in a "digital" manner, with secretarial assistance from the IT Ministry in New Delhi, he said that the rise in appeals is keeping committee members engaged with the work. Mr. Krishnan added: "If there are more complaints coming to the grievance officers within the company and those complaints are then getting appealed, then it means that the system is working." (Users are required to first complain to social media firms before approaching the GAC.)

The most common types of complaints, Mr. Shukla said, arise from incidents of impersonation on social media, and hacking. A key aspect of the GACs is their power to overturn 'deplatforming' or account suspensions by social media platforms. Mr. Shukla said that the GAC rarely had to invoke this power, and that "generally the suspension [has been applied for] right causes."

Orders not public The GACs' orders are not made public, which has led to some criticism from civil society groups on transparency grounds. Mr. Shukla said that details of individual cases cannot be disclosed to the public, as they contain private information like email addresses, phone numbers, and Aadhaar numbers. The GAC model of hearing complaints digitally has been replicated in the draft Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025 for the yet-to-be-constituted Data Protection Board of India (DPBI), which will hear complaints on personal data misuse and address data breach reports from firms. The DPBI too will conduct its proceedings completely remotely, the IT Ministry said.

Theft only motive; no gang behind attack on Saif Ali Khan: Maharashtra Minister Yogesh Kadam



GNS News Agency, Jan 20

No underworld gang is behind the knife attack on Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan, Maharashtra Minister of State for Home Yogesh Kadam said on Friday (January 17, 2025). "A suspect who has been detained in connection with the attack is not part of any gang. No gang has carried out this attack," Mr. Kadam told reporters in Pune. Saif Ali Khan attack: Mumbai Police detain one person for questioning

"There has been no intimation from Saif Ali Khan to police till date on whether he faced any threat," the Minister said. "He has not sought any security cover, but if he does so, we will follow due procedure," he added. Mr. Kadam said theft was the only motive behind the attack on the

actor. Mr. Khan (54) suffered grievous injuries after an intruder stabbed him with a knife repeatedly at his 12th floor flat in upscale Bandra in the early hours of Thursday (January 16, 2025). The actor, who received multiple stab injuries, including in his neck, underwent an emergency surgery at Mumbai's Lilavati Hospital. Kareena Kapoor Khan opens up on knife attack on Saif Ali Khan: An incredibly challenging day for our family

He is doing "very well" and expected to be discharged in two to three days, doctors said on Friday (January 17, 2025.) Mr. Kadam said the Mumbai police have detained a person whose facial features matched with the suspected attacker whose image was captured in CCTV cameras when he was fleeing the building. "The person has a criminal record and police were questioning him," he said. "Asked about possible involvement of a criminal gang in the attack, the Minister maintained primary investigations have ruled out any such angle. So far, theft seems to be the only motive behind the incident," he added. "The Mumbai police have detained a person whose facial characteristics are similar to the man seen in CCTV cameras. The police are tracking one more person," Mr. Kadam informed. CCTV footage showed the suspected assailant, wearing a red scarf and carrying a backpack, scurrying down the stairs from the sixth floor of the 'Satguru Sharan' building where Saif Ali Khan lives.

Madurai-Thoothukudi new line project not shelved, clarifies Railway Ministry



GNS News Agency, Jan 20

Days after Minister for Railways Ashwini Vaishnav's remarks on the fate of the Madurai-Thoothukudi new line project triggered a political row, the Union Railway Ministry on Wednesday (January 15, 2025) clarified that the project has not been shelved and there are no issues pertaining to land acquisition for the same. At the Integral Coach Factory in Chennai last week, the Minister, while responding to a query from a journalist on the status of the Madurai-Thoothukudi new line project via Arappukottai, claimed that it was shelved on the basis of a letter given by the Tamil Nadu government.

The issue snowballed into a controversy with the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) IT wing challenging the Minister in a post on social media about certain facts and demanding an apology from him. The party had shared a copy of the letter on the project sent by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin to Mr. Vaishnav dated August 19 last year.

In the letter, Mr. Stalin, citing the normal budget allocation against the reduced regular budget allocation for new line and doubling projects, had mentioned the slow progress of the Madurai-Thoothukudi via Arappukottai new line, among seven new line projects. The letter highlighted the budget allocation for 12 doubling works, station work connecting the Kilambakkam bus terminus, and the various railway infrastructure projects being executed in the city. A press release issued by Southern Railway on Wednesday claimed since journalists were asking many questions simultaneously regarding the projects being executed in the State, and due to "background noise in the factory," the Minister misheard it as "Dhanushkodi project". Accordingly, the minister's reply was regarding the Dhanushkodi line project, and he said that the State government had written to the Railway Ministry that this project might be dropped due to land acquisition and environmental issues. The mediapersons construed his above comments as though he was referring to the Madurai-Thoothukudi project, thus causing unintended confusion, the statement said. The Minister has clarified that in Madurai-Thoothukudi project, there is no land-related issues on the part of the State government.

Erode (East): A bypoll with few challenges for DMK

GNS News Agency, Jan 20

In normal circumstances, a bye-election should be a political audit of the government's performance. In Tamil Nadu, although a few bye-elections have favoured Opposition parties, most of them have gone in favour of the ruling dispensation. The entire Cabinet and official machinery work towards this goal, as ruling parties treat bypolls as a matter of prestige.

The upcoming bypoll for the Erode (East) Assembly constituency, on February 5, 2025, necessitated by the death of the Congress legislator E.V.K.S. Elangovan, however, poses little threat to the ruling dispensation. With the General Assembly election just a year away, the Congress has stepped aside in favour of its alliance leader, the ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), which has announced V.C. Chandirakumar, a former DMK legislator, as its candidate. Erode is witnessing a second bypoll in two years. In 2023, a bypoll was held after Thirumagan Evera, the son of Mr. Elangovan, passed away. The Congress successfully fielded Mr. Elangovan in the by-election with DMK's support. This time, the Congress has left it to the DMK, as family members of Mr. Elangovan are not keen on contesting. The charm of the impending bypoll was lost on the day that the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), the main Opposition party, announced its decision to boycott it. It is surprising, given the AIADMK's organisational strength in the western region, known as the Kongu belt. Even today, the AIADMK is represented in the Assembly by more members from this region. The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is also staying away from the bypoll.

In a State where by-elections were furiously fought and heralded a change of regime, the decision of the AIADMK and the NDA to boycott them exposes their inability to put up a good fight, let alone secure victory. AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K. Palaniswami justified his party's decision on the grounds that the ruling party would misuse its power and not allow the electors to cast their votes freely.

While the ruling party has an advantage in a by-election, as the voters in the constituency generally do not take risks by electing an Opposition party candidate, the AIADMK could have left a mark if it had the company of the BJP. The absence of a strong alliance, rather than the "excesses of the ruling party", as alleged by Mr. Palaniswami, is the reason behind the AIADMK's boycott.

By-elections are important. The by-election to the Dindigul Lok Sabha in 1973 announced the arrival and permanent domination of the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu politics. In 1974, C. Aranganayagam (AIADMK), who later became a Minister in the Cabinets of M.G. Ramachandran and Jayalalithaa, won the bypoll to the Coimbatore West Assembly constituency when the DMK was in power. The DMK, too, had won bypolls when the AIADMK was in power under the leadership of MGR.

It was late AIADMK leader Jayalalithaa who emphasised bypolls. In 2002, she and her entire Cabinet campaigned in the Sathankulam by-election. When she fell out with her ally and actor-turned-politician Vijayakant in 2011, she challenged him to field his party candidate in the by-election to the Tenkasi constituency, to prove his strength.

The party started losing by-elections only after her death in 2016. T.T.V. Dhinakaran, the nephew of Ms. Jayalalithaa's confidante Sasikala, sprang a surprise by winning the bypoll to the RK Nagar constituency, as an Independent, defeating both the DMK and the AIADMK candidates. The DMK won 13 seats in the 22 Assembly seats in bypolls held alongside the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. These results foretold what was in store for the ruling AIADMK in the 2021 Assembly elections.

Pollution case: Supreme Court asks if there's embargo on the number of vehicles a person can own in the same city



GNS News Agency, Jan 20

The Supreme Court on Monday (January 20, 2025) asked if there was any restriction on the number of vehicles a person could own in the same city, and if there was a law that ensured commercial and residential complexes had enough parking spots on their premises. "Is there any embargo on the number of vehicles a person can register? There are people who buy their second and third vehicles in the same city," Justice A.S. Oka, who heads a Bench, asked advocates appearing for the Centre, National Capital Region areas, and local authorities in the capital city. The court was considering a note prepared by the amicus curiae, senior advocate Aparajita Singh, which has recommended a robust and integrated public transport system for reducing the number of private vehicles, a prime cause for rising toxicity levels in air quality, on the roads of the

national capital. Justice Oka asked whether development regulations with respect to residential and commercial complexes had provisions which mandate that permission would not be given unless there was room for parking. "Those who can afford to buy apartments in these residential complexes, they have two or three vehicles..." Justice Oka remarked. The court said building regulations must make it clear how many parking spots were mandatory in residential and commercial complexes. "In some cities, an apartment is given two parking spaces, or at least one per apartment," Justice Oka said. The court said a substantial parking policy was necessary considering the large inflow of vehicles into the capital city. Ms. Singh said vehicles parked on roads were a common sight in the capital.

The Bench proposed orally that public authorities must buy only electric vehicles. "The various governments, corporations, etc.," Justice Oka said. Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Commission for Air Quality Management, observed in her capacity as the Centre's law officer that the government was "aggressively" going for electric vehicles, but a balance had to be maintained still. "We want to keep a balance as electricity is drawn from coal," Ms. Bhati explained. The court said it would hear arguments on these concerns which trigger pollution on February 3, 2025. The Bench said authorities, including the Road and Transport Ministry, the Urban Affairs Ministry and Delhi Development Authority, must address the court in the case.

Google must face part of US consumer lawsuit over search dominance

GNS News Agency, Jan 20

Google has failed to persuade a judge in California to throw out a lawsuit accusing the technology giant of monopolising the online search market. San Francisco-based U.S. District Judge Rita Lin in a ruling on Thursday said consumers can proceed for now with allegations that the Alphabet unit's business practices hampered the development of high-quality rival search engines. The lawsuit filed in 2022, accused Google of unlawfully scheming with Apple to make Google the exclusive preloaded default search engine on the iPhone maker's devices. Lin dismissed other claims in the lawsuit related to Google's text advertising and said the plaintiffs could not include Google chief executive Sundar Pichai and the Alphabet unit's former chief Eric Schmidt as defendants. Google and attorneys for the 26 consumers who filed the lawsuit did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Google has denied any wrongdoing. Apple is not a defendant. Lin's latest ruling comes after the plaintiffs amended their complaint following a ruling in August against Google by a federal judge in Washington, D.C. In that decision, U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta found that Google's exclusive contracts with Apple and other companies helped it create an illegal monopoly over search engines.



Google countered that the D.C. judge's order, which the company is fighting, does not help the consumer plaintiffs in the California case. Google said the consumers' lawsuit rested on unfounded allegations. Lin said the plaintiffs had shown enough detail to contend that Google's exclusive contracts for default status have hurt market competition. At this stage in the case, Lin wrote, the consumers' claims support their conclusion that in a more competitive market "viable search alternatives would have emerged that offer greater privacy protections or are less clogged with ads."

Awami League mobilises against Yunus government



GNS News Agency, Jan 20

After months of maintaining a low profile, the deposed Awami League of Bangladesh has begun to mobilise both inside the country and in different parts of the world. The political party that ruled Bangladesh for over a decade and a half faced serious setbacks when Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Cabinet col-

leagues were deposed and fled the country in August. However, over the past few weeks, AL leaders have begun to challenge the interim government headed by Chief Adviser Mohammad Yunus. Earlier this week, the joint secretary of the Awami League, Mahbubul Alam Hanif, lashed out against the Yunus government following the recommendations made by the Constitution Reforms

Commission seeking fundamental changes to the state of Bangladesh. In a statement, the Awami League leader said in Dhaka that the "commission has recommended removal of secularism, socialism, and nationalism from the 1972 constitution and the recommendations are not acceptable at all." Former Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, Hasan Mahmud, is known to have

taken refuge in Belgium. and the All European Awami League has been holding multiple meetings in Belgium protesting against growing instances of mob justice and breakdown in police system and administration.

The main underground political party Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) that was in sync with the interim government in August and September is no longer extending unconditional support. On Sunday, General Secretary of BNP Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir echoed the concerns as enunciated by Mr. Hanif of the Awami League. Mr. Mirza Fakhrul said that the far reaching changes suggested by the reform commissions will not be accepted without all party consensus. The statement was made following an event on the 89th birth anniversary of founder of the BNP and late President Ziaur Rahman in Dhaka.

If Boeing deliveries were timely, more of our pilots would be flying, says Akasa Air CEO Vinay Dube



GNS News Agency, Jan 20

More pilots at Akasa Air would be flying today if Boeing's aircraft delivery were timely, the airline's founder and CEO Vinay Dube tells The Hindu. "Is it a reality that we were supposed to get more aircraft, and therefore we should have seen a larger percentage of pilots clocking flying hours or in training? Yes, absolutely," Mr. Dube told The Hindu in a telephonic conversation.

Out of 775 pilots "hired for flying" at Akasa Air, 60% of them are able to log flying hours. Most of the remaining 300 pilots will also be able to fly by 2025-end. Pilots were hired with a 18-24 month timeline in mind before they start flying, keeping in mind the long training footprint for the final batch of 200-300 pilots that joined the airline without a prior Boeing 737 experience, as well as six-months of notice period to be served by new hires at their previous organisation, Mr. Dube said countering allegations from a set of pilots that it was hoarding pilots.

The airline received three Boeing 737 MAX 8s in the

calendar year 2024, after adding a plane per month since it launched operations in August 2022 because of delays in deliveries from Boeing because of heightened regulatory oversight for it following a mid-air blowout of a door-plug on Alaskan Air in January 2024. Later, a 55-day strike by machinists too brought production to a halt. It will add its 27th aircraft next week. If the airline had continued to grow its fleet at the rate it did in 2022 and 2023, it would be closing the financial year 2025 with nearly 42 aircraft in its fleet. The top executive declined to provide the number of aircraft deliveries likely in calendar year 2025, but said that it was taking a conservative estimate of the deliveries originally planned for the year. Boeing has also conveyed to the airline that it will deliver some shortfalls from 2024 over the next 12 to 24 months, but Mr Dube said that they were not drawing their plans for the ongoing calendar year based on this promise.

The airline is also "100% current" on its pre-delivery payments to Boeing and won't be leasing any planes. In a bid to assuage employee concerns, Mr Dube said, "Akasa's strength is its employee-centric approach. We have made a commitment to them and we will stick by that commitment. We are a well capitalised airline, we have a strong strategy and we are here for the long term." But he refused to confirm or deny media reports that the consortium of family offices of Azim Premji and Ranjan Pai were in talks for acquiring a minority stake in the airline for USD 100 million. On the issue of rest and duty hours for pilots regarding which the DGCA held another meeting with airlines and pilot grouping last year ahead of Delhi High Court ultimatum for reaching a consensus, Mr Dube said "best practice solutions" for managing fatigue should be adopted.

AICTE sounds AI bugle for core engineering streams as well

GNS News Agency, Jan 20

With the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), the apex body for technical education in India, declaring 2025 as 'The Year of AI', various institutes are exploring ways in which AI can be introduced not just as separate courses but as an interdisciplinary part of the curriculum of core courses also. To enable this, AICTE released a circular outlining a mix of approaches and efforts that can be taken by its various affiliated technical institutes at all levels. Some of them are AI awareness weeks, AI student chapters, AI labs and awareness on AI career pathways. The AICTE has directed all relevant institutes to submit an implementation plan by January 31st addressing the same.

As a field of learning, artificial intelligence has been around for quite a while. However, AI has become somewhat of a buzzword with increasing popularity especially in the past two years since the launch of ChatGPT in late 2022. From the leaders of the state to scientists, educationists and industrialists are all looking to upskill and adapt to a world with AI. This has brought immense focus on technical education in this field. According to a report by salesforce.com, India ranks third in the Asia Pacific region in terms of AI-readiness.

Nearly 8 lakh CBSE 9th and 10th grade students signed up for AI modules in 2024. At the higher education level, there have been various avenues extending to online certification courses offered by various platforms as well as workshops, seminars and electives at institutes. AICTE's recent announcement pushes for more formalised incorporation of AI as a topic in engineering curriculums.

India's autonomous (not affiliated to AICTE) premier institutes have been leading in this field with institutes like IIT Kharagpur introducing specialised degree programs on AI. IIT Kanpur introduced an e-masters degree in AI and ML. IIT Madras also launched a BTech in AI and Data Analytics last year and it became the third most popular course offered by the institute. These courses focus on data analytics and data structures, linear algebra, basics of optimisations, deep learning fundamentals and so on. Similarly designed are the courses that are offered by various other institutes often under the computer science department. These courses are mostly about the introduction of AI itself, focusing on the intricacies of development and workings of an AI model.

On the other hand is the question of training students across core engineering branches in the ways that they can use AI in their respective fields. "It is important for us to remember that what we call AI today, like computers a few years ago, is more like a tool," said Assistant Professor Sourav Sarkar from Jadavpur University which has open electives on AI and ML offered by the Computer Science department to final year students from all departments. He explained, "AI has already been employed by several core engineering industries to solve real life industry-level problems. For example, AI is being used for load monitoring at a power plant. So the problem being solved is of mechanical engineering and the tool used is AI. This is different from what computer science students will do, which is, develop these tools. It is now up to us, through research experi-

ence, expertise and industrial-academic collaboration, to teach students how they can use AI in their field. Both of these things go hand in hand."

SRM Institute of Science and Technology, for example, offers a BTech in Mechanical Engineering with a specialisation in AI and ML. The syllabus is composed of topics like automation, soft computation, the trend of 'industry smartization' and other AI and ML applications in mechanical engineering fields like that of oil and gas in the energy sector. One of the first full-fledged BTech programs in India that focused entirely on AI and data science was started at IIT Guwahati under its Mehta Family School of Data Science and Artificial Intelligence. Head of the school, Prof. Ratnajit Bhattacharjee said, "Core faculty members of this centre belong to the various core engineering branches. For BTech students of other programs, we offer a minor course model as well as elective courses. Our first batch is graduating this year. By the second day of placements, almost all students had gotten placed." Speaking about incorporating AI into core branches, Prof Bhattacharjee said, "I specialise in wireless communication within the electrical engineering branch. Our 5G and 6G communications have immense scope for AI application. Resource allocation problem, frequency, power, beamforming problem are some examples of aspects where AI finds application. I am teaching this course on 'AI application in Wireless Communication' this semester and it is being attended by core BTech students as well as MTech and PhD students." Manufacturing, robotics and production that fall within the domain of mechanical engineering use AI, he added. Springer Nature has started a full-fledged research journal that focuses on AI in the field of civil engineering. Relevant courses can be developed focusing on construction planning, risk mitigation, predictive maintenance, transportation, geotechnical, structural and so on.

Collaborative effort/knowledge and resource sharing seem to be the key to enabling these steps. AICTE will conduct workshops and certification programs to enhance faculty skills in AI education. Students will gain practical experience through internships, projects, and mentorships facilitated by their colleges' partnerships with international companies. The highest-performing institutions will be honored with recognition as models for excellence in AI. Prof. Sarkar said, "It is important for departments and faculties to keep abreast of the latest research and technology in this dynamic field in order to translate that knowledge into our context for students. We have joint and collaborative projects with various industries so that also helps. Premier institutes will not face many challenges in this but it could prove to be a sure challenge for others." Cross-fertilisation of knowledge amongst colleagues across branches, keeping oneself updated with latest innovations through research journals and papers and deliberation with other universities are some of the factors that have helped IIT Guwahati incorporate AI in a way that speaks to core engineering branches, Prof Bhattacharjee stressed. He said, "We had associate faculties not only from our institute but also some universities from the U.S. like Purdue that worked together on this. We deliberated for a year to come up with a properly balanced curriculum."

Stalin writes to Union Education Minister, CMs of non-BJP-ruled States against draft UGC regulations

Strongly reiterating the Tamil Nadu government's stance against the Centre's draft UGC regulations, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Monday (January 20, 2025) wrote to Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, urging him to withdraw the rules (2024 and 2025). Mr. Stalin also wrote to his counterparts in non-BJP-ruled States, such as Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Punjab, Telangana, and West Bengal, calling upon them to adopt a resolution in their respective legislatures — as Tamil Nadu had done — against the draft UGC regulations. In his letter to Mr. Pradhan, Mr. Stalin listed out certain provisions in the 2024 regulations — the "Conduct of Entrance Examinations for UG & PG Admissions, Eligibility for M.Tech./M.E. Programs with a 4-Year (Arts/Science) Degree, Multiple Entry and Multiple Exit (MEME) System" — and expressed his reservations. In the draft UGC regulations, 2025, Mr. Stalin objected to provisions, including those over the appointment of "Non-Academicians as Vice-Chancellors, Exclusion of State Government from the Vice-Chancellor Search Committee, and Cross-Disciplinary Teachers." "We believe that many such provisions in the draft regulations may pose serious challenges to the academic integrity, autonomy, and inclusive development of State universities. We, therefore, request that the Minis-



try of Education may withdraw the draft Bills under discussion and review these concerns to better align with the needs of the diverse higher education landscape in India," Mr. Stalin contended. In his letter to Chief Ministers of non-BJP-ruled States, Mr. Stalin referred to the resolution adopted in the Tamil Nadu Assembly against the draft UGC regulations and said: "I strongly believe that it is essential for all States to take a similar stand. I request you to consider passing a resolution in your august Assembly on the same lines as ours." Mr. Stalin charged that these guidelines were a clear infringement of the rights of State governments and would have far-reaching consequences for the autonomy of our universities.

TikTok restores service to U.S. users; thanks Trump



GNS News Agency, Jan 20

TikTok restored service in the United States on Sunday (January 19, 2025) after briefly going dark, as a law banning the wildly popular app on national security grounds came into effect. TikTok credited President-elect Donald Trump, who retakes power on Monday, for making the reversal possible - though the outgoing administration of President Joe Biden had earlier said that it would not enforce any ban. The video-sharing app had shut down in the United States late on Saturday as a deadline for its Chinese owners ByteDance to sell its US subsidiary to non-Chinese buyers loomed.

TikTok thanked President-elect Donald Trump, who on Sunday said he planned to sign an executive order after his inauguration on Monday to give TikTok's China-based parent company more time to find an approved buyer before the popular video-sharing platform is subject to a permanent U.S. ban. He also called in a post on his Truth Social platform for the United States to take part-ownership in TikTok. The president-elect said he "would like the United States to have a 50% ownership position in a joint venture," arguing that the app's value could surge to "hundreds of billions of dollars - maybe trillions." In a statement posted on X following Trump's comments, TikTok said it "is in the process of restoring service." "We thank President Trump for providing the necessary clarity and assurance to our service providers that they will face no penalties providing TikTok to over 170 million Americans." TikTok goes dark in the U.S. ahead of ban.

"A law banning TikTok has been enacted in the U.S.," a pop-up message informed users who opened the TikTok app and tried to scroll through videos on Saturday night. "Unfortunately that means you can't use TikTok for now." The service interruption TikTok instituted hours early caught most users by surprise. Experts had said the law as written did not require TikTok to take down its platform, only for app stores to remove it. Current users had been expected to continue to have access to videos until the app stopped working due to a lack of updates. "The community on TikTok is like nothing else, so it's weird to not have that anymore," content creator Tiffany Watson, 20, said Sunday.

Ms. Watson said she had been in denial about the looming shutdown and with the space time on her hands plans to focus on bolstering her presence on Instagram and YouTube. "There are still people out there who want beauty content," Ms. Watson said. The company's app was removed late Saturday from prominent app stores, including the ones operated by Apple and Google. Apple told customers with its devices that it also took down other apps

developed by TikTok's China-based parent company, including one that some social media influencers had promoted as an alternative. In upholding the law on Friday, the Supreme Court decided that the risk to national security posed by TikTok's ties to China overcomes concerns about limiting speech by the app or its 170 million users in the United States.

Mr. Trump's plan to issue an executive order to spare TikTok on his first day in office reflected the ban's coincidental timing and the unusual mix of political considerations surrounding a social media platform that first gained popularity with often silly videos featuring dances and music clips. Despite its own part in getting the nationwide ban enacted, the Biden administration stressed in recent days that it did not intend to implement or enforce the ban before Mr. Trump takes office on Monday. During his first term in the White House, Mr. Trump issued executive orders in 2020 banning TikTok and the Chinese messaging app WeChat, moves that courts subsequently blocked. When momentum for a ban emerged in Congress last year, however, he opposed the legislation. Mr. Trump has since credited TikTok with helping him win support from young voters in last year's presidential election. "We are fortunate that President Trump has indicated that he will work with us on a solution to reinstate TikTok once he takes office. Please stay tuned," read the pop-up message the app's users now see under the headline, "Sorry, TikTok isn't available right now." The only option the message gives U.S. users is to close the app or click another option leading them to the platform's website. There, users see the same message and are given the option to download their data, an action that TikTok previously said may take days to process.

Apple said in a statement on its website that three TikTok apps and eight other ByteDance-created apps were no longer available in the U.S., while visitors to the country might have limited access. The removed apps included video-editing program CapCut, art editing program Hpic and Lemon8, a video-sharing app that includes some of the same features as TikTok. "Apple is obligated to follow the laws in the jurisdictions where it operates," the company said. Apple said the apps would remain on the devices of people who already had them installed, but in-app purchases and new subscriptions no longer were possible and that operating updates to iPhones and iPads might affect the apps' performance. In the nine months since Congress passed the sale-or-ban law, no clear buyers emerged, and ByteDance publicly insisted it would not sell TikTok. But Trump said he hoped his administration could facilitate a deal to "save" the app. TikTok CEO Shou Chew is expected to attend Mr. Trump's inauguration with a prime seating location. Mr. Chew posted a video late Saturday thanking Trump for his commitment to work with the company to keep the app available in the U.S. and taking a "strong stand for the First Amendment and against arbitrary censorship." Mr. Trump's choice for national security adviser, Michael Waltz, told CBS News on Sunday that the president-elect discussed TikTok going dark in the U.S. during a weekend call with Chinese President Xi Jinping "and they agreed to work together on this." On Saturday, artificial intelligence startup Perplexity AI submitted a proposal to ByteDance to create a new entity that merges Perplexity with TikTok's U.S. business, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Indonesia to push social media protections ahead of age-limit law

GNS News Agency, Jan 20

Indonesia will impose interim child protection guidelines on social media companies while the government carves out a law to set a minimum age for users of the platforms, a senior communications ministry official said on Wednesday. On Monday, communications minister Meutya Hafid said the government planned to issue a regulation to set a minimum age for social media users, after discussing the proposal to protect children online with President Prabowo Subianto. The plan follows Australia's decision to ban children under 16 from accessing social media, with fines for tech giants from Instagram and Facebook owner Meta to TikTok, owned by China's ByteDance, if they failed to prevent children from accessing their platforms. "What the minister means is that the government is headed for the direction of a stronger regulation on age limit, which is through the formation of a law," Alexander Sabar, a senior official at the communications and digital ministry, told Reuters. In the meantime, the government will issue a regulation for digital platforms, including social media companies, to adhere to child protection guidelines, he said, without providing details. "The emphasis for the government regulation is child protection -- how they are protected from physical, mental, or moral perils," he said, adding the regulation would not totally limit children's access to social media. Meta and TikTok did not respond to requests for comment. Nurmayanti, a 46-year-old mother of three who



goes by one name, said she agreed with the plan to curtail social media content, particularly content promoting pornography or discrimination. "They now can freely open social media so that is concerning to us as parents," she said, adding the law must be strict and clear. However, Anis Hidayah, a commissioner at Indonesia's main human rights body, said that limiting the internet for children was important but the government must be careful to not curb their right to information. Nearly 50% of children under 12 in tech-savvy Indonesia use the internet with some respondents of that age group using Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, according to a survey by the Indonesia internet service providers' association.

No difference between PM and Kejriwal, says Rahul as he targets Congress's INDIA ally

GNS News Agency, Jan 20

Addressing his first public event in Delhi ahead of the February 5 Assembly election, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday (January 14, 2025) trained his guns on Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, blaming him for "rising corruption and pollution" in the national capital. Speaking to supporters in Seelampur in north-east Delhi, which witnessed communal riots in February 2020 that left 53 people dead and over 700 injured, the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha compared Mr. Kejriwal with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and accused both of making "false promises" to the public. "Do you remember how Delhi was when Kejriwal came to power? He said he will remove corruption. But what has actually happened? Pollution and inflation have kept increasing," said the Congress leader at his 'Jai Babu, Jai Bhim, Jai Samvidhan' event. He added, "Just like Modiji, he keeps making false promises one after the other. There is no difference between them at all." This was his first election event in the Capital since the 2024 Lok Sabha poll, which INDIA bloc partners AAP and the Congress fought together in a 4-3 seat-sharing arrangement and where Mr. Gandhi had campaigned for candidates from both parties. However, AAP and the Congress are fighting the Assembly election separately. In response to Mr. Gandhi's comments, the AAP chief, in a post on X, said, "Today Rahul Gandhi came to Delhi. He abused me a lot. But I will not comment on his statements. His fight is to save the Congress. Mine is to



save the country." Mr. Gandhi said that if the Congress wins the election, a caste survey will be conducted in the national capital. He then dared the former Chief Minister to clarify his stand on the issue of caste census and the demand for the removal of the 50% cap on reservations. "See big dreams" "We want participation and respect for everyone. We want even the poorest of the poor, be it a Dalit person or someone from the backward classes, and people of all faiths to be able to see big dreams," he said. He held Mr. Kejriwal and Mr. Modi responsible for the rising inflation and alleged that the two were serving "a few billionaires." "Inflation is at its peak. Poor people are becoming poorer and the rich people are growing richer. [Industrialist Mukesh] Ambani and [Gautam] Adani do marketing for Narendra Modi.

'Never seen such recession': How global slump has led to an extended Diwali break for Surat diamond industry



GNS News Agency, Jan 20

SuratThe numbers have had a direct impact on Surat with eight out of every 10 diamonds in the world polished in the Gujarat city in around 5,000 small, medium and big diamond factories. For the second consecutive year, the Diwali vacation in the diamond factories has exceeded 21 days. With the industry facing an unprecedented recession, diamond traders have had to resort to all sorts of measures to cut their losses. One such step is to extend the Diwali holidays of diamond workers. Usually the diamond factories close for around three weeks during Diwali, but last year, after the Ukraine-Russia war, the industry workers got a 36-day vacation, the longest till then. "The global conditions have affected the diamond cutting and polishing industry of Surat. Going by convention, when Diwali vacation used to be of 21 days, the factories should have become functional on November 15. But keeping in mind the present conditions, we will fully start operating only from the first week of December," said Surat Diamond Association (SDA) president Jagdish Khunt.

This year, the sales of rough diamonds by De Beers, the leading global diamond company, has depleted from 5.6 million carats in 2020 to 2.1 million carats in 2024. The numbers have had a direct impact on Surat with eight out of every 10 diamonds in the world polished in the Gujarat city in around 5,000 small, medium and big diamond factories. The Surat diamond industry employs 6 lakh people. Over the last couple of years, with the industry taking a beating, many factories have laid off employees, mostly diamond cutters. According to Diamond Workers' Union, Gujarat, Vice president Bhavesh Tank, over 65 diamond workers had committed suicide in the current financial year. The indus-

try is, for the first time in its history, witnessing longer vacations. SDA president Khunt said, "The diamond factories will start opening next week onwards. We are hopeful that from the first week of December, a majority of the factories will start functioning. The diamond traders have started opening their shops but no major movement is being seen in the market." In a report submitted to Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council in Mumbai, New York-based independent diamond industry analyst and consultant Paul Zimmisky said De Beers' results fall in line with the company's production guidance, which has been cut twice in 2024 in response to market conditions. In July, full-year guidance was cut to 23-26 million carats from 26-29 million carats in April, which was itself previously cut from 29-32 million carats. On a global natural diamond production basis, Zimmisky forecasts output of just 105 million carats this year — the lowest since 1995. "The supply is only one side of the equation, but materially, cutting goods to market is clearly the right path for the industry at the moment. These proactive and aggressive measures should translate to significantly reduced industry-wide stocks as we head into 2025, which ideally will allow profitability, and importantly, confidence, to return to the trade," he said in his report.

While addressing industry stakeholders at GJEPC head office in Mumbai, he said, "While the present scenario may appear challenging, the long-term prospects are closely tied to global population growth, expanding middle classes, and increasing wealth even as a significant price recovery is not expected until at least

2025." Former president of SDA and an industry veteran, Dinesh Navadia, said, "The diamond industry was hit by global recession in 2008 as well but during that time, the demand for polished diamond was still there. However, the situation now is quite grave as there is not much demand. We have not seen such a recession in our life." He further said, "The major factors affecting the industry is the Russia-Ukraine war, followed by the Israel-Palestine war. Locally, the diamond factory owners are facing a lot of problems in running the factories and paying salaries to the diamond polishers. To overcome the financial burden, the factory owners have cut short production, and also given two to three days off per week to workers (as against the norm of one day off a week). We are hopeful that with the new US president-elect Donald Trump, the global factors affecting the industry may be resolved."

File list of cases under SP Panchkula where probe is pending for more than 3 years: HC

GNS News Agency, Jan 20

Mohinder Singh Sangwan, an ex-LAO has been booked in an FIR registered in July 2020, under sections of cheating, and corruption Act. He has argued in his plea that he has been falsely implicated. Mohinder Singh Sangwan, an ex-LAO has been booked in an FIR registered in July 2020, under sections of cheating, and corruption Act. He has argued in his plea that he has been falsely implicated. Hearing the plea for anticipatory bail of a former LAO (land acquisition officer) in a cheating and corruption case, the Punjab and Haryana High Court has sought a list of cases from SP Panchkula registered in different police stations under him, where the investigation of criminal cases is pending for the last more than three years.

The directions have been issued by the bench of Justice NS Shekhawat, while hearing the anticipatory bail plea of Mohinder Singh Sangwan, an ex-LAO, in the Haryana government. Sangwan has been booked in an FIR registered in July 2020, under sections of cheating, and corruption Act. He has argued in his plea that he has been falsely implicated. On the latest hearing of the plea, a bench of justice NS Shekhawat ordered: "The SP shall submit the complete details of all such cases: number of accused who are yet to be arrested and reason for delay in conducting the



investigation in such cases. He shall also indicate as to whether the proclaimed offender proceedings have been initiated against such accused, who have not been arrested for a sufficiently long time and whether any steps have been taken to attach their properties." Justice Shekhawat also directed the SP to explain the reasons for delay in arresting the accused in the present case and shall also explain the evidence, which has been collected by the investigating agency against Sangwan after the inordinate delay of four years. The notice was issued to the Haryana government for a reply on December 3. Sheenu Sura, Deputy Advocate General, Haryana, accepted notice on behalf of the government and asked for time to file a status report in the present case.

Chandigarh Mayor withdraws agenda to increase power cess

Chandigarh mcThe municipal tax in Punjab is being charged at the rate of 2 per cent on electricity consumption, which approximately comes out to be 16 paise per unit and in Haryana, it is being charged at 8 paise per unit. Power cess will not be hiked in Chandigarh, Mayor Kuldeep Kumar confirmed on Thursday. A day after the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation circulated an agenda to discuss the cess hike on power, the Union Territory (UT) Chandigarh mayor directed various officials to withdraw it. The agenda now stands withdrawn and will not be discussed in the upcoming meeting of the civic body.

While confirming the development to The Indian Express, Kumar said: "I have directed the commissioner to withdraw the agenda. No power cess shall be hiked". When quizzed on how the agenda arrived, the mayor said something it got "misinterpreted". On Wednesday, the agenda item was circulated to be brought for discussion in the House meeting of the municipal corporation (MC) scheduled for Saturday, in which the Chandigarh administrator will also be in attendance. "Since the MC is experiencing a financial crunch at present, it is exploring sources of revenue generation. It is, therefore, proposed that the municipal cess on electricity consumption can be enhanced from 10 paise per unit to 16 paise per unit on the pattern of Punjab state," the agenda item had stated. The MC has stated that it had imposed municipal cess on electricity consumption within its limits at 10 paise per unit in December 2019, which is contributing to an earning of Rs 15-16 crore per annum. With the hike to 16 paise per unit, the corporation was expecting an increase of the revenue to Rs 22 crore per annum. The



municipal tax in Punjab is being charged at the rate of 2 per cent on electricity consumption, which approximately comes out to be 16 paise per unit and in Haryana, it is being charged at 8 paise per unit. After reports of the cess hike, there was widespread criticism. The Congress too said it would oppose the agenda.

A few months ago even power tariff was hiked. A few months ago, the Joint Electricity Regulatory Commission (JERC) had approved a tariff hike of 9.4 per cent for the financial year 2024-2025 for electricity consumption in Chandigarh with effect from August 1. As per the mandate of the Electricity Act, 2003, the power tariff is regulated and determined by the JERC after taking into account the cost of power purchases, revenue realisation, and other expenditure to ensure the sustainability of power.

Christian event at Surat society stopped over conversion allegations; no proof, say police

GNS News Agency, Jan 20

Deputy Commissioner of Police, Zone, Rakesh Barot, along with Pal police staff reached the spot, talked to the attendees and found that they were only holding prayers. Deputy Commissioner of Police, Zone, Rakesh Barot, along with Pal police staff reached the spot, talked to the attendees and found that they were only holding prayers. An event organised by members of the Christian community at the club house of a housing society in Surat was brought to an abrupt stop on Wednesday evening after a few residents called up the police and accused the

organisers of carrying out religious conversions on the premises. However, police verified that the organisers had sought due permission from the management of the residential society and found the allegations baseless. The incident took place at a newly built high-rise in Pal area of Surat. Deputy Commissioner of Police, Zone, Rakesh Barot, along with Pal police staff reached the spot, talked to the attendees and found that they were only holding prayers. Police took statements of around 40 people. Pal police inspector K L Gadhe said, "The event was organised by advocate Yogesh Patel, who is the resident of the same apartment complex."

Decoding AAP's first list for Delhi polls: Headstart for new entrants, with some surprises thrown in



GNS News Agency, Jan 20

Popularity likely to translate into "winnability" — based on continuing surveys of candidates, including sitting MLAs as well as other potential faces — informed the AAP's decision, said party leaders, while the timing of the announcement aims to give them a head start over their rivals. Popularity likely to translate into "winnability" — based on continuing surveys of candidates, including sitting MLAs as well as other potential faces — informed the AAP's decision, said party leaders, while the timing of the announcement aims to give them a head start over their rivals. From seeking a first-mover advantage in constituencies where it has no representation, or deems itself weak, to securing as much of a share of the vote bank it has in common with its INDIA bloc ally Congress, the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) decision to declare candidates in 11 seats on Thursday was more than meets the eye, according to party insiders.

Popularity likely to translate into "winnability" — based on continuing surveys of candidates, including sitting MLAs as well as other potential faces — informed the AAP's decision, said party leaders, while the timing of the announcement aims to give them a head start over their rivals. In addition to concentrating on semi-rural seats in South Delhi, the AAP's picks have also been declared in trans-Yamuna con-

stituencies in East Delhi that is considered a BJP stronghold and the Congress's bastion of Northeast Delhi. "Seats such as Badarpur, Laxmi Nagar, Rohtas Nagar, Ghonda, Vishwas Nagar, and Karawal Nagar, for instance, are, or were, represented by the BJP. Chhatrapur had an AAP MLA who switched over to the BJP while the former Seemapuri MLA of the AAP moved over to the Congress. The announcement of the names will give our candidates adequate time to translate their local support into votes," said an AAP leader. "For those who have joined the AAP after having been with the BJP or the Congress for much of their careers and were part of the second-tier leadership there, more time to prepare can reduce the margin between them and their competitors — especially from the Congress who will replace them with new faces — and translate into a win thanks to their hold on the local organisation," the leader added. Six of the 11 candidates named were recently from the BJP and the Congress. According to an AAP source, there were some surprises in the first list. While it had been made clear that the Kirari and Seelampur MLAs would be replaced, the decision to drop Gulab Singh Yadav from Matiala came as a surprise to many in the party. A two-time MLA, Yadav won in 2020 by more than 28,000 votes. In 2022, a purported video of Yadav being manhandled by his party colleagues ahead of municipal polls was shared on several platforms. Denied a ticket from the seat that he has contested from thrice (2013, 2015 and 2020), the AAP is out of another rural leader after former minister Kailash Gahlot. A party insider, however, said Yadav was a senior party leader and the leadership might have other plans for him. "Several changes are needed within the party as there is strong anti-incumbency, especially in rural seats, which is where the AAP had performed well earlier. It is a course of concern for the party," said the AAP leader. Another leader, however, expressed surprise at the party's decision to repeat Sarita Singh and Deepak Singhla. Singh won Rohtas Nagar in 2015 but lost in 2020. Singhla contested in 2020 but lost to BJP's O P Sharma in Vishwas Nagar.

Held for killing girlfriend, African national found dead in jail

GNS News Agency, Jan 20

Kharar suicide, african student death, indian expressAt the mortuary where the body of the African student is kept. An African national Thursday allegedly died by suicide inside Sunny Enclave police post at Kharar after he was arrested for the alleged murder of his woman friend. A judicial inquiry was marked into the incident to find out whether the incident had happened due to the negligence of any police personnel. Sources said Saviour Chikpola, a national of Tanzania, was arrested by the police on Wednesday after it was established that he had killed his woman friend Nuru Maria, from Zambia. Her body was found in her rented apartment in Crown City, Kharar, on November 14.

The preliminary investigation suggested that she had died naturally but her post-mortem report on November 18 revealed injuries to her throat which indicated that she was murdered. Police launched an investigation on the basis of the post-mortem report and zeroed in on Saviour Chikpola. On Wednesday, the Kharar (city) police booked Chikpola under Section 103 (murder) of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS) and arrested him. Chikpola was lodged in the lock-up in Sunny Enclave police post where he committed suicide. Both friends, Chikpola and Nuru Maria were first-



year students of a private university at Ghruan. The motive of the murder was not clear yet. SP (Rural) Manpreet Singh told The Indian Express that they were looking into the matter. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Deepak Parekh said that they were investigating why Chikpola killed Maria. The SSP added that the preliminary investigation suggested that Maria was not happy with Chikpola's friendship with other women. "We are conducting further investigation and soon find the reason for the crime," the SSP added.

Bogus vacancies created to help teachers join govt schools near home, one sacked



GNS News Agency, Jan 20

An inquiry conducted by the Punjab education department into the alleged discrepancies in the station allotment of newly recruited master cadre teachers has found that bogus vacancies were created to facilitate some teachers to join the schools close to their homes. Following a preliminary inquiry, the director general of school education (DGSE) Thursday issued an order terminating the services of Rajvir, deputy manager, Management Information System (MIS), who handled the backend system of e-Punjab portal, an online platform of state's school education department. The order issued by DGSE office states that as per the preliminary inquiry, conducted by Aminder Kaur Brar, director, State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), the said employee was "found guilty" of creating bogus vacancies in schools which were later filled by the teachers whose homes were in vicinity. The order undersigned by Parminder Pal Singh, Additional Secretary, education department cum officiating DGSE, reads that several discrepancies were reported in the online station allotments for 4,161 and 598 master cadre teachers (the newly recruited teachers for grade 6 to 10). After the dis-

crepancies were reported, an inquiry was marked to the director, SCERT. "According to the probe report, new vacancies on e-Punjab portal were created in connivance with MIS wing employees, and the teachers were made to join those stations which were near to their homes," states the order. The order adds that Rajvir, deputy manager, MIS "has been found guilty" for the irregularities which were reported in the entire process, and he was asked for an explanation. However, his reply was found "unsatisfactory", the order states. "Hence, his services are being terminated with immediate effect," the order concludes. Talking to the Indian Express, Additional Secretary Parminder Pal Singh said: "The action against the said employee has been taken as per the findings of the preliminary report which indicates that data of vacancies was tampered at the backend to which only MIS team has the access. Other aspects will be probed further."

Meanwhile, teachers said that this was "just the tip of an iceberg" and a "deeper probe was required" to find other links behind the alleged scam. "This also indicates that teachers who were favored might have bribed some employees. Just one person cannot be made a scapegoat as new vacancies are never created without the approval of the finance department. Widespread discrepancies happened during the station allotment for both newly recruited and promoted teachers. For instance, a school in a village having several vacancies is still lacking teachers. How did this happen?" Vikram Dev, state president, Democratic Teachers Front (DTF) said: "Those who were favored with such practices also need to be identified and action should be taken against them. The department has never adopted a transparent approach when it comes to declaring vacancies during promotions, transfers and new recruitments. This is what leads to such practices. It is clear that employees were apparently bribed to get choice postings."

Gurgaon man points gun at 12-year-old boy over scuffle with his son, arrested

A 35-year-old man was arrested for allegedly pointing a gun at a 12-year-old boy at a park in a residential society in Gurgaon earlier this week. According to the Gurgaon police, the incident took place at 5 pm on Tuesday in DLF Phase 3 when the child of the accused and the victim had a scuffle at the society's park. "The accused left his house with the pistol and entered the park before pointing it at the boy after coming to know of the fight. His wife, who saw him leave with the pistol, ran behind him, and asked him to go home," said a police officer. The incident was captured on CCTV footage and surfaced on social media. In the video, the man can be seen walking to the park as his wife follows him. She is seen restraining him and pushing him out of the child's way. The police said the man was arrested after the



boy's father lodged a complaint. "We arrested him, but as it was a bailable offence, he was released on bail."

U.N. investigative team says Syria's new authorities 'very receptive' to probe of Assad war crimes



GNS News Agency, Jan 20

The U.N. organization assisting in investigating the most serious crimes in Syria said Monday (December 23, 2024) the country's new authorities were "very receptive" to its request for cooperation during a just-concluded visit to Damascus, and it is preparing to deploy. The visit led by Robert Petit, head of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for Syria, was the first since the organization was established by the U.N. General Assembly in 2016. It was created to assist in evidence-gathering and prosecution of individuals responsible for possible war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide since Syria's civil war began in 2011. Mr. Petit highlighted the urgency of preserving documents and other evidence before it is lost. Since the rebel overthrow of Syria's President Bashar Assad and the rebel opening of prisons and detention facilities there have been rising demands from Syrians for the prosecution of those responsible for atrocities and

killings while he was in power. "The fall of the Assad rule is a significant opportunity for us to fulfill our mandate on the ground," Mr. Petit said. "Time is running out. There is a small window of opportunity to secure these sites and the material they hold." U.N. associate spokesperson Stephane Tremblay said Monday (December 23, 2024) the investigative team "is preparing for an operational deployment as early as possible and as soon as it is authorized to conduct activities on Syrian soil." The spokesperson for the organisation, known as the IIMM, who was on the trip with Mr. Petit, went further, telling The Associated Press: "We are preparing to deploy on the expectation that we will get authorization." "The representatives from the caretaker authorities were very receptive to our request for cooperation and are aware of the scale of the task ahead," the spokesperson said, speaking on condition of not being named. "They emphasized that they will need expertise to help safeguard the newly accessible documentation." The IIMM did not disclose which officials in the new government it met with or the site that Mr. Petit visited afterward. "Even at one facility," Mr. Petit said, "the mountains of government documentation reveal the chilling efficiency of systemizing the regime's atrocity crimes." He said that a collective effort by Syrians, civil society organizations and international partners will be needed, as a priority, "to preserve evidence of the crimes committed, avoid duplication, and ensure that all victims are inclusively represented in the pursuit of justice." In June 2023, the 193-member General Assembly also established an Independent Institution of Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic to clarify the fate and whereabouts of more than 1,30,000 people missing as a result of the conflict.

U.S. NSA Sullivan and Yunus express commitment to protect human rights in Bangladesh

GNS News Agency, Jan 20

Amid growing outrage here about the large-scale attack on minority Hindus and their places of worship in Bangladesh, U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Monday (December 23, 2024) spoke with the Bangladesh interim government's Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus and both leaders expressed commitment to protect human rights in the troubled South Asian nation. "Both leaders expressed their commitment to respecting and protecting the human rights of all people, regardless of religion," the White House said in a readout of the call between Mr. Sullivan and Mr. Yunus. The call comes less than a month before the Biden administration passes on the power to Donald Trump, who would be sworn in as the 47th President of the United States on January 20 next year.

This comes days after Indian American Democratic Congressman Shri Thanedar urged the White House to strongly raise the issue of killing of Hindus and destruction of their temples in Bangladesh with the head of the country's interim government. "The United States has a storied history of championing the oppressed and this issue should be no different. When we receive a global call for help, we must respond appropriately as the world's bellwether of human rights. We must urge Prime Minister Muhammad Yunus to fulfill his promise of restoring peace and rebuilding the nation on principles of equality and justice," Mr. Thanedar told reporters at the footsteps of the U.S. Capitol last week. Mr. Sullivan, during the call, thanked Mr. Yunus for his leadership of Bangladesh during a challenging period, the White House said. "Sullivan re-iterated the United States' support for a prosperous, stable, and democratic



Bangladesh, and offered the United States' continued support in meeting the challenges Bangladesh faces," said the readout of the call. Hindu Action said that disturbing reports of brutal attacks against the Hindus continue to surface, particularly over the past two weeks, as desperate pleas for help pour in from those affected on the ground. Hindu Action executive director Utsav Chakrabarti said what has happened in the last five and half months in Bangladesh clearly reflects that "Muhammad Yunus has failed to contain" his allies in the Jamaat-e-Islami who are now running around the country, burning temples, killing people, raping women and indulging in atrocities against priests and leaders from the Hindu community by incarcerating them. "It is incumbent upon our current administration as well as the upcoming administration to put sanctions on Bangladesh, as Congressman Thanedar has pointed out," Mr. Chakrabarti said. "It is important that we clearly chart out a path for safe autonomous zones for the Hindus, all 15 million of them, along with the Buddhists and Christians within the boundaries of Bangladesh," he added.

South Korea's Opposition party vows to impeach acting President Han Duck-soo

GNS News Agency, Jan 20

South Korea's main opposition party said on Tuesday (December 24, 2024) it will seek to impeach acting leader Mr. Han Duck-soo after he missed an opposition-set deadline to approve independent investigations into impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol and his wife. If realised, Mr. Han's impeachment would further deepen South Korea's political tumult and worries by neighbouring countries caused by Mr. Yoon's stunning December 3 (2024) martial law declaration and ensuing impeachment. Since Yoon's impeachment, Mr. Han, the country's No. 2 official, has taken over presidential powers and duties. If he's impeached too, the Finance Minister is next in line.

The main liberal opposition Democratic Party, which holds a majority in Parliament, has slammed Mr. Han for vetoing several opposition-sponsored bills, including a controversial agriculture bill. It also urged Mr. Han to quickly appoint justices to vacant seats on the Constitutional Court, which is reviewing Mr. Yoon's impeachment and will determine whether to dismiss or reinstate him. Filling the Court's three empty posts could make conviction more likely, as it requires the support of six of the Court's nine possible members. The Democratic Party also demanded that Mr. Han approve bills calling for the appointment of special prosecutors to investigate Mr. Yoon for rebellion over his martial law decree and his wife for corruption and other allegations by Tuesday (Dec. 24). But Mr. Han didn't do so during Tuesday's Cabinet Council meeting, calling for the ruling and opposition parties to negotiate.

The Democratic Party floor leader, Mr. Park Chan-dae, responded that there was no room for negotiations about a Mr. Yoon investigation and that his party would begin steps toward an impeachment immediately. "We've clearly warned that it's totally up to Prime Minister Han Duck-soo whether he would go down in history as a disgraceful figure as a puppet of rebellion plot leader Yoon Suk Yeol or a public servant that has faithfully carried out the orders by the public," Mr. Park told a televised party meeting. Korean prosecutors and other officials are separately probing whether Mr. Yoon committed rebellion and abuse of power, but he's ignored requests by investigative agencies to appear for questioning and allow searches of his office. Mr. Yoon's Defence Minister, Police Chief, and several other senior Military Commanders have already been arrested over the deployment of troops and police officers to the National Assembly, which prompted a dramatic standoff that ended when lawmakers managed to enter the chamber and voted unanimously to overrule Mr. Yoon's decree.

The governing People Power Party said that the opposition's impeachment threats are interfering with Mr. Han's "legitimate exercise of authority." Floor leader Mr. Kwon Seong-dong, a Mr. Yoon loyalist, said the Democratic Party's "politics of intimidation have reached their



peak." An impeachment vote would face legal ambiguities. Most Korean officials can be impeached with a simple majority of parliament, but impeaching the presidents takes two-thirds. The rival parties differ on which standard would apply to an acting president. The Democratic Party controls 170 of the National Assembly's 300 seats, so it would need support from members of other parties including Mr. Yoon's own to get a two-thirds majority. The Constitutional Court has up to six months to determine Mr. Yoon's fate. If he's thrown off office, a National election to find his successor must take place within two months.

Vysya Limelight Awards for women 2024 presented

Hyderabad: The women achievers of the Vysya community hand-picked for their professional excellence were presented with the Vysya Limelight Awards for Women 2024 at a glittering function in HICC here on Monday night. The award recipients included Anuradha Vobbilisetty, a senior advocate at Azza Ebrahim Hussain Almulalla Advocate and Legal Consultants in Dubai and Madhu Krishna, the first lady pilot from Arya Vysya community, Aruna Subbarao, a melody maker, Sunaina Badam, comedienne and Deepthi Matta, a production manager. Anuradha born in Andhra Pradesh moved to Dubai and has been practising law, saving the lives of 14 Indians by getting their death sentence commuted to life imprisonment. Madhu Krishna hailing from Mysore is now a captain with Air India Express. She has 20 years of experience. Deepthi Matta is the first female production executive in the film industry in South India and worked on more than 60 films. The other awardees include Dr. Sirisha Bysani, Manufacturer of the Year; Nagaruchika Kiran, Startup of the Year, Shruthi Karthik, Businesswoman of the Year - NRI, Dubai, UAE; Vani Nagendra, Singer of the Year; Chaitanya Jaini, Burocrat of the Year; Padamaja Rani K, Government Official of the Year; Sushmitha Vuppla,

Export curbs not to affect farmers; tomato, onion prices to stabilise soon: Pralhad Joshi



GNS News Agency, Jan 20

On National Consumer Day, the Union Food Consumer Affairs Ministry will launch Jago Grahak Jago App, Jagriti App, and Jagriti Dashboard to protect consumers from the dark patterns on the Internet. Talking to The Hindu, Union Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said the government's efforts are to balance between the interests of consumers and producers. Mr. Joshi, also responded to a recent statement by Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on enhancing minimum support price, and said interest of consumers is served when there is abundant availability of food commodities produced by the farmers. On the ban on exports on certain agricultural commodities, the Minister said it will not be advisable for India to gamble on international trade when it comes to food security. Domestic requirements have to be prioritised over trade gains, he said.

On the National Consumer Day on December 24 (Tuesday), the Union Food and Consumer Affairs Ministry will launch Jago Grahak Jago App, Jagriti App and Jagriti Dashboard to protect consumers from the dark patterns on the Internet. About 13 e-commerce companies will sign a voluntary commitment for ensuring consumer safety on the day. Union Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi says the government's efforts are to balance between the interests of both the consumers and the producers. In an interview to The Hindu, Mr. Joshi responded to a recent statement on enhancing minimum support price (MSP) from Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar, and said interest of consumers is served when there is abundant availability of food commodities produced by the farmers. On the ban on export of certain agricultural commodities, the Minister says it will not be advisable for India to gamble on international trade when it comes to food security. The situation of the increase in the prices of tomatoes and onions has now normalised with good weather condition, Mr. Joshi claims, and adds that potato prices have been at elevated levels this year due to slightly lower production. Excerpts: The consumer-producer balance has been a long-debated topic. Recently Vice-President Mr. Dhankhar opined that enhancing MSP will result in overall improvement of the society, benefiting consumers too. How do you respond to this? There is no fundamental conflict between the interest of farmers and consumers, and the government is committed to protecting both farmers and consumers. The MSP has been increased year after year by the government. For example, if we look at the rate of increase in MSP during last 10 years: Gram/Chana from ₹3,100 per quintal in 2013-14 to ₹5,650

per quintal in 2024-25 (82%); Tur from ₹4,300 per quintal in 2013-14 to ₹7,550 per quintal in 2024-25 (76%); Masur from ₹2,950 per quintal in 2013-14 to ₹6,700 per quintal in 2024-25 (127%). The interest of consumers is served when there is abundant availability of food commodities produced by the farmers. Increasing prices of tomato, potato and onions have remained a worry for consumers. How do you assess the steps taken to curb inflation in the last six months.

The onion buffer has played an important role in making onions available during lean months of September to November. Retail sale at ₹35 per kilogram in major consumption centres has provided the consumers at a highly affordable price. Bulk transportation of onions by rail wagons this year has been a game changer. Over 11,000 MT of onions have been transported by 14 trains to five cities, viz., Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Guwahati and Lucknow. The prices of onion and tomato have come down in recent weeks. Kharif onion sowing and production are reported to be normal. In case of tomato, prolonged monsoon rains have led to crop damage and high perishability, leading to high prices during October. The situation has now normalised with good weather condition. Potato prices have been at elevated levels this year due to slightly lower production. Now we are entering the harvest season for potato which will continue till March 2025. Sowing progress has so far been normal. Export curbs are another issue. While one section favours export curbs to ensure domestic availability and reasonable domestic prices, another argument is that Indian farmers and traders should get the benefit of global trade disruptions due to Ukraine situation. How do you see this? For a large country like India, it will not be advisable to gamble on international trade when it comes to food security. Therefore, domestic requirement has to be prioritised over trade gains. Restrictions imposed on exports in certain agricultural crops, in recent past, have not adversely impacted Indian farmers in real sense because of higher domestic prices and the procurement of these crops at the MSP.

The Centre is issuing a series of Quality Control Orders (QCOs) in several goods and services. How do you assess these QCOs impact on exports?

This has been beneficial in both imports and exports. We didn't have a standard for many products. We brought standardisation for 769 products. QCOs are issued by various Ministries/Departments (Regulators) of the Central government under the provisions of the BIS Act, 2016. BIS acts as the certification and enforcement authority for implementing these QCOs. To minimise disruptions, sufficient time is provided by the regulators to manufacturers for smooth implementation of QCOs. If concerns arise regarding the impact of QCOs on production of certain products, such matters are dealt with by the respective regulators whenever industry raises their concerns and makes representations before the regulators concerned. The regulators are conducting stakeholder consultations in coordination with the BIS to address these issues and may take appropriate measures, including extensions or modifications to the implementation timeline, to prevent potential supply gaps and ensure a balanced approach. It may be mentioned here that timelines have been extended in most of the QCOs based on the request from stakeholders.

How to tax popcorn? GST council's formula sparks outrage

The GST Council's move to tax popcorn differently based on its sugar or spice content has drawn criticism from the opposition and sparked social media outrage, with two former government economic advisers questioning the tax system introduced in 2017. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council, chaired by the Finance Minister and including State representatives, announced on Saturday (December 21, 2024) that non-branded popcorn mixed with salt and spices would attract a 5% GST, pre-packaged and branded popcorn 12%, and caramel popcorn, categorised as a sugar confectionery, 18%. The differential rates come into effect immediately, ending confusion over rates as popcorn was taxed differently across States. Explaining the rationale behind the decision to tax caramel popcorn at 18%, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that any product with added sugar is taxed differently.

The announcement, however, sparked a social media storm on Sunday (December 22, 2024), with opposition politicians, economists and supporters of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government criticising the move and others creating memes and poking fun at it. "Complexity is a bureaucrat's delight and citizens' nightmare," India's previous Chief Economic Adviser K.V. Subramanian wrote on X. He questioned the rationale of the decision he said will contribute minimally to tax revenues, but inconvenience citizens. His predecessor, Arvind Subramanian, said "the folly is compounded because instead of at least moving in the direction of simplicity we are veering to greater complexity, difficulty of enforcement and just irrationality".

One widely circulated post on X showed an image of a branded "salt caramel" popcorn packet and said how it would send the taxman into a tizzy calculating the tax rate on it. Jairam Ramesh, leader and spokesman of the Congress party, said the "absurdity of three different tax slabs



for popcorn under GST ... only brings to light a deeper issue that the growing complexity of a system that was supposed to be a Good and Simple Tax'. A Finance Ministry spokesperson and the GST Council Secretariat did not respond to requests for comment on the controversy. Gopal Krishna Agarwal, the BJP's spokesman on economic affairs, said the GST Council "clarification" on how popcorn is to be taxed was in reply to a specific query on the issue. "It is normal when basic ingredients are same but finished products attract different GST rates," he said, adding that GST has become a very efficient and effective ecosystem for enhanced and transparent tax compliance through a corruption-free and smooth process.

The GST system has run into similar controversies for its tax classifications in the past and faced questions although not on this scale. Previous controversies have involved taxing chapatis or unleavened Indian flatbread differently from layered flatbreads, different rates for curd and yogurt, and cream bun versus bun and cream served separately.

Rooppur nuclear power project is for well-being of people of Bangladesh: Rosatom

Russian nuclear major Rosatom on Tuesday (December 24, 2024) said the Bangladesh anti-graft commission's remarks are "an attempt to discredit" the Rooppur nuclear power project. In a statement issued to the media, Rosatom reiterated that the \$2.65 billion Rooppur project is transparent and that it is ready to defend the case in a court of law. "Rosatom is committed to a policy of openness and the principle of combating corruption in all its projects and maintains a transparent procurement system. External audits regularly confirm the openness of the business processes of the project. Rosatom State Corporation is ready to defend its interests and reputation in court," Rosatom said in a statement sent to The Hindu. The statement from Rosatom came a day after the Anti-Corruption Commission of Bangladesh came out with a statement alleging that deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her family members including her niece the UK MP Tulip Siddiq laundered around \$900 million to offshore outfits in Malaysia. The commission cited an internal investigative report and stated that it has discovered around \$5 billion "irregularities" in the Rooppur nuclear power project that has been under the works since 2011. Rosatom described the anti-corruption



oufit of Bangladesh as "provocative" and said, "We consider false statements in the media as an attempt to discredit the Rooppur NPP project, which is being implemented to solve the country's energy supply problems and is aimed at improving the well-being of the people of Bangladesh." had reported earlier, that Tulip Siddiq who is a Labour MP in the United Kingdom and has been facing scrutiny in the UK since the fall of the government of her aunt Sheikh Hasina, was involved in an elaborate scheme to launder money that involved her paternal uncle Tarique Ahmed Siddique.

S&P Global revises outlook on Adani Electricity, Adani Port to 'negative'



Two days after US Prosecutors accused Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani and seven others of alleged \$265 million bribery schemes, global rating agency S&P Global on Friday revised the outlook on Adani Electricity and Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd. (Adani Ports) to "negative". The rating agency affirmed its "BBB-" ratings on both the companies. Adani Green Energy Ltd. Restricted Group 2's (AGEL RG2), a subsidiary of Adani Green Energy Limited (AGEL), outlook has also been revised to negative, S&P Global said. On Wednesday, prosecutors in New York accused Gautam Adani, his nephew Sagar Adani and six others for allegedly offering Rs 2,029 crore (US \$265 million) in bribes to Indian government officials for securing "lucrative solar energy supply contracts" with state electricity distribution companies. "Because of the potential impact across the wider Adani Group, we revised to negative the outlook on Adani Electricity Mumbai Ltd. (Adani Electricity) and Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd. (Adani

Ports). We also affirmed our 'BBB-' ratings on these entities," the rating agency said.

Project finance entity Adani Green Energy Ltd. Restricted Group 2 (AGEL RG2) is a subsidiary of Adani Green Energy Limited (AGEL), the entity linked to the allegations. Although it is ring fenced from the parent, the rating agency said it has revised to negative the outlook on AGEL RG2 and affirmed its 'BB-' issue rating. On Thursday, Adani Green Energy called off its \$600 million bond offering, after the US indictment of promoter Gautam Adani and others in the bribery case. Adani Green Energy had planned to use the bond sale's proceeds to repay foreign-currency loans. "The negative outlook on these entities indicates that, in our view, their cash flows could be materially affected if their funding access weakens, their funding costs rise significantly, or the allegations are proven, in addition to our assessment of their governance and business profiles," S&P Global said. It said that a US indictment of three board representatives of an unrated Adani group entity could affect investor confidence in other Adani group entities (because the founder is on the board of multiple entities within the group), thereby potentially impairing their funding access and increasing their funding costs. The alleged bribery case could further raise questions regarding the management and governance of various Adani group entities, it said. "We believe domestic, as well as some international banks and bond market investors, look at Adani entities as a group, and could set group limits on their exposure. This may affect the funding of rated entities," the rating agency said. S&P warned that if allegations of illegal activities or misleading statements prove true, it could assess the group's governance more negatively.

RBI, Maldives Monetary Authority sign pact to promote use of local currencies

RBI Maldives India The MoU was signed by Governor of Reserve Bank of India Shaktikanta Das (right) and Governor of Maldives Monetary Authority Ahmed Munawar. The RBI and the Maldives Monetary Authority on Thursday signed an agreement in Mumbai for establishing a framework to promote the use of local currencies — the Indian Rupee and the Maldivian Rufiyaa (MVR) for cross-border transactions.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by Governor of Reserve Bank of India Shaktikanta Das and Governor of Maldives Monetary Authority Ahmed Munawar. "The MoU encourages the use of INR and MVR in current account transactions, permissible capital account transactions and any other economic and financial trans-

actions as agreed upon by both countries," the RBI said in a statement. This framework would enable exporters and importers to invoice and settle in their respective domestic currencies, which in turn would enable the development of trading in the INR-MVR pair in foreign exchange market. Local currency use to optimise costs: RBI Use of local currencies would optimise costs and settlement time for transactions, the RBI added. "This collaboration marks a key milestone in strengthening bilateral cooperation between RBI and MMA," it said. Use of local currencies in bilateral transactions will eventually contribute to promoting trade between India and Maldives as well as deepen financial integration and strengthen the economic relations between India and Maldives, India's central bank said.

Two Trump executive orders, 4 years apart, and a reversal of TikTok's fortunes

A saga of two executive orders captures, in part, the extremes that US President-elect Donald Trump could traverse on exactly the same subject. In August 2020, then President Trump invoked his emergency economic powers to issue an executive order that imposed broad sanctions against TikTok on national security grounds. Fast forward to January 19, 2025 and Trump, now President-elect, and a day before taking charge, said that he plans to issue an executive order that would give TikTok's China-based parent company ByteDance more time to find an approved buyer before the popular video-sharing platform was subject to a permanent US ban. Trump, the initiator of all of TikTok's troubles in the US less than five years ago, is now the potential saviour.

The Ban The short-video sharing platform used by over 160 million Americans began restoring its services on Sunday after Trump said he would revive the app's access in the US when he returns to power Monday. "Frankly, we have no choice. We have to save it," Trump said at a rally on Sunday, hours before his inauguration. In a message to users hours before the rally, TikTok said: "As a result of President Trump's efforts, TikTok is back in the US".

Earlier on Sunday, Trump had announced the decision in a post on his Truth Social account as millions of TikTok users in America awoke to discover they could no longer access the TikTok app or the platform. Google and Apple removed the app from their digital stores to comply with a US federal law that required them to do so if TikTok parent company ByteDance did not sell its American operation to an approved buyer by Sunday. Triggered by Trump's 2020 executive order, and after multiple twists and turns, US legislators enacted this federal law that required ByteDance to sever ties with the platform's American operations by Sunday citing national security concerns posed by the app's Chinese origins. This was passed with wide bipartisan support in April, and President Joe Biden then went on to sign it. ByteDance sued citing the rights accorded under the US First Amendment. The American Supreme Court upheld the law on Friday.

The TikTok ban was in many ways an unprecedented step. The US has never banned a major social media platform and this move did mark a clear break from the past. Web searches for the word "VPN" surged in the minutes after American users struggled to access TikTok, accord-

ing to Google Trends quoted by news agency Reuters. This also comes at a particularly tense moment in US-China relations, given Trump's public threats of higher tariffs on China. Earlier, on Friday, the Chinese Embassy in Washington accused the US of using unfair state power to suppress TikTok. "China will take all necessary measures to resolutely safeguard its legitimate rights and interests," a spokesperson said.

In the days running up to his inauguration, Trump has, however, struck a discernibly conciliatory tone on bilateral relations with China and indicated that he wants to have more direct contact with Chinese leaders. Significantly, Beijing is sending its Vice-President, Han Zheng, to Trump's inauguration on Monday — the first time a senior Chinese leader will witness a US president taking oath. Foreign leaders traditionally do not attend US presidential inaugurations. TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew also plans to attend the inauguration, Reuters said, quoting a source. After Trump's August 2020 executive order, a deal structured as a partnership that would have included both Oracle and Walmart taking stakes in Tik Tok was formulated, but it subsequently fell through. This time around, media reports say Beijing has held talks about selling TikTok's US operations to Trump ally Elon Musk, though the company has denied that. Search engine startup Perplexity AI submitted a bid on Saturday to ByteDance for Perplexity to merge with TikTok US, Reuters said, quoting a source. Privately held ByteDance is about 60 per cent owned by institutional investors that include General Atlantic and BlackRock, while its founders and employees own 20 per cent each.



Shaping aluminium industry's future

India's aluminium industry represents a critical intersection of economic potential, technological innovation and sustainable development. As a strategic metal with widespread applications, aluminium plays a pivotal role in India's industrial ecosystem, reflecting the nation's economic ambitions and technological capabilities. The domestic market for aluminium in India is a testament to the country's rapid industrial transformation. Beyond the sectors of power, construction, transportation and packaging, aluminium has become integral to emerging technological domains. The metal's unique properties — lightweight nature, corrosion resistance and excellent conductivity — make it indispensable in cutting-edge industries ranging from renewable energy infrastructure to advanced electronics and smart city development. The industry's economic narrative is particularly compelling when examined through the lens of technological evolution. Historically confined to basic applications like utensils and electrical wiring, the Indian aluminium sector has undergone a remarkable metamorphosis. Today, it is pushing boundaries in sophisticated sectors such as aerospace, precision engineering, automotive manufacturing and defence technologies. This diversification represents more than just economic expansion; it signifies India's growing technological sophistication and global

competitiveness. Employment generation remains a critical aspect of the aluminium industry's broader social impact. While direct employment stands at over one million people, the indirect employment ecosystem is exponentially larger. A comprehensive study by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) suggests that each direct job in aluminium production creates approximately 2.5 to 3 additional jobs in related sectors. Rural and resource-rich regions particularly benefit, with aluminium production creating cascading economic opportunities in mining communities, transportation networks, and ancillary industries. Global market dynamics present both challenges and opportunities. While China remains the dominant global producer, recent geopolitical tensions and supply chain disruptions have created openings for alternative production centres like India. The Covid-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in global manufacturing supply chains, prompting many multinational corporations to seek more diversified aluminium sourcing strategies. However, the challenges confronting the industry are multifaceted and interconnected. Production cost dynamics represent a complex puzzle of economic variables. High taxation, elevated interest rates, substantial power tariffs and coal availability constraints create a challenging operational environment.

A morning habit Tabu wishes to adopt



Tabu epitomises grace and all things beautiful on and off the screen. But it turns out there are still some things on her wishlist. So, when asked about a habit she would like to adopt, she said, "Exercising regularly and waking up at 5 a.m. I don't know why 5 a.m., though." The Crew actor also shared that she often wonders how everyone else sleeps well on planes while she doesn't. What about her nighttime routine? "I go and say goodnight to my pet. I cuddle him, wake him up from his sleep, and pinch his cheek. And then he growls at me," Tabu told The Nod. If waking up early is on your list, too, here's a ready reckoner.

Experts validate that having and following a morning

routine helps. "It is of utmost importance to have a consistent sleep schedule — a set time to go to bed. This ensures we get adequate sleep and wake up on time. Getting up early also helps to have a meaningful morning. This can only happen if we sleep early," Dr Sudhir Kumar, consultant neurologist, Apollo Hospitals, Hyderabad, said. While the 5 AM club has come to be in the reckoning due to author Robin Sharma's namesake bestseller, following a morning routine is said to have far-reaching benefits for one. "I would redefine the '5 AM Club' as the most important habit for self-care and the first step towards self-love, which everyone should take," said Saurabh Bothra, yoga trainer and CEO, Habuild. According to Bothra, early mornings offer a quiet and focused time to contribute to our physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

What can help you?

Consistency is the key to building and maintaining habits. Ease into a morning routine by setting your alarm 30 minutes earlier each week and see how your body responds to the change. During this time, you can exercise, journal, and learn something new daily. However, you don't necessarily have to wake up at 5 am. "The goal here is to have a quiet time reserved only for yourself. And it would be best if you were serious about using this time for your growth," said Bothra.

This is what happens to the body when you eat a protein bar every day

Protein bars have become a popular snack choice for those seeking a quick and convenient source of nutrition, especially among fitness enthusiasts and busy professionals. Marketed as a healthy option, these bars promise to deliver essential proteins, vitamins, and minerals in a compact form. Kanikka Malhotra, consultant dietician and certified diabetes educator, says, "For individuals who have certain dietary requirements or hectic schedules, a protein bar might be a simple method to augment regular protein intake. It's crucial to comprehend both their possible advantages and disadvantages in comparison to entire food sources."

Protein bars have become a popular and practical option to increase daily protein intake, she agrees, especially for people with certain dietary requirements or busy lifestyles. "Their potential benefits, such as promoting muscle protein synthesis, controlling hunger, giving a complete nutritional profile, and being convenient and portable, are supported by scientific study." She states, "Even while protein bars can be a useful complement to a diet that is balanced, it is crucial to choose goods that have a modest quantity of harmful fats, low added sugars, and high-quality protein sources. Although a protein bar a day might be a quick and easy way to increase your consumption of protein, it might not necessarily have the same nutritional benefits as entire foods."

Natural sources of vital nutrients, fibre, and good fats include lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, beans, and dairy products. Compared to protein bars, these foods have a more comprehensive nutritional profile and can deliver longer-lasting energy and satiety. Furthermore, whole food sources can be included in a well-balanced meal or snack and are typically less expensive. Festive offer Minimise added sugars, as excessive intake can contribute to weight gain and other health issues. Minimise added sugars, as excessive intake can contribute to weight gain and other health issues. Malhotra tells indianexpress.com, "Although protein bars that are heavy in sugar or artificial components can be a convenient method to increase your intake of protein, doing so every day may have long-term negative effects on your health." Type 2 diabetes, insulin resistance,



and weight gain can all be attributed to high sugar consumption. Artificial sweeteners and additives may be detrimental to general health and intestinal health. Protein bars should be carefully chosen; try to find ones with real food ingredients, natural sweeteners, and as little added sugar as possible, Malhotra suggests. "For optimum health, a range of whole food protein sources must be included, and moderation is crucial."

What consumers should look for on nutrition labels When selecting a protein bar, consumers should pay close attention to the following nutrition label details: -Look for bars with a high protein content, ideally at least 10-15 grams per serving. -Minimise added sugars, as excessive intake can contribute to weight gain and other health issues. Aim for bars with less than 5 grams of added sugar per serving. -Choose bars with a decent amount of fibre to promote satiety and digestive health. A good target is at least 3 grams of fibre per serving. -Be cautious of artificial sweeteners, as some may have potential negative health effects. Opt for bars with natural sweeteners like stevia or monk fruit. -Look for bars with healthy fats like nuts or seeds, which can provide sustained energy and support overall health. -Check for added vitamins and minerals that can enhance the nutritional value of the bar. -Be aware of the serving size listed on the label, as multiple servings may be contained within a single bar. -Review the ingredients list to ensure the bar is made with real, whole food ingredients and avoids excessive additives or preservatives.

Yes, it is time to start planning your holiday cards

Holiday cards may be intended to spread cheer, but they can have the adverse effect of being stressful to both send and receive. Proponents say they love to share a piece of themselves with loved ones. Detractors see long, braggish letters with bad grammar. Adam Groffman, who works in marketing and lives in New York City, enjoys cards as a physical touch point with faraway friends and family. "It's nice to get an annual update," he said, "even if it doesn't necessarily trigger me to keep much more in contact than beyond the occasional Instagram or Facebook like."

If sending out a card is on your to-do list, the right tools will make it faster, easier and more efficient as Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa coincide to create a trifecta of holiday spirit. While there is no grammar jail (as much as some people might think there should be), getting the basic rules right is important. "Our brains are wired in a certain way to react when we encounter bad grammar and punctuation," said Jeffrey Barg, a grammar expert. "I have absolutely received cards that have wished me 'happy holidays' but then they pluralize the family's last name with an apostrophe and you know what? All of a sudden everything is a little less merry for me." Shortcuts to creating a mailing list

If you're sending cards in the mail, organizing addresses should be your first priority. "Get the list ready as soon as humanly possible," said Victoria Hiegel, a personal assistant and musician in New York City who posts "a day in the life" videos on social media. "I guarantee you will accidentally forget someone and you want time to remember and add them in." (Make sure you order a few extra cards in case you do forget someone, so that you can quickly address and mail that card out.) Maintaining a spreadsheet of names and addresses that you use year after year seems to be the most common way to tackle this problem. Kathleen Boyce, of Belmont, North Carolina, who is Barg's mother-in-law, has a list of about 175 people that she updates before printing new labels every year. If you're starting from scratch, social media creators have suggested building a Google form and sending a link out to loved ones to collect their addresses. You can then convert the responses into a spreadsheet or .csv file to print labels.

Apps and websites can also be helpful. Many card sites allow you to upload your contacts and provide a link you can send out to collect and store any addresses you don't already have. Minted will even address the envelopes for you for free. Gather photos (but no one says you have to use them) Buy cards where you can just have the paragraph that you've already written," said Heigl, who suggested adding handwritten well wishes in addition to the printed ones. "For your special besties, then you can go in when you're packing the cards and write a cute little note. Like, 'Hope your dog is great!'" If you do want to include photos, Google Photos, Amazon Photos and Apple Photos all allow the users to search by people, dates, locations and other parameters to help them find the photos they want to



include. Photos cards can become keepsakes, marking time as each year passes. Katherine Fernandez, a stay-at-home mother in West Caldwell, New Jersey, has been sending cards from Minted since her daughter was born in 2018. She has a professional photo of her family taken every year and then puts the completed card in a clear acrylic frame and displays it on her front hallway table for guests to view. Services to design and print personalized cards abound. Wirecutter, The New York Times' product recommendation service, chose Simply to Impress as its top holiday card site. Local printing options became more limited after Costco outsourced its photo services to Shutterfly in early 2023, but if you're working up to the last minute, places like Walgreens and CVS can print either online or in their brick-and-mortar stores. And keep an eye out for Black Friday sales that reduce the cost of these services — you'll still be able to receive the physical cards in time for mailing in December. To letter or not to letter? For some people, just putting the card together is enough. But for others, the letter is an important piece of the tradition. "It's an old-fashioned way to keep in touch, and it's the kind of stuff you wouldn't say in a text or a phone call," said Boyce, noting that she includes both good and bad news in her letter, such as the death of her father. "I think most of the people would have already known that he died. But I think people still enjoy seeing a silly picture of him, of which there are many." Sending out the cards Mailing the card out — including stuffing, addressing and stamping the envelope — can be another form of connection. Fernandez, who sends cards to her extended family in Peru, treats it as "mommy and me" time with her 7-year-old daughter. As they stamp each envelope, they talk about the person who will be receiving it. What happens if you don't mail them out on time? It could lead to a delightful surprise at another time of the year. Groffman intended to send out about 100 cards in 2023, but he wasn't able to order them in time. Instead, he went to the post office and bought postcard, first-class U.S. and international stamps to stockpile at home. "All year, I've made a concerted effort to send thank-you cards and postcards for things various friends and family have done," he said. "And I'm going to keep with that tradition going forward."

Bigg Boss 18 winner Karanveer Mehra calls roasting Vivian Dsenra a low point: 'I should have avoided that'



GNS News Agency, Jan 20

Actor Karanveer Mehra emerged as the winner of Bigg Boss 18 on Sunday night. He defeated actor Vivian Dsenra to win the coveted title. This is Karanveer's second consecutive victory on a reality show. Before Bigg Boss 18, Karanveer won Khatron Ke Khiladi 14. After winning the trophy and Rs 50 lakh prize money, Karanveer spoke to SCREEN about his journey on Bigg Boss. The actor jokingly asked the channel to also announce a third reality show

that he could win, so that he could complete his hat-trick.

Talking about winning the Bigg Boss 18 title, Karanveer Mehra said, "I share this trophy with all those who have voted and loved me and of course the media who I have not paid." He also added that he dedicated his victory to all the fans and friends who supported him tirelessly. "I have gotten used to winning, I want to have a hat-trick now. So please Colors TV announce another show now which I could win, maybe Laughter Chefs." Sharing his high and low points in the journey, Karanveer also added, "The task where I lifted Edin or trimmed Rajat's beard were my high points. The low point was the roast I did with Vivian, I should have avoided that." Further sharing about his bittersweet equation with his friend of 12 years Vivian Dsenra, Karanveer said, "We had a lover's spat on the show, actually both of our definitions of friendship are very different. He thought of me as a dearer friend and I was coming from a space where I thought he was getting things very easily. But now it's a 100-day friendship." Having tasted success twice, when Karanveer was asked what it meant to him and how he dealt with it, Karanveer shared, "Take success with a pinch of salt, it teaches you nothing. I am glad that I failed a lot of times to reach here."

'Shah Rukh Khan forever,' says Coldplay's Chris Martin at Mumbai concert



New Delhi: Coldplay singer Chris Martin gave a shout out to Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan during his second Mumbai concert on Sunday. In the video circulating online, Martin can be heard saying "Shah Rukh Khan forever" on the stage before beginning his next song amid cheers from concert-goers. It's not the first time that Martin has expressed his love for the superstar. Back in 2019, the

singer shared a post on X in which he mentioned the songs and films he liked back then. At the end of the note, he wrote "Shah Rukh Khan forever".

The band in on its India tour and will perform in Mumbai for a third time on January 21 before they travel to Ahmedabad for a two-day concert at the Narendra Modi Stadium on January 25 and January 26. On their first concert on Saturday, Martin won fans over by connecting with them in their native tongues. His attempts to speak Hindi and Marathi were met with overwhelming warmth. Martin began by saying in Marathi, "Tumhee saghre aaj chaan distat" (You all look beautiful today). He then said in Hindi, "Aap sab ka bahut swagat hai humare show pe. Mumbai mein aakar hume bahut khushi ho rahi hai. (You're all very welcome to our show. We feel happy after coming to Mumbai.) "Sorry, my Hindi and Marathi are bad but I tried my best," he said, before switching to English. The British musician thanked Indian fans for giving him the chance to play in one of "our favourite places in the whole world." "This is our fourth visit to India, the second time playing... We couldn't have asked for a better audience. It's amazing you welcome us," Martin said.

American Model Chrissy Teigen advocates for social media shut off from 6 pm to 6 am

Los Angeles: Model Chrissy Teigen, who is married to singer John Legend, has urged for social media services to be suspended between the hours of 6 pm and 6 am to give everyone a break because "life was awesome" before platforms like Facebook and Instagram.

In a post on her Instagram Stories, she said: "I personally think that one day there will be the most incredible rule, my first rule would be — I think the government or some kind of ethics committee, somebody, should shut off social media between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. Leave it all up. Everyone gets to do anything they want but only between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. Shut it off. Done. (sic)" Teigen went on to add: "I come from the days where we had nothing and then we saw something. Guys, life was great. Life was awesome before this. I know it's hard to see it now, but it's doable. It's very doable. This doesn't have to be our lives. And I say this for myself as well because, obviously, I'm on here right now doing this! But it doesn't have to define us or be our whole lives." Her post comes after TikTok was taken down in the US after lawmakers in the country ordered the platform's Chinese owners ByteDance to sell the firm or face a black out in America, reports 'femalefirst.co.uk'. However, the platform has since been given a reprieve thanks to US President-elect Donald Trump, who has vowed to work with the company to find a solution after he officially takes office on Monday. A statement from TikTok posted on X explained: "In agreement



with our service providers, TikTok is in the process of restoring service. We thank President Trump for providing the necessary clarity and assurance to our service providers that they will face no penalties providing TikTok to over 170 million Americans and allowing over 7 million small businesses to thrive. It's a strong stand for the First Amendment and against arbitrary censorship. We will work with President Trump on a long-term solution that keeps TikTok in the United States."

Nilavukku Enmel Ennadi Kobam, Dragon opt for new release dates to accommodate Ajith's Vidaamuyarchi



Big-ticket films are important for the thriving ecosystem of cinema. While the various stakeholders are primed to make maximum profits, it also means that the release calendar is scheduled around these films. That is why when Ajith Kumar-Magizh Thirumeni's Vidaamuyarchi missed the Pongal release date, it led to five Tamil films making it on Pongal instead. We had films like Madha Gaja Raja, Tharunam, Kadhalkka Neramillai, Nesippaya, and Vanangaan hitting the screens. And now, just when Dhanush's third directorial, Nilavukku Enmel Ennadi Kobam, and Pradeep Ranganathan's Dragon were planning a Valentine's Day release, Vidaamuyarchi is back to disrupt the plans.

With Lyca Productions announcing Vidaamuyarchi's release date as February 6, the makers of NEEK and Dragon also shared their revised release date. Sreyas, the director of Wunderbar Films, which is backing NEEK, shared

a statement that read, "Due to recent developments, NEEK is postponed to February 21. Thank you to everyone for your unconditional love and support. Om Nama Shivaya." The movie, which is directed by Dhanush, stars Pavish, Anikha Surendran, Priya Prakash Varrier, and Mathew Thomas. Similarly, AGS Entertainment, who are producing Pradeep's Dragon, directed by Ashwath Marimuthu, announced that the film would hit theatres on February 21. Sharing the announcement, Pradeep wrote, "Thala vandha thalli poyi dhaana aaganum (If the leader is coming, we have to make way, right?). Dragon from Feb 21." Interestingly, both NEEK and Dragon, are billed as romantic entertainers and campus stories, which might have been perfect for the Valentine's Day weekend. However, with both films rescheduling their release date to two weeks after Vidaamuyarchi, it is almost like Tamil cinema is urging the romantics in the audience to celebrate Valentine's Day a week later.

'Kaun Banega Crorepati' marks silver jubilee: Big B gets emotional

Mumbai: The quiz-based reality show 'Kaun Banega Crorepati' has completed 25 years enabling dreams to become reality, and building moments that are life-changing. On the occasion, the makers of the show kicked off grand celebrations with its latest episode. During the episode, a video plays for the show host, Amitabh Bachchan, featuring messages from his fans congratulating him on completing 25 years of "Kaun Banega Crorepati". One audience member passionately shares, that "KBC" is like a festival, a magical experience, and Big B is the magician. People cannot imagine "KBC" without you. This show should continue for another 25 or even 50 years, with you being an integral part of this journey". Moved by all the love and blessings coming his way, an emotional Amitabh Bachchan responded, "Thank you very much, Deviji. You have said such kind and wonderful things. I have never looked at this show

as just work. Every contestant who steps onto this platform, and every audience member present, feels like a guest in my home. Just as we welcome guests with warmth and hospitality at home, I strive to extend the same courtesy here. To me, you all truly feel like family". He further mentioned "Life brings its share of ups and downs, and when I see contestants performing well, it fills me with immense joy. But when they struggle or lose, it deeply pains me. I have often said that the pain contestants feel is something I experience as well. Witnessing someone in distress is never easy. This game holds the power to transform lives in a single moment with just one correct answer. People come here carrying countless hopes and dreams, and being a part of those moments as their dreams unfold is a source of inspiration for me. I hope the love and affection from all of you continue to grow stronger forever. Adding a touch of humor to lighten the atmosphere,

'Manisha Koirala insisted on doing Chotti si Love Story, said I won't take money,' claims filmmaker Shashilal K Nair: 'I wanted a model-like girl'



Manisha Koirala starred in the 2002 film Chhottisi Love Story alongside a 14-year-old Aditya Seal. The film was an adaptation of Krzysztof Kieslowski's A Short Film About Love. Upset with the way certain scenes had been shot with her double, Manisha has even approached the court to stay the release of the film. After the film released, it received negative reviews. Manisha allegedly involved political figures to ban the release of the film, accusing the film's director Shashilal K Nair of using objectionable scenes. In a new interview, the filmmaker has shared his side of the story. In an interview with Friday Talkies, the filmmaker said, "I wanted a newcomer, model-looking girl for the film. Manisha

said I will do it. I said this is going to be an experiment-like film. She said, 'I will do.' Manish was not model-looking, I needed a thin girl. I told her that and she was like, 'I can go to the gym, workout and lose weight.' When she talks so much that I won't even take money. You get convinced. I gave her a couple of months but she couldn't lose weight. She came on set on the first day of the shoot, I saw her and I was disappointed. She is so overweight, how will we make this film?" He added, "I discussed this with her. It was supposed to be a film where a boy stalks a girl with a binocular. Now for someone to do that, the girl should have those kind of looks. How can she play the role? The film needed scenes like her changing and stuff. We had a long meeting during the lunch break. We decided, for close-up shots, we can use Manisha's shots and for long shot we can use duplicate because I didn't want to hurt her and tell her please go back. She was co-operative and helpful because both Manisha and the duplicate shared the same costume." Previously, speaking to Times Now, Shashilal said, "The only reason I see for her to create such uproar is she wants to get into politics. It's the only way I can make sense of this madness. I never wanted this ugly situation. Manisha is like family. I wanted to make a film with newcomers. I may have succeeded in bringing in the audience to see my small film. But it's like getting a blow in the stomach and getting one sweet in compensation. I cannot enjoy the sweet. My life is in turmoil. Memories going back 15 years have been ruined. Manisha and I can never be friends again, though I wish we could be. I wish she didn't make this an ego issue." Manisha, however, refused the claims of her attempting to get the film banned. She told Times Now, "I want the shots with the duplicates removed. And I think the posters displaying bums and breasts are in very bad taste. Also, now that the film is making profits everywhere, why should I not take any fees? I want a share of the profits."

Gaurav Taneja takes aim at Anupam Mittal as he addresses rejection on Shark Tank India 4, compares Beastlife and Shaadi.com

Following his Shark Tank India 4 rejection, Gaurav Taneja reflected on his experience, while also highlighting the importance of breaking conventional norms and redefining entrepreneurship. Social media influencer and entrepreneur Gaurav Taneja aka Flying Beast recently made an appearance on Shark Tank India 4 with his fitness brand Beast Life.

"You cannot allot a set time in start-ups; you have to be available all the time," founder and CEO of Shaadi.com and People Group Anupam Mittal told social media influencer and entrepreneur Gaurav Taneja — popularly known as Flying Beast — while choosing not to invest in the latter's fitness brand Beast Life on Shark Tank India Season 4. During the episode, Taneja valued his company at Rs 100 crore and sought Rs 1 crore for a 1 per cent equity stake. However, none of the sharks were convinced by his pitch due to concerns over his lack of full-time commitment to the business, especially given that it was still in its infancy stage, within its first year of operations. The judges also found the equity distribution problematic as Raj Vikram, a key partner, holds only an 11 per cent stake, while Taneja and Varun Alagh, both engaged in other ventures, control 40 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively.

Following the episode, Taneja reflected on his experience, while also highlighting the importance of breaking conventional norms and redefining entrepreneurship. Recalling being asked by the sharks if he would continue with his YouTube channel even after the success of Beast Life, Taneja shared that he replied with a "yes" without hesitation. "Aap ka focus nahi hoga, aap waha se paisa bana loge (You will not have any focus, you will make money from there)," he quoted them as saying. While he didn't name Anupam Mittal, the comment was made by Shaadi.com founder.

"But to me, that felt like a risky move — one that could hurt more than help. With over 8 years of digital marketing experience, I understand the power of organic reach and audience trust. We're already EBIDTA positive, and because of the distribution we've built, we save nearly 90% of our total expenditure on marketing. That's a huge advantage," Taneja shared. He further compared Beast Life and Shaadi.com's social media presence, noting that while Shaadi.com amassed 125K Instagram followers since April 2015, Beast Life, within just eight months, has surpassed 127K and continues to grow. "Shaadi.com might have spent millions to create this distribution. The rules of entrepreneurship are evolving. Maybe it's time to explore and break traditional moulds," he mentioned. ICYMI | Junaid Khan says, "Do ex-wives ki galiyaan padhoge," as Salman Khan quizzes Aamir Khan about his new girlfriend Taneja also shared an insightful observation by Snapdeal co-founder Kunal Bahl,



which apparently did not make it to the final cut of the episode: "Har cheez ka pattern hota hai. Sab us set pattern mein comfortable hote hai. But kabhi kabhi time hota hai us pattern se nikalne ka (Everything has a pattern. Everyone is comfortable in that set pattern. But sometimes it is time to break out of that pattern)." Mentioning that he is still new to the entrepreneurial journey, Taneja acknowledged that bold moves might lead to failures.

Amitabh Bachchan sold his Mumbai flat for this price...

Hyderabad: Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan has sold his apartment in Oshiwara locality in Mumbai in January last and got an appreciation of over 168 per cent on his investment. The Bollywood icon bought the premium duplex apartment in 2021 for a price of Rs 31 crore. He has now sold it for Rs 83 crore, Square Yards, a real estate consultancy firm in Mumbai said quoting registration documents on the website of Inspector General of Registration. Oshiwara is a bustling neighbourhood in western Mumbai near the strategic location of Lokhandwala Complex. The property, Square Yards press release said, is located in The Atlantis, a residential project developed by Crystal Group, which has 4, 5, and 6 BHK apartments. As per the IGR registration documents the duplex apartment has a built-up area of 5,704 sq. ft and a carpet area of 5,185.62 sq. ft and boasts of six mechanized car parking spaces. The transaction incurred a stamp duty payment of Rs. 4.98 crore and registration charges of Rs. 30,000.

India's Paris Olympics winners, including star shooters, complain about discoloured medals, want them replaced



GNS News Agency, Jan 20

The medals of some of India's Olympic heroes from the 2024 Paris Games, and those belonging to many of the greatest athletes from around the world, have shown signs of rust and deterioration, and could be replaced.

The Indian Express contacted some of the Indians who climbed the podium in Paris and they said their prized possessions were not in the best condition. Shooting bronze medalists Swapnil Kusale and Sarabjot Singh have complained that the colour had started to come off within days of the podium ceremony. The colour of the bronze medal came off within seven days of winning the medal. When I reached India, friends, coaches and fellow shooters also pointed that out. An Olympic medal is a cherished possession for a shooter and the removal of coating was visible. All who saw the medal noticed that," Kusale, 50m 3-Position bronze medalist, said. Sarabjot, who won the mixed team medal with Manu Bhaker, also had a similar complaint. "I too had noticed the discolouring of the medal a few days after the ceremony and my team contacted the concerned authorities for the issue to be highlighted. Olympic medals inspire youth as well as current shooters to achieve Olympic glory and its deterioration should not happen," the pistol shooter said. Double medalist Manu Bhaker's two bronze medals — in the 10m air pistol individual and mixed events — have also lost their colour, PTI reported.

It is in stark contrast to Olympic medals given decades ago that have largely maintained their pristine condition. "It has been more than 40 years since Hardik Singh's granduncle Gurmial Singh won the Moscow Olympic hockey gold and that medal has seen years without any discoloration. The Paris Olympics bronze medal won by Hardik had discoloured and such things should not happen," said the

hockey bronze medalist's father Varinder Pal Singh.

The IOC said that Paris organisers are in contact with the national Olympic committees of the athletes concerned and that the replacement process will start in a few weeks. The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) said that if any medalist approaches it in this regard, it will take up the case with the world body.

"An Olympic medal is a lifetime achievement and a cherished memory, and if any athlete feels that their medal has deteriorated because of poor quality and needs a replacement, we will request the IOC for replacement," IOA president PT Usha said. It's a problem that a lot of achievers from other countries are also facing. Despite the absence of any official figure from the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the French Olympic Committee or Monnaie de Paris (the mint that produced the medals), it has been speculated that the number of such damaged medals is over 100. Problem beyond borders.

Even before the Games had ended, American skateboarder Nyjah Huston had posted a video of his bronze medal that he said had deteriorated. Recently, French swimmers Yohann Ndoye-Brouard and Clément Secchi posted images of their medals on social media, saying they looked like "crocodile skin," or ones dating back to 1924 rather than 2024. These complaints have reached the IOC and the French mint and they have decided to replace a number of such medals. "The Monnaie de Paris has taken the issue of damaged medals very seriously since the first exchange requests in August, and has mobilised its internal teams," the French mint was quoted as saying by the Associated Press. "Since then, the company has modified and optimised its relative varnishing process. The Monnaie de Paris will replace all damaged medals at the athletes' request during the first quarter of 2025." The medals were designed by Parisian jewelry house Chaumet and each of them contained a hexagonal, polished chunk of iron taken from the Eiffel Tower.

Kusale is hopeful of getting a replacement and believes an Olympic medal, which can provide encouragement to future generations, should stay in their original condition for as long as possible. "I believe in the Olympic legacy and the medals of sporting legends, whom we would see on TV and get inspired by watching them win Olympic medals, should retain their original form and the legacy should not be spoiled. I will be open to accepting the new medals as per the IOC and it should be done for all," he said.

Shreyas Iyer at Idea Exchange: 'The calmer you are on the field, the wiser you feel from within'

GNS News Agency, Jan 20

Shreyas Iyer on the IPL auction, parting ways with KKR, interacting with Shah Rukh Khan, the toughest phase of his career and his advice to struggling players. The conversation was moderated by Devendra Pandey.

Devendra Pandey: Did you expect that kind of money (Rs 26.75 crore) at the IPL auction?

During the auction, we were in Hyderabad, watching it from our rooms and I was expecting a good amount. But I never thought that I would exceed a point and there would be so much competition between two teams over me. Overall, I was thrilled. After a certain point, I shut the door, went into the washroom and I was like, I don't want to listen to what's happening.

Devendra Pandey: It was believed you'd be retained by KKR because you were a successful captain. What happened?

Certainly, I had a fantastic time winning the championship at KKR. The fan following was outstanding, they were electrifying in the stadium and I loved every moment I spent there. So obviously, we had a conversation straight after the IPL championship. But for a few months, there was a layover and no concrete effort in having a retention talk. I was perplexed about what's happening. So, because of a lack of communication, we came to a situation where we parted ways, mutually. And that's the long and short of it. Devendra Pandey: Were you disappointed because you gave your heart and soul, though it wasn't in your hands. Yes, obviously disappointed, because when you don't have a certain line of communication and if you get to know things one week prior to the retention date, then obviously something is lacking over there. So I had to take a call. Whatever is written is supposed to happen. But other than that, I would just like to say that the time I spent over there with Shah Rukh Sir, the family, all of them, was phenomenal. And obviously, winning the championship was probably an integral part of my life.

Devendra Pandey: How have your interactions with Shah Rukh Khan been?

We all know Shah Rukh sir, he's a heartthrob and people go bonkers whenever they look at him. He's got this certain zest when he walks into the room, that energy, that vibration. And he's a dominant figure, obviously. I got to learn a lot from him. He is very kind and generous in nature. And probably that's what makes him pretty unique as an individual. I love his confidence level and self-belief about the team the most. It was surreal.

Devendra Pandey: Do people misjudge you because you have always been straightforward in your communication and has it backfired ever?

My journey has been a roller-coaster ride but I personally feel I'm not going to change for anyone. If they don't understand me, they don't understand me. I am myself, I call a spade a spade. I don't like to beat around the bush and if I make a point, I'll make it straight away, to your face. If someone feels bad then let it be but that is me and that's how I've grown up to be. Whenever you guys say that I have a lot of attitude and arrogance, it's not that I do it on purpose but that's my personality. I am a bit reserved but I have opened up a bit and try to understand the other person as well. It's never my intention to hurt anyone.

Devendra Pandey: What's the talk back home on money and investments? Do they stop you from spending?

I come from a conservative family, basically my Dad says, save money but my mom says, bindaas udaana because it's hard-earned. I feel one has to multiply money and not make wrong investments. If something makes you happy, do it, don't have second thoughts.



Devendra Pandey: Are you still fond of shoes?

I still like them and I love to give them to any cricketer who can't afford it. I come from a lower-middle class family and my parents have supported me through thick and thin. They never made me realise that we are short of money. I have seen that whenever I have given something, be it bat or gloves to a player, they do very well. Right now, Suryansh (Shedje) is playing with my bat. I'm sure there are others too who do it. On interactions with KKR | For months, there was no effort in having a retention talk. We decided to part ways, mutually. If you get to know things one week prior to the retention date, then obviously something is lacking.

Sandip G: Your favourite World Cup knock?

The 82 against Sri Lanka. Because there was a lot of talk about dropping me from the squad, and that I'm not providing much for the team. Even though I had scored a 50 against Pakistan, there was some talk which put me in a helter-skelter situation. That kind of (talk) boosted my instincts from within. I wanted to just give my 110 per cent. And in that game, I decided that I would just back my instincts and go full throttle. No looking back. I'm impressed by the way I played in that game. I became my own fan after that. It was a game-changing innings, especially in the World Cup.

Sandip G: Does the outside chatter about weaknesses, especially from people who have not played the game at this level, affect you?

Yeah, it's irritating, especially when it comes from people, who haven't faced 150 km per hour delivery, advising you to play in a particular way. But I would say it is their opinion. They have all the right to talk, but they can talk between themselves not to the player directly.

Sandip G: In the World Cup, you adopted different trigger movements at different times. Can you shed some light on that?

It is important that you adapt according to the situation. You don't have the same wickets all the time. There is variable bounce on certain wickets. On a certain track, you need to chop and change a little bit with your stance. Not your grip that much, but with your stance and your trigger movements. I have practised a lot on that. It's not only on the field, but also whenever I'm in my room, I always have a bat and I see to it that I shadow practice. That, if the wicket is like this, I'm going to play in a certain way. I have a set mindset, like, okay, this is how I'm going to play on that particular wicket. If it doesn't work, it doesn't work. But I went out there with a plan. You might not execute it every time. On play strategy | We strategise off the field as well about how to go against a certain player. On the field, it's all about execution, about being calm and communicating with the captain and the players.

Jannik Sinner: 'Knew in my mind I'd struggle today', after gasping for breath, suffering trembling hands in 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 win



GNS News Agency, Jan 20

Defending champion Jannik Sinner suffered acute distress but remarkably managed to return to court to win 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 against Holger Rune on Monday. At one point, his hand could be seen trembling wrapped inside a towel. Channel 9 reported that Sinner 'struggled to breathe and his hands were trembling in between points as Holger Rune threatened his Australian Open throne on Monday.' The World No. 1 Sinner had taken the opening set 6-3 against the 13th seed, as the Dane struck back to win the second 6-3. In the third, the Italian seemed to be coming apart physically and looked almost spent on Rod Laver Arena. "There are worrying signs for the defending champ," commentator Brenton Speed said on Nine, as Sinner's hands shook uncontrollably in between points. The temperature in Melbourne hovered around 32 degrees and according to Channel 9, "the mercury rises much higher out on court." Sinner went on to win the third set but the distress was prolonged as he took a medical timeout at 3-2. Todd Woodbridge, talking on Channel 9 said, "Have a look at him — he looks distressed, he doesn't take water, there is no towel... he looks ill." "It looks like that Rune is the one with the more energy — no question about that," Jim Courier

added. Jannik Sinner of Italy plays a forehand return to Holger Rune of Denmark during their fourth round match at the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

Before heading out of court to get checked, he had his blood oxygen levels tested as the medical timeout lasted nearly 12 minutes. He looked legitimately confused about which direction to head out in, and Courier called him a "zombie walking across the court," according to 7news.com.au. "You start to wonder with this, if he didn't carry some kind of a weird bug into the match," Courier speculated. "We don't know for sure. Pure speculation. But when they start doing those types of checks, that might be an indication that it's not just fatigue... He is disorientated... it seems more than just the heat." Courier insisted that the player hadn't been particularly thinking straight as he failed to carry a shirt for a change that could've given him 10 more minutes. What is interesting is he didn't take a shirt to go change," the tennis great was quoted as saying by 7news. "He could have bought himself two more minutes of rest time if he had changed his shirt or shoes, because you get an extra couple of minutes if you do that. So he is not thinking clearly either, because he should have done that." Later after a long rally, he was seen leaning on his racket to stay on his feet. It's when Courier recalled Sinner vomiting on court at a tournament in Beijing in October 2023 before going on to win the match and the tournament. "He has shown a history of being able to play through some physical duress, but that was in cool conditions and best-of-three sets," he said. "That is very different to what we are facing here." When Rune called for a trainer before Sinner served out the set, it gave the Italian more time. The whole court seemed to be in strife as the net broke causing a delay and both players went inside. Sinner would serve out the match re-energized thereafter. "This morning was a very strange morning because I didn't even warm up today, so just tried to go on court as fit as I could. I knew in my mind already before the match that I would struggle today," he said in his on-court interview.

Rishabh Pant to lead Lucknow Super Giants in IPL

GNS News Agency, Jan 20

Rishabh Pant made it clear to the Delhi franchise that he wanted to lead India, revealed co-owner Parth Jindal. (BCCI) Rishabh Pant will lead Lucknow Super Giants. Rishabh Pant on Monday is announced as Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) new skipper for the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2025. "So very simple and that is about announcing the captain of LSG for the future and that is Rishabh Pant," LSG owner Sanjiv Goenka said on Star Sports.

"We have decided on that the moment we won him at the auction. But we were waiting for a moment to announce it together." Rishabh Pant was bagged by Lucknow Super Giants for Rs 27 crores after a ferocious bidding war at the IPL auction. Rishabh Pant Delhi Capitals Parth Jindal Rishabh Pant (C) of Delhi Capitals walk back during match 43 of the Indian Premier League season 17 (IPL 2024) between Delhi Capitals and Mumbai Indians held at the Arun Jaitley Stadium, Delhi on the 27th April 2024. (Photo by Arjun Singh / Sportspics for IPL) While his former franchise Delhi Capitals opted for a Right To Match bid at Rs 20.75 crore, LSG raised the bidding by a staggering margin to Rs 27 crore, make him the most expensive signing at the auctions history ahead of Shreyas Iyer, who received a Rs 26.75 crore bid from Punjab Kings earlier this evening.

"I will give my 200 percent. That's my commitment to you. I will try whatever is there in my power to repay the

Shreyas Iyer on outside chatter about his weakness against short pitch bowling: 'It's irritating'



GNS News Agency, Jan 20

Shreyas Iyer has opened up about the outside noise regarding his weakness against the short pitch deliveries. "It's irritating, especially when it comes from people, who haven't faced 150 km per hour delivery, advising you to play in a particular way," Shreyas Iyer said at the Idea Exchange. "But I would say it is their opinion. They have all the right to talk, but they can talk between themselves not to the player directly."

The 30-year-old had an excellent ODI World Cup as he amassed 530 runs in 11 innings, including two hundreds and three fifties. The right-handed batter rated his 82 against Sri Lanka at Wankhede Stadium as his favourite knock from the marquee event. "The 82 against Sri Lanka. Because there was a lot of talk about dropping me from the squad, and that I'm not providing much for the team," he said.

Shreyas Iyer, who captained Kolkata Knight Riders to the IPL 2024 title, was picked by Punjab Kings for Rs 26.75 crore in IPL 2025 mega auctions. Shreyas Iyer, who captained Kolkata Knight Riders to the IPL 2024 title, was picked by Punjab Kings for Rs 26.75 crore in IPL 2025 mega auctions. "Even though I had scored a 50 against Pakistan, there was some talk which put me in a helter-skelter situation. That kind of (talk) boosted my instincts from within." I wanted to just give my 110 per cent. And in that game, I decided that I would just back my instincts and go full throttle. No looking back. "I'm impressed by the way I played in that game. I became my own fan after that. It was a game-changing innings, especially in the World Cup." Iyer had also adopted different trigger movements at different times. He said: "It is important that you adapt according to the situa-



tion. I am really excited and looking forward to new beginning and new energy. And have a blast out there with lot of fun," Pant told mediapersons after being unveiled as the new skipper. "We start with new hope and aspirations. And most importantly, new confidence. I wanted to introduce you all to our new captain Rishabh Pant," Goenka said. Pant made his IPL debut in 2016 for Delhi Daredevils (now Delhi Capitals), and has been part of the team since, before being elevated as captain in 2021. Pant's IPL record has been one to look at, as the destructive wicket keeper batsman has amassed 3284 runs in 111 matches, with an astonishing strike rate of 148.93. In his 66 T20I innings for India, he has scored 1209 runs, at a strike rate of 127.26.

"There is variable bounce on certain wickets. On a certain track, you need to chop and change a little bit with your stance. "Not your grip that much, but with your stance and your trigger movements. I have practised a lot on that. "It's not only on the field, but also whenever I'm in my room, I always have a bat and I see to it that I shadow practice. "That, if the wicket is like this, I'm going to play in a certain way. I have a set mindset, like, okay, this is how I'm going to play on that particular wicket. "If it doesn't work, it doesn't work. But I went out there with a plan. You might not execute it every time."

Rishabh Pant named Lucknow Super Giants captain, vows to give his all for maiden IPL title

GNS News Agency, Jan 20

Kolkata: Dynamic keeper-batter Rishabh Pant was on Monday named the captain of Lucknow Super Giants for the upcoming IPL and he vowed to give his "200 percent" to win the team's maiden title. Pant was picked at the mega auction for an IPL record Rs 27 crore by the franchise owner Sanjiv Goenka. "I will give my 200 percent. That's my commitment to you. I will try whatever is there in my power to repay the faith. I am really excited and looking forward to new beginning and new energy. And have a blast out there with lot of fun," Pant told media persons after being unveiled as the new skipper. "We start with new hope and aspirations. And most importantly, new confidence. I wanted to introduce you all to our new captain Rishabh Pant," Goenka said. This is Pant's second stint as a leader in the IPL. At his former franchise Delhi Capitals, the captaincy became a point of contention, leading the 27-year-old Pant to opt out of DC's retention plans after unsuccessful negotiations. Asked about his new team going the distance in the next IPL, Pant sounded optimistic. "Definitely happy with the team.