

# INDIAN CHRONICLE

## Harish slams Congress over Rythu Bharosa, says govt betrayed farmers yet again

Hyderabad: Coming down heavily on the Congress government in the State for backing out on its guarantees, BRS leader and former Minister T Harish Rao accused the Congress government of betraying Telangana's farmers with false promises. The Congress, which came to power on the back of grand promises to increase investment support under Rythu Bandhu and provide Rs 15,000 per acre annually through its 'Rythu Bharosa' scheme, has failed to deliver on its commitments.

## Hyderabad: Mega job mela to be held at Masab Tank on January 6

Hyderabad: A mega job mela is being organized on January 6 (Monday), from 8 am to 1 pm, at Khaja Mansion, Masab Tank. The event's organiser, Mannan Khan Engineer, said many companies will be participating in the job mela and offering job opportunities in various positions in pharma, health, IT & ITes firms, education, banks and others. Work-from-home options will also be provided by a few companies. Qualification of candidates should be above SSC and preliminary interviews will be conducted at the venue. Entry to the programme is free. Interested job-seekers can contact on 8374315052 for further details.

## Congress govt at it again, Rythu Bharosa assistance limited to Rs 12,000 per annum

Hyderabad: GNS News Agency, Jan 4

The Congress government, which came to power riding high on its promise of hiking the Rythu Bharosa financial assistance for farmers from Rs 10,000 to Rs 15,000 per acre, has once again revealed its deceptive side by limiting the hike to just Rs 12,000 per annum.

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, who said the financial assistance would be released from January 26, blamed the current financial condition of the State for his inability to keep his promise.

Addressing the media after a Cabinet meeting here on Saturday, Revanth Reddy said the government was "forced" by the financial condition of the State to reduce the Rythu Bharosa amount.

"We will ensure that every cultivated land in the State gets the benefits of the scheme," he said, also hinting at possible attempts to restrict the number of beneficiaries of the agricultural input scheme, which as Rythu Bandhu under the BRS government had pulled Telangana out of an agrarian crisis and earned plaudits with even the Centre replicating it.

The Chief Minister said landless farmers and tenant farmers would also be provided Rs 12,000 annually under the Indiramma Atmiya Bharosa scheme. A sub-committee, constituted to recommend eligibility criteria for beneficiaries, submitted its report during the meeting.



The Chief Minister also announced that all eligible families in the State would be provided ration cards soon. "The government has decided to provide ration cards to all the people who deserve it," he said.

The Cabinet also discussed the formation of a Yadagirigutta Temple Trust Board modelled after the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD) and the timing of upcoming elections for local bodies, including Gram Panchayats, Zilla Parishads, and Mandal Parishads, which are expected to take place after the Sankranti festival.

The Indiramma housing and distribution of fine rice through ration shops was also discussed.

## Revanth Reddy misleading people on financial condition of Telangana, says KTR

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Rajanna-Sircilla: BRS working president KT Rama Rao came down heavily on Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, stating that he was trying to mislead the people of the State with blatant lies on the economic condition of the State.

Commenting on Revanth Reddy's statement that the financial condition of the State was in a miserable condition and that the State was in a debt trap, Rama Rao said being the head of the State, Revanth Reddy should not have made such a statement.

Reacting sharply to Congress leaders' comments that the previous BRS government had pushed the State into debts, Rama Rao termed such statements false and said there was



## Stop hindu bashing & be alive to real issues

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

New Delhi : They fail to understand that the more they depend on the bashing of Hindus and try to pollute political atmosphere based on caste, the greater the damage they are doing both to their own party and the country. Their latest objection is that a college in Delhi University is named after Veer Savarkar. Why are they making all kinds of comments not only against Savarkar but also against Sanatan Dharma itself, spitting venom against Brahmanism. Many in the bloc want to know why there are no non-Brahmin priests. They must get their facts right. Tamil Nadu and Bihar have many of them. They should spend their energies on highlighting various issues of common men, fight for their cause, and win over them to come to power

What is ailing the Congress party and its allies? Is it old age, ignorance, laziness, arrogance and the feeling that only they know everything, though they know nothing much and are highly basing their thoughts, actions and reactions on those who tutor them with their half-baked knowledge about Hinduism and claim to be self-styled intellectuals?

The opposition should be more sensible and sensitive to real issues. They should not get stuck with superficial nonsense including Hindu bashing with garbaged arguments. This must stop. India that is Bharat is a country of Hindus. It is high time they gave up narrow politics and stopped dividing people along caste lines. They seem to be least bothered about the pain and suffering of the common man. The needs of the man on the street, who has voted for them, are also ignored by their so-called allies in bloc INDIA, whose minds are getting equally muddled.

The bloc is not sparing any thoughts about the health risks the country is facing. Nor is it bothered about the reforms required in various sectors, most importantly education. They are least bothered about the army of young Indian whiz kids storming the global stage and bringing glory to the country.

What bothers them most is the Union government naming a college of Delhi University after Veer Savarkar. Can any Congress leader explain why the national capital has been named Delhi? The reply would be, "Ya, yes, it's named after the Sultanate of Delhi." Well, readers, ignorance cannot be bliss! The Sultanate of Delhi belongs to the 12th century but the first reference to the name 'Delhi' seems to have been made in the 1st century BCE, when Raja Dhili built a city near the site of the future Qutub Minar tower (in the present-day southwestern Delhi) and named it after himself.

The problem with these parties, particularly the Congress, more so in the last ten years is they have stopped being practical. They have been trying to come to power 'fatafat khatakat', not realising that in the process they have been losing ground 'khatakat.' They fail to understand that the more they depend on the bashing of Hindus and try to pollute political atmosphere based on caste,

the greater the damage they are doing both to their own party and the country.

Their latest objection is that a college in Delhi University is named after Veer Savarkar, and not anyone from the Nehru or Indira Gandhi family. Their team of intellectuals are making all kinds of comments not only against Savarkar but also against Sanatan Dharma itself, spitting venom against Brahmanism. Do they know that the total percentage of Brahmins in this country is just about 4 per cent?

Before I go a little deeper into the issue, I would like to ask all those who are talking utter nonsense against Brahmanism why they don't stop celebrating Hindu festivals in their houses and tell their families not to call priests when a child is born or when someone dies to perform the last rites. They do not know who a Brahmin is actually and never bother to find out because they are allergic to Hinduism. A Brahmin is one who attains Brahmagyan (knowledge).

Sage Vedavyas who gave us Mahabharata was born to Sage Parashara and Matsyagandhi, the daughter of the chief of fishermen tribe. Matsyagandhi means "she who smells like a fish." Rishi Valmiki was not a Brahmin. Sage Viswamitra was not a Brahmin. Vishvamitra was a king in ancient India.

Let's come to modern times. Swami Vivekananda was not a Brahmin. Hopefully, all those who are crying hoarse over Brahminism for no reason will not call Vivekanand a non-Hindu.

These leaders who are spreading hatred against Sanatana Dharma do not even know that the Madras High Court said that Sanatana Dharma is a set of eternal duties, including duty to the nation, to the king, to one's parents and to gurus, besides care for the poor among others. The judge further noted that while free speech is a fundamental right, it should not devolve into hate speech, particularly when it pertains to matters of religion. He underscored the need for ensuring that no one is injured by such a speech.

Whether it is Rahul Gandhi, Stalin or any Pinarayi Vijayan, please check your understanding before making comments in your attempts to divide the people of this country, based on caste and religion. No one has the courage to criticise the pastors

who fought over the sharing of gifts in Hyderabad on Christmas day. No one has the courage to make any comment against any other religion except Hinduism. It's time the opposition INDIA bloc closed the 'mega mall of hatred' under the garb of 'Mohabbat ki dukan' and came out of the influence of pre-Independence propaganda of the British. Many in the bloc want to know why there are no non-Brahmin priests. Please shed ignorance and get your facts right. In Tamil Nadu, from the deity which is the Kula Devata of Shankaracharya to the deities who are Kula Devatas of almost one-fourth of the state, they are all served by non-Brahmin pujaris.

## 19 flights diverted, over 400 delayed as dense fog hits operations at Delhi airport

New Delhi, GNS News Agency, Jan 4

The Delhi airport on Saturday saw 19 flight diversions, many cancellations and over 400 flight delays as low visibility conditions due to dense fog impacted operations for the second straight day.

An official said 19 flights were diverted at the airport between 12.15 am and 1.30 am due to reduced visibility. Of them, 13 were domestic, four international and two non-scheduled flights.

More than 45 flights were cancelled due to bad weather conditions at Delhi as well as at the destination airports, the official said.

The country's largest airline IndiGo had temporarily put arrivals and departures on hold at the airport early in the morning.

"While landing and takeoffs continue at Delhi Airport, flights that are not CAT III compliant may get affected. Passengers are requested to contact the airline concerned for updated flight information.

"Any inconvenience caused is deeply regretted," the Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL) said in a post on X at 6.56 am.

CAT III facility allows aircraft to operate in low-visibility conditions.



Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) in the national capital is operated by DIAL.

"#6ETravelAdvisory: Departures and arrivals at #DelhiAirport are currently on hold due to reduced visibility," IndiGo said in a post on X at 1.05 am on Saturday.

Air India said in an update on X at 1.16 am that poor visibility due to dense fog was impacting flight operations in Delhi and parts of northern India.

A thick blanket of fog had enveloped Delhi on Friday as well, delaying more than 400 flights.

## Hackett Group software companion for the Hackett Group software compini for the lives of public school students in the lives of the Hackett Group Kondapur Hyderabad the Hackett Group Kondapur Hyderabad



"Shabad januari 4(praja jyothi)the Hacket of Sports Dresses, Notebooks Group Company Kondapur Hyderabad, Sports Uniform, Books, Books\* \*\*\*\* Pallagarari Rajendar Reddy is 50 thousand worth sports with special initiative Dreesess Note Books has been offered in this program Employee Sai Pradeep, Rajendar Reddy, Jijadish, Lakshmi and Soumya Shakabad Mandal Mandal Mandal Mandal Village is the principal of gold The program has been taken to the idea that the student has been taken to students, previously school painting benches, have been completed in cooperation with his fellow employees in the cooperation of his fellow employees in the cooperation of the basis of its own cost of high school primary schools accompany. Students have been able to stand in the future in the future 50 thousand worth of sports dresses, note book pencils Donation, a Hacket Group Software Company, Speaking to School Head Master Basaapped in this occasion, School students in the public school If the school student of school student to have read the student's novice repeals, it is a great man who responded immediately Rajendar Reddy. Made school painting benches have thanked thanks for completing the cooperation of his friends that acknowledged for the basics of infrastructure. In addition, he said that he was a great thing offering



50,000 thousand worth of sports dresses notebooks in collaboration with the job company. Yet there is still any problems in the future, saying to their good mind to bring them to their attention. On this occasion, Rajendar Reddy said that I was going to be good to do good work when I was good to work with my friends that our company contribution would have a hundred percent of me. When I thought about them about good work, immediately responded to it as positive and said that my idea would be strength. If my friends brought to my attention in the future, I promised to meet those issues in collaboration with the company's Staff. This program is a high dilut group company stop Rajendar Reddy, Sai Pradip, Santosh, Lakshmi, Yhaswini, Soushi, School Stop HM Basapa, Chandra, Amber Singh, Paremesh, Anganes, Lalitha Kumari, Anadada Reddy, Journalist Murali, Venkalmandm, student students participated in the Venkaluma opalasma ...

# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Haryana's graft taint

HARYANA has had a 'double-engine' government since 2014. It's no mean feat that the BJP has won three Assembly elections on the trot in this state adjoining the Capital. No wonder voters continue to have great expectations in terms of good & clean governance. Even as the euphoria over the party's stunning victory in the October 2024 state polls is waning, a sobering fact has come to light — of the 104 trap cases in which officials were caught red-handed by Haryana's Anti-Corruption Bureau last year, 34 involved members of the police force. It is a good sign that the ACB is cracking down on corrupt officials, but what about deterrence and fear of the law? The functioning of the government and the police comes under a cloud when those tasked with law enforcement themselves demand and accept illegal gratification. Other departments have a better record, but there is no room for complacency as they also have their black sheep who need to be weeded out.

It was the anti-corruption plank that had helped the BJP decimate the scam-tainted UPA a decade ago, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasising his zero-tolerance approach with the slogan, "Na khaunga na khane dunga". However, the rot in Haryana shows that the initiative to cleanse the system remains a work in progress.

Speaking at a 'Good Governance Day' event last week, the Haryana Governor rightly stated that information technology was the most effective means of curbing corruption. Indeed, e-governance has made a difference, but unscrupulous people are adept at finding new ways to bypass rules and procedures. The Union Government, which is often accused by the Opposition of misusing Central agencies to settle political scores, must pay greater attention to Haryana, which is at risk of becoming a bad advertisement for the much-touted anti-corruption campaign.

## Mumbai sets record for organ donations since Covid-19 with 20% rise in 2024



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Mumbai set a record in 2024 for organ donation, achieving its highest number of Brain Stem Death (BSD) donations since Covid-19. Data provided by Zonal Transplant Coordination Centre (ZTCC), the body responsible of overseeing organ donations in Mumbai shows that at least there was a 20 per cent rise in BSD donors this year as the numbers rose from 50 last year to 60 this year and that led to significantly higher organ donations this year, saving more number of lives.

In 2024, a total of 60 BSD donors were recorded in Mumbai, resulting in the retrieval of 162 organs—a 20% increase from 2023, which had 50 donors and 143 organs retrieved. The key organ donations included 93 kidneys, 51 livers, 2 pancreases, 8 hearts, 7 lungs, and 1 small bowel. Tissue donations also showed marked improvement, with 21 corneas, 4 skin donations, 9 bones and 2 bilateral ankle tendons retrieved in 2024, compared to 16 corneas, 2 skin donations, and 7 bones in 2023. BSD, or Brain Stem Death, refers to the irreversible cessation of all brain activity while the heart continues to beat, often due to severe trauma or brain injury. Despite the individual being declared clinically dead, organs remain viable for transplantation, making BSD donors vital in addressing the critical shortage of organs for transplants. It is also called cadaver organ donation.

The clinical impact of this rise in BSD donations is far-reaching. "Each organ donor can save up to eight lives, and tissue donations significantly improve the quality of life for many more," said Dr S K Mathur, president, ZTCC, Mumbai. "This increase in BSD donations reflects not only advancements in medical practices but also heightened public awareness about the transformative power of organ donation." Comparative statistics highlight key shifts in trends. Kidney donations saw a significant rise from 75 in 2023 to 93 in 2024, and liver donations increased from 44 to 51. Both organs are crucial for patients suffering from end-stage organ failure. However, heart donations dipped slightly, from 16 in 2023 to 8 in 2024.

organ donations in mumbai Comparative statistics highlight key shifts in trends. Tissue donations also demonstrated encouraging growth. "These are essential for burn victims, reconstructive surgeries, and orthopedic treatments," said Dr Bharat Shah, general secretary of the ZTCC.

Experts attribute the rise in donations post-Covid to sustained awareness campaigns, improved hospital coordination, and the resolution of pandemic-related disruptions. Public hospitals, in particular, are positioned to play a crucial role in further enhancing organ donation rates. Historically, these institutions have lagged in organ transplants, despite a high incidence of trauma cases. To address this gap, the Maharashtra government approved a policy in 2024 to upgrade 25 state-run medical colleges with critical care units and trained staff to promote organ donation. Among these, Mumbai's JJ Hospital and six other major medical colleges are set to become nodal transplant centres. Additionally, KEM Hospital has taken a proactive approach by appointing three critical care specialists dedicated to identifying and maintaining potential donors in intensive care units. "To maximize the impact of these initiatives, public hospitals must establish dedicated transplant coordinator teams responsible for identifying donors and counselling families," Dr Shah said. "Standardised protocols for early detection of brain death and maintaining donor viability are essential. Regular training programmes for medical and support staff can ensure adherence to global best practices in organ donation." Public awareness remains key to sustaining this momentum. Collaborative campaigns with NGOs, educational institutions, and community organizations can address cultural and religious concerns surrounding organ donation.

## 2 suspected Bangladeshi militants with links to Ansarullah Bangla Team arrested in Murshidabad



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

The West Bengal Special Task Force Monday arrested two people for their alleged links to Al-Qaeda affiliate Ansarullah Bangla Team (ATB) from the state's Murshidabad district. This followed the recent arrest of Minarul Sheikh and Mohammad Abbas, suspected members of the banned Bangladeshi group, in the same district. According to the police, Sajibul Islam, 24, and Mustakim Mondal, 26, are residents of Nowda in the state's Murshidabad district. Sources said Sajibul Islam is the

cousin of Shab Sheikh, another individual linked to ATB. The police have claimed that the arrests of Minarul and Abbas earlier this month revealed a pattern of radicalisation. They said investigations are underway to uncover the extent of the militant network operating in Murshidabad and neighbouring districts like Nadia. Minarul and Abbas allegedly targeted children aged 12-16, recruiting them into madrasas where they were indoctrinated and trained for potential suicide missions. Police sources claim that Minarul and Abbas, along with Shab Sheikh, aimed to establish a network of 30 suicide bombers in Murshidabad, Nadia, Uttar Dinajpur, and Alipurduar.

The investigation has also uncovered evidence of training sessions conducted through LED screens installed in local madrasas. These sessions were reportedly facilitated by Amir and Jasimuddin, the leaders of ATB's Bengal branch. A war of words erupted between the ruling Trinamool Congress and the BJP after the arrests of suspected militants in West Bengal. While the TMC has held the Centre responsible for "terrorists infiltrating" Bengal, the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party has blamed the state ruling party for allegedly making Bengal a haven for such individuals.

## 6 arrested in 2 voter ID forgery cases in Delhi's Shaheen Bagh

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

The Delhi Police on Monday arrested six people in two cases related to voter ID forgery at Shaheen Bagh and said that the evidence collected "indicates a systematic misuse of technology and forged documents to manipulate the electoral registration process". The arrests were made following complaints lodged by Vinod Kumar, the Electoral Registration Officer for Okhla Assembly Constituency, who reported that several individuals had submitted forged documents for electoral roll applications. Ravi Kumar Singh, Deputy Commissioner of Police (South East Delhi), said the FIRs were registered on December 26 and 29. As per the complaints, the accused used falsified documents, including Aadhaar cards and electricity bills, to create or modify voter IDs, Singh added. The police identified the arrested accused as Muhammad Naim, 32, Rizwan Ul Haq, 30, Sabana Khatoun, Rajat Srivastava, 27, Trilok Chand, 51, and Sachin Kumar, 27. The accused were arrested by a team led by Inspector Dinesh Morale, Station House Officer, Shaheen Bagh police station, under the supervision of Jai Narain, Assistant Commissioner of Police, New Friends Colony, while recovering a computer used to create the forged documents.

"Srivastava, a cybercafe operator in Jasola, was linked to both forgery cases. He forged electricity bills for multiple individuals using PDF editing tools. Chand, a private tutor from Malviya Nagar, was found to collaborate with him in creating fraudulent documents and is known to one accused,



Kisunee, for four-five years," said DCP Singh. Chand had also helped Sachin, a housekeeping employee at a hospital in Delhi, to forge documents of his uncle, a hearing- and speech-impaired person, to transfer land ownership from his uncle's name, Singh added. The officer said that Haq, a cybercafe owner from Shaheen Bagh, allegedly used Photoshop to forge electricity bills for Naim, an electrician who applied for a change of address on his voter ID card using fake documents. "Khatoun, a housewife from Shaheen Bagh, was also found using forged electricity bills to apply for an address change on her voter ID card," DCP Singh said. He further mentioned, "Efforts are being made to identify and apprehend other individuals involved in the forgery network. Evidence collected so far indicates a systematic misuse of technology and forged documents to manipulate the electoral registration process."

## AIIMS Delhi launches new portal for patient redressal, to instal AI-enabled CCTV cameras



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

All India Institute Of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, has launched a redressal grievance system through which patients can submit complaints and feedback, and track the status of their issues in real-time. According to AIIMS officials, SANTUSHT, the portal, is functional in the institute's Mother and Child Block. Dr M Srinivas, Director, AIIMS, said Monday patients can register complaints by scanning a QR code and submitting their concerns in text, audio, or video format. "Once a complaint is submitted, it is directed to the responsible personnel for resolution, ensuring actions are taken promptly and efficiently within 24 hours," said Dr Srinivas during a press conference. Dr Srinivas said through the portal he wants to emphasise prompt, compassionate responses, and continuous improvement based on patient input, ensuring a positive and personalised healthcare experience. "The portal maintains strict security measures to protect patient information and ensure confidentiality, having successfully undergone a security audit by AAA Technologies and got a Security Audit certificate. It is live and successfully running in the MCH Block," he added.

Along with this, another portal named SAHAS will also

be introduced for AIIMS employees for comprehensive HR, financial, and procurement management. Taking a cue from the R G Kar Medical College and Hospital rape and murder case, AIIMS would also instal AI-enabled CCTV cameras and facial recognition for enhanced security and access control. Dr Srinivas said these steps are being taken to ensure data digitalisation and the safety of doctors.

Providing the details of the work done under his tenure of more than two years, the AIIMS director said around 1,000 more beds have been added to patient care in the last 2.5 years. "The fundamental thing has been good governance and transparency. We expanded hospital services and added 425 beds in the mother and child block. This is exclusively for obstetrics, oncology, paediatric, and paediatric surgery. In addition, 200 beds have come in the surgical block and a national centre for ageing comprising 200 beds has also come up and are functional," he added. Dr Srinivas said 127 beds have been added to cater to private wards as well. "As new blocks have come up, our operation theatres have also increased to the tune of 50 per cent, our ICU beds have increased to the tune of 40 per cent, and there are now 3,600 inpatient beds in the whole campus put together so in a way we have increased operation theatres, ICU capabilities, and inpatient beds." He said medical investigations have been made available round the clock which has enhanced radiological services, including CT, MRIs, and X-rays, at AIIMS. "This has increased our capabilities for radiological services by 20 per cent and laboratory services by 15 per cent," said Dr Srinivas. He said AIIMS has created almost 9 lakh Abha IDS under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) for which the institute got an award from the National Health Authority. "More than 30,000 patients have been treated under the Ayushman Bharat scheme and various Jan Aushadhi Kendras have also come under that," he said.

## Manish Sisodia launches crowdfunding platform to raise funds



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections, Aam Aadmi Party's sitting Patparganj MLA Manish Sisodia Monday launched a crowdfunding platform to garner support for his poll campaign. Sisodia will contest the late-February Delhi elections from Jangpura. In a statement, the AAP said through the platform manishsisodia.aamaadmi.org, people can "transparently donate any amount, starting from

₹100, to support his vision of advancing the politics of work, education, and development in Delhi."

Addressing the need for the crowdfunding campaign, Sisodia said, "To contest elections, I require funds. For the past decade, I have worked honestly and tirelessly alongside Arvind Kejriwal, transforming Delhi's schools and other systems. I have dedicated myself to the welfare of Delhi's people, without ever saving money for personal gains." "Appealing for public support, Sisodia said, "I am preparing to contest from the Jangpura Assembly constituency, and I hope people will support me in this endeavour. Those who believe in bringing change to the country, ensuring quality education in excellent schools and colleges for every child, empowering them to shape their own future, and establishing honest governance will stand with my campaign." Sisodia also said the AAP is fully prepared to contest the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections. "Our workers are fully prepared, tirelessly working in their respective constituencies to ensure Arvind Kejriwal is re-elected as the chief minister of Delhi. I have been entrusted with the responsibility of contesting from the Jangpura Assembly constituency by Arvind Kejriwal and AAP workers," he said.

## To ensure partygoers' safety, Pune auto-rickshaw drivers' union launches 'You Drink, We Drive' initiative



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

A union of auto-rickshaw drivers in Pune has launched a service to ensure commuter safety this New Year's Eve. The "You Drink, We Drive," service by Prepaid Auto Booth at Pune Railway Station, launched in collaboration with the Baghtoy Rickshawala Sangathana, encourages partygoers, especially those consuming alcohol, to hire auto-rickshaws or cabs instead of driving under the influence. According to Baghtoy Rickshawala Sangathana, commuters see a shortage of rickshaws and cabs on New Year's Eve. To address this issue, auto-rickshaws and cab drivers associated with the booth and the union will provide a pickup and drop-off service at government-approved fares. Keshav Kshirsagar, spokesperson, Baghtoy Rickshawala Sangathana, said the arrangement has been made to ensure passengers are picked up from their homes, transported safely to their destinations, and dropped back home afterwards. "This initiative aims to reduce the risks associated with drunk driving and provide a hassle-free experience for commuters. Passengers need to WhatsApp us and book an auto or a cab using our registered number," he said. Kshirsagar said fares would be charged according to government-approved rates: Rs 17 per km for auto rickshaws and Rs 25 per km for cabs. "Passengers must book by calling our designated number (8999448149) and pay an advance of Rs 1,000 to secure the service, as many individuals might refuse to pay after consuming alcohol," he added. Additionally, if passengers request the driver to wait for more than one hour at their party venue or pub, a waiting charge of Rs 500 per hour will apply.

Addressing women's safety concerns, the union head assured that measures have been implemented to track the drivers' movements. "All drivers are registered with the prepaid booth and the police. We are committed to ensuring women feel safe, even late at night," he said. He said passengers have also been advised to safeguard their personal belongings and any damage to the vehicle, such as vomiting inside, will incur cleaning charges.

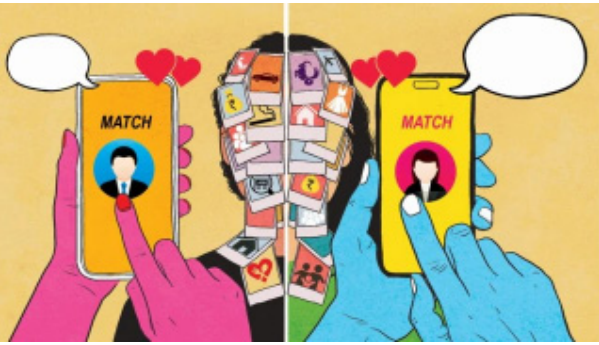
## 37 years later, man gets 20 years in jail for bid to smuggle 4,000 kg hashish in drums as 'mango chutney'

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

A special court on Monday sentenced a 65-year-old man to 20 years in jail in a case dating back to 1987, when over 4,000 kg drugs hidden in drums ready to be exported as "mango chutney" to London were seized. The court said that Nitin Khimji Bhanushali was found to be working as part of a syndicate for illicit trafficking of contraband substance, hashish, under the guise of exporting food articles.

Bhanushali, a resident of Santacruz, was also directed to pay a fine of Rs 10 lakh. He was convicted under various sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, and Customs Act. Bhanushali was serving a prison term in another case in Rampur district jail in Uttar Pradesh and was brought to Mumbai in 2018 to face trial in this case. The case from 1987—two years after the NDPS Act was enacted—was probed by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI). The DRI claimed that it had received information that there was a conspiracy to export hashish from India and that drugs were stored in a warehouse in Vikhroli, the eastern suburbs of the city. On July 1, 1987, the agency began keeping a watch on the warehouse. It was alleged that the accused found out that there had been a leak, and nobody visited the warehouse, fearing action. The next day, the DRI raided the warehouse and found 550 plastic drums stored there. While 50 drums were empty, the remaining were filled with mango chutney, of which 194 drums had plastic packets inside them. These packets contained dark brown substance, which was later found to be hashish. The DRI seized 4,365 kg hashish, valued at Rs 2.6 crore in India and Rs 40 crore abroad. The drums also had a sticker, "Sweet Sliced Mango Chutney" pasted on them, stating that it was an Indian condiment and with the name of a company, Shivam Food Products, which probe later showed, was not in existence. The DRI searched various properties and named ten persons as accused, including Bhanushali. The DRI claimed that one foreign national, named Markos, as part of the conspiracy had approached a manufacturer of mango chutney, but was told that the condiment would only be available during mango season. Subsequently, Markos, whose real name was revealed to be Ibrahim, and who remains a wanted accused, assembled others to export the drug. Hashish was procured, mango chutney was bought from a factory in Wada in Maharashtra, and fake documents to show that the chutney was to be exported were prepared, and the drums were instead packed in the drums and stored at the warehouse, the DRI claimed. Among those arrested was the owner of the warehouse, drivers and those who had supplied the chutney. In a previous trial against three persons which concluded in 2010, all of them were acquitted, including one person named as the main accused, on various grounds including that there was ill-treatment and illegal detention of those accused. Since Bhanushali had a previous conviction under the NDPS Act, special public prosecutor Vijendra Mishra sought the maximum punishment, the death penalty. Bhanushali, who attended the proceedings in a wheelchair, had sought leniency on the ground that he has many ailments and is unable to walk or do chores on his own. Special Judge S E Bangar said on Monday that addiction to narcotic drugs is spreading widely in the society and the younger generation is vulnerable to it. "The accused persons were found possessing a huge quantity of contraband substance which was commercial in nature and of huge value in the international market while it was sought to be exported by evading the Customs and by violating the provisions of law," the court said.

## When it feels (swipe) right: Finding love in Delhi, one match at a time



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

As the sun sets on the lake at the 14-Century Hauz Khas Fort in Delhi, a 23-year-old woman settles down with her cappuccino at a tony café a short distance away. Her hair is tied up in a sleek bun, her make-up minimal – soft pink blush on her cheeks – but it is her eyes that do the talking. Oscillating between her smartphone and the café entrance, they finally stop at the latter as a strapping young man walks in. This is a 25-year-old tech employee, and more importantly, the woman's "match". The duo connected on a dating app last week; this is their first in-person meeting. The woman is excited but also nervous. "The first dates always feel like this. It is like I'm battling with myself, wishing that the person is just as appealing, if not more, in reality as they seemed online," she shares as she fiddles with her gold earrings. "My parents think I am out with college friends. They wouldn't understand this... modern way of meeting people," says the Rajouri Garden resident.

Until a decade ago, the couple who met online would have been an anomaly. But with technology rapidly taking over every aspect of life, online dating seems to have become a norm more than an exception for young adults looking for companionship in a busy, demanding modern world. And Delhi, being a melting pot with people from all walks of life and parts of the country making it their home, seems to be playing a perfect backdrop for fledgling virtual-to-real love stories to play out. While the 23-year-old met her online match in person, a 22-year-old Delhi University (DU) student is still weighing his options. His thumb hovering over his smartphone screen, the multiple dating apps at his disposal have opened up a world of possibility and hope outside of his conservative family in his hometown, Kanpur, in Uttar Pradesh. "I am the first among my cousins to try out this dating method," he declares as he swipes right on a potential match. The proliferation of smartphones and dating apps has revolutionised how young Delhiites approach relationships. During the pandemic in 2020, Tinder became a virtual lifeline for many, providing much-needed human interaction. An official statement from the app noted that "60% of members came to Tinder because they felt lonely and wanted to connect with people. Gen Z specifically sought out Tinder to meet new people and get out of their echo chambers." Like the student, a 20-year-old woman is finding a way out of her small-town life through the few dating apps that dot her phone screen. "My parents are already talking about arranged marriage, but I want to explore. Dating apps give me that freedom," says the woman, an undergraduate DU student who hails from Haryana's Fatehabad.

She finds the option to make the first move on Bumble "empowering". Recounting a date from a few months ago, she says, "We went out for a drink and it felt good, it didn't pan out into a relationship, though." To be sure, meeting a potential partner through the online medium is not entirely new for Indians what with a multitude of matrimonial websites, riding the "dotcom boom", proliferating the internet over the last few decades. For a 30-year-old banker who lives with his parents in Dwarka Sector-23, though, these websites are yet to catch up with what modern partner-seekers want. "It is a frustrating process as the people I met on these (websites) are very conservative. What usually matters is one's salary package, caste, and whether the horoscopes match or not. I don't believe in astrology and, being a part of these platforms, I felt I was going against my beliefs," says the man, who eventually transitioned to Hinge, where he found a partner "more in line with his values". He has been dating her for two months now.

The banker's success story does little to assuage the skepticism of a 27-year-old psychologist about dating apps.

"It is like shopping for a partner..." she says. "The endless choices can be overwhelming. You keep second-guessing every connection because you know there are always more profiles to look at." Having found a partner at her workplace, the woman, who hails from Madhya Pradesh's Bhopal, says she feels relieved about being "out of the online dating cycle". "It is exhausting to keep up with conversations. Sometimes, people ghost you for no reason, or you feel pressured to perform, to be interesting at all times... Trust is also a big issue," she tells The Indian Express. An interesting aspect of Delhi's dating revolution is how age plays a role in the apps people choose. While Tinder and Bumble dominate among 18-25-year-olds, slightly older users between the ages of 25-35 lean toward apps like Hinge and Aisle. Hinge, which brands itself as "designed to be deleted," appeals to young professionals who are increasingly tired of the casual dating scene. Other variables like career goals, cultural expectations, and the desire for deeper connections further shape the experiences of older daters. The psychologist says, "... Career-focused people often look for partners with similar ambitions. That's why apps like Aisle are appealing — it's not just about looks, but lifestyle compatibility... The desire for deeper connections grows with age... By the time you're nearing 30, you're looking for more than just a fling." A 29-year-old entrepreneur, who works in the field of fashion, agrees. A resident of Southwest Delhi, she recounts her experience of transitioning from Tinder to Hinge: "When I was younger, Tinder was fun — meet someone, grab a drink, maybe see where it goes. But now I'm at a stage in my life where I'm looking for something more serious. Hinge feels like the right place for that. People seem more grounded, more open to having deeper conversations."

She shares that she once spent weeks texting a guy on Bumble "... but despite me initiating a meeting repeatedly, he never showed any interest. One day, he finally agreed to meet... but that day, I was left in a coffee shop... he never showed up... That was a wake-up call for me..." A 22-year-old student at Miranda House also says it is hard to find someone truly compatible. "Even on dating apps, people make judgments based on where you live, which car you drive, or even your last name," she laments.

In a world where the line between online and offline is a razor-thin one, it is also hard to compartmentalise a connection in one straight, neat category. Sharing one such experience, the Miranda House student says, "I met this guy at a college fest and we got talking. That felt more organic than dating apps because there were no expectations right away. But we eventually added each other on Instagram, and it, sort of, blended into online dating!" For many, compatibility means also being on the same page in terms of religion. This is where religion-specific apps, such as Muzmatch and Salaam, which target Muslims, come into play. "I was looking for a serious relationship and one within my community..." says a 41-year-old professional. Although, the skewed gender ratio, here in favour of women, made him back off. "You end up matching with very few people as compared to women," he shares. For Delhi's LGBTQ+ community, dating apps are a double-edged sword. While they provide them the anonymity to explore their sexuality without the prying eyes of society, they also expose them to criminals looking to take advantage of their vulnerability. "Someone asked me to send them money. Another time, my photos were used to create fake profiles," says a 22-year-old from Jasola Vihar. A 28-year-old shares similar experiences on Grindr. "He asked me for minimal amounts, like Rs 1,000-Rs.1,500, citing a family emergency. This is when I unmatched with him," he shares about a date. In another instance, he was stunned to find pictures of his body on someone else's profile. These two experiences are not isolated cases. Over the last few years, cases of people using fake profiles on dating apps to extort money or inviting people on dates only to present them with an inflated bill in connivance with café staffers have made headlines. The 2022 case of Shradha Walkar, who met her partner, later accused of murdering her, through Bumble is still fresh in many minds. However, the hope of finding love through the virtual medium, where most youngsters spend a huge chunk of their waking hours these days, seems to override the risks. As a Master's student at South Asian University sums it up: "Dating in Delhi is like the city itself — chaotic, contradictory, sometimes frustrating, but always exciting. We are all just trying to find our way, one date at a time."

## Support startups: CM to technical universities in UP



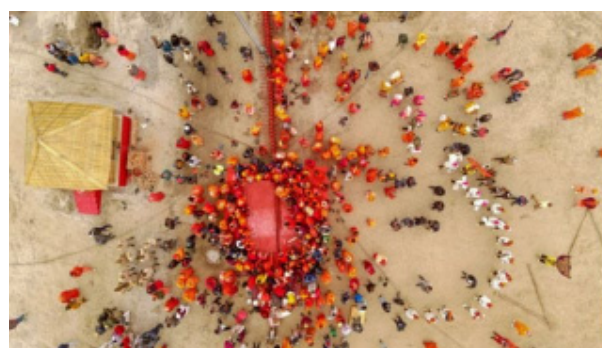
GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday convened a meeting regarding the UP Innovation Fund (UPIF) and directed all three technical universities in the state to promote innovation and support startups. Adityanath emphasised the importance of setting up innovation centres in these universities with full facilities to assist student entrepreneurs. Also, he called for comprehensive mapping of global and local markets to guide students in developing

innovations aligned with current demands. In the meeting, he said, "Innovation must keep pace with changing technology and global market trends. To achieve this, Centres of Excellence should be established to drive new innovations. Centres for Innovation must also be established in all three technical universities for which the government will provide the necessary funding."

The CM reiterated that while the government has ample funds, young innovators often lack financial support. He stressed the importance of channeling funds through universities to empower students. He instructed officials to draft a detailed plan to implement these measures. He also called for development of trades based on global market mapping. Adityanath said, "Technical universities should provide space for ODOP (One District One Product) initiatives alongside modern technology." He directed universities to collaborate with IITs to enhance their innovation capabilities. A contribution of Rs 400 crore was approved two years ago to support startups. Simultaneously, investment managers were expected to contribute between Rs 1,200 crore and Rs 3,600 crore.

## Land allocation done through portal, transparency ensured: Maha Kumbh Mela Authority



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Days after the Samajwadi Party (SP) criticised Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath alleging irregularities and harassment of sadhus in allocation of land in Mahakumbh Nagar, the Kumbh Mela administration on Monday claimed that the allocation of land is being done through 'Maha Kumbh Land and Facility Allocation' portal and land that "complete transparency" was being ensured in the process. A state government spokesperson said the Prayagraj Mela Authority is ensuring "complete transparency and departmental accountability in land allocation and basic services for the fair". Applicants can submit online applications and track the status of their allocated land and provided facilities at any time.

The SP's media cell, in a statement posted on X on December 21, had showed a picture of a seer alleging that he was facing harassment and running from one office to another seeking allocation of land in Mela area. The post also alleged the Maha Kumbh has been "commercialised" in an aim at earning money instead of providing services to the seers and the pilgrims. In a response to the allegations, the Mela Authority shared details on Monday regarding the allocation procedure. According to the Authority, in Kumbh 2019, the details and allocations of over 5,500 institutions were digitised. This time, land is being allocated to over 10,000 institutions, including government, emergency, social, and religious organisations. This transparent system ensures that saints and institutions can complete their work

easily and promptly without standing in long queues. In this 'Amrit Mahotsav Maha Kumbh', the authority informed that more than 40 crore devotees are expected to visit Prayagraj to take holy dip. Additionally, lakhs of people will observe 'Kalpavas' (stay on bank of Sangam) during the Maha Kumbh. According to Additional Mela Officer Vivek Chaturvedi, a GIS-based map has been utilised to design the layout of the Kumbh Mela, spanning 4,000 hectares across 25 sectors. Pre- and post-monsoon drone surveys were conducted to create precise topographic maps of the land. These surveys resulted in preparation of high-resolution maps, GIS-based layers, and geo-referenced CAD files with an accuracy of 0.5 cm. The Prayagraj Mela Authority has accepted applications from institutions that participated in Kumbh 2019 as well. For this, the authority conducted extensive publicity through local and national newspapers and invited applications on its portal from October 29, 2024, to November 12, 2024.

The 2019 Kumbh data was analysed to allocate land and facilities following established rules. After application analysis, allocation, and approval by the authority, digitised facility slips were created. Vendors can view these facility slips online and update the details, including photos, in coordination with the institutions. The digital and online system is allowing applicants to access updates about their land allocation and facilities at any time and raise objections if necessary. To assist with facilitating devotees and expediting their requests, a large number of 'Kumbh Fellows' have been deployed to support the Mela administration. There is complete digitisation of application data with live tracking of application status and allocation, the spokesperson said. Automated data flows between vendors and government departments related to facility slips for timely establishment. Third-party inspection and verification committee model is done for validation with photographic evidence of facility setup. Customised MIS reports and comprehensive institutional analysis is done by the Prayagraj Mela Authority. This software will enable the authority to complete land and facility allocation on time with minimal queues and physical appointments by institutional representatives.

## At mahapanchayat in Greater Noida, farmers step up pressure on govt

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Intensifying their protests related to land acquisition, farmers from Ghaziabad, Jewar, Meerut, Agra, Aligarh and Bulandshahr gathered for a mahapanchayat in Greater Noida Monday in response to the Bharatiya Kisan Union's (BKU) call. This comes a day after UP CM Yogi Adityanath directed authorities to swiftly resolve the grievances of protesting farmers. The farmers have demanded a hike in compensation and implementation of the 2013 land acquisition bill. They also sought that 10% of the developed land be allocated back to them. In the case of residential and commercial land, they sought a 64.7% rise in compensation rates to match inflation. They also demanded the release of the farmers lodged in jail. BKU leader Rakesh Tikait, who reached the Yamuna Expressway loop, also known as Zero Point, at 2.05 pm, said in the last few years, prices of every item have gone up. "Then why was the circle rate not increased? For Gautam Buddha Nagar, the issue is land acquisition. If the government does not listen, we will keep protesting."

Addressing the crowd, BKU leader Ravinder Pradhan said: "We gave our land in the name of development of cities in Gautam Buddha Nagar... First Noida Authority, then Greater Noida Authority, and now Yamuna Authority, they have all taken away our rights," he alleged. "Last month, the UP government formed a committee to implement the recommendation of another committee formed in February for increased compensation and developed plots," he further said. "It has been nearly one month, but there is no update from this committee. They have not held any meeting with the local farmers, and we feel there is no significant up-



date," said Pradhan.

Several farmers also presented their grievances against the authorities. Narender Nagar from Dankaur said his 22-acre land was acquired for the development of the Yamuna Expressway in 2018. "I've not received my share of the developed land and increased compensation. This is why I came here today," he said, with documents in his hand.

The CM, chairing a meeting on Sunday with the Chief Executive Officers of Noida, Greater Noida and Yamuna authorities, asked officials to address farmers' concerns. Noida Authority CEO Lokesh M said the CM directed them to implement the actionable recommendations submitted by a state-level committee earlier. "We have already started implementing these recommendations, with surveys underway in villages. Issues regarding the lease-back of farmers' lands will also be taken up soon," he said.

## BJP claims Sanjay Singh's wife registered as voter in UP, he hits back

A day after AAP MP Sanjay Singh accused the BJP of attempting to remove his wife Anita Singh's name from the voter list in Delhi, BJP IT cell chief Amit Malviya alleged she is registered as a voter in both Sultanpur, Uttar Pradesh and New Delhi, adding that the Election Commission should take action in this regard. In response, Sanjay Singh rejected the allegations and announced that he would file defamation cases against Malviya and BJP MP Manoj Tiwari who had shared a related post by Malviya on X. Addressing a press conference on Sunday, Sanjay Singh claimed the BJP's move was in retaliation after he raised the issue of voter deletions of Purvanchalis in Parliament. "They filed an application to delete my wife's vote to teach me a lesson," Singh had said.

Malviya, posting Anita Singh's affidavit on the social media platform X, stated, "In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections,

both AAP MP Sanjay Singh and his wife voted in Delhi. If Anita Singh is registered in UP's Sultanpur as per her sworn affidavit, her Delhi vote is both invalid and illegal. @ECISVEEP must step in and act." Sharing photos of Anita Singh's affidavit, Malviya added, "Who can be more degraded than a man dragging his wife into the quagmire of politics? If she is a voter of Sultanpur, her name cannot be on Delhi's voter list. And if she votes in both places, it's a crime." His post was reposted by BJP MP Tiwari. Singh rejected the allegations and threatened to file a defamation case. "On the EC website, search for Anita Singh's name at booth number 220-29-35. She voted in Delhi in the May Lok Sabha elections," he said. Singh also accused BJP leaders of disrespecting Purvanchalis and defaming his family. "I have had a public life for 30 years, and these baseless allegations are humiliating. Amit Malviya and Manoj Tiwari will face justice for their lies," Singh said.

## Stalker who pushed college student to death in front of train in Chennai sentenced to death

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

A special court in Chennai on Monday sentenced a man to death for killing a 20-year-old college student, whom he pushed in front of a moving train at a crowded railway station in 2022. The man, D Sathish, 25, was also sentenced to three years of rigorous imprisonment under the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Harassment of Women Act.

He was fined Rs 35,000, and the court ordered Rs 10 lakh compensation for the victim's younger sisters. The judgment was delivered by Judge J Sridevi of the Mahila Court in Chennai, following Sathish's conviction on December 27 for murder under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code and harassment under Section 4 of the Tamil Nadu anti-harassment law. The death sentence is subject to confirmation by the Madras High Court. The victim, S Sathya, was a college student in Tambaram, south of Chennai. On October 13, 2022, Sathya was waiting at the St Thomas Mount railway station with a classmate to board a train when Sathish approached her. A former friend turned stalker, Sathish had been harassing Sathya since her engagement a month earlier. The two had a heated argument before Sathish shoved Sathya onto the tracks just as a train hurtled into the station. She died instantly. Eyewitnesses reported the horrific scene, and CCTV footage captured the crime, forming a crucial part of the evidence presented during the



trial. Sathish, who fled the scene, was arrested in a few hours. Soon after the news of her death reached Sathya's home, her father died by suicide. Both Sathya and Sathish lived in police quarters in Alandur, a neighbourhood in Chennai. Sathya's mother is a police constable, and Sathish's father a retired sub-inspector. The families had once been friends, but the relationship soured due to Sathish's obsessive behaviour. During the trial, over 70 witnesses testified against Sathish. "The accused is sentenced to death and is to be hanged by the neck till he is dead," the judge said in her order. The judgment will now move to the Madras High Court for confirmation, a standard procedure.

## Mahakumbh Nagar hospital welcomes two newborns

Amid preparations for the Maha Kumbh Mela, which is scheduled to start in January, the Central Hospital established in Mahakumbhnagar, Prayagraj, facilitated the delivery of a baby girl on Monday, marking the second consecutive day of deliveries. A baby boy was born in the hospital on Sunday. With the consent of the families, the baby girl has been named 'Ganga' while the boy is named 'Kumbh'. Deputy CM and Health Minister Brajesh Pathak, who extended congratulations to the two families, told The Indian Express that this hospital has been set up to serve the millions of people arriving for the Maha Kumbh. Pathak said the 100-bed Central Hospital established in the Parade area of Maha Kumbh Mela, is well-equipped with fa-

cilities including OPD, general ward, delivery centre, ICU and operation theatre. People have started getting treatment at this hospital. Separate wards have been set up for male, female and children. The hospital is also equipped with diagnostic centres such as X-Ray, biochemistry lab and ultrasound, he added. Shivkumari, a resident of Banda district and Sonam of Kaushambi district gave birth to a baby girl and baby boy, respectively. Hospital staff informed that Sonam had arrived at the hospital with her husband, Raja, after experiencing labour pain. The couple, who came to the Maha Kumbh Mela area in search of work, sought immediate medical attention at the hospital.

## Hiring new recruits for every heist, stealing rice and clothes: Delhi's serial thief has a 'unique' modus operandi



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

When more than 3,000 kg of rice in 71 bags was stolen from a warehouse in Alipur on December 26, police did not anticipate that the key accused would turn out to be a seasoned thief with a 'unique' modus operandi. On Sunday, Ravi aka Gopal aka Mama, who has more than 40 cases registered against him, was arrested along with two accomplices, identified as Sanjay Kumar and Rakesh Kumar, in what the officials dubbed as the rice robbery case. "Ravi has been arrested multiple times. But every time he was released, he would quickly return to his old ways," Nidhin Valsan, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer North), said.

To evade arrest, the 54-year-old seasoned thief from Bihar ensured he worked with different accomplices for every heist, according to police. "He never worked with the same set of accomplices twice. Instead, he would recruit new people for every heist, ensuring his criminal networks remain difficult to track," another officer, who was part of the investigation, said. More than 150 people associated with

him have landed in jail over the years, officials said. Among other quirks of Ravi, who has been booked in cases linked to robbery, dacoity and the Arms Act, is that he allegedly committed thefts in stolen vehicles. "He targeted warehouses, spent time observing the location, and then committed the robbery using stolen vehicles," an officer said. According to DCP Valsan, he mostly stole daily consumables, like rice, clothes, and other items that could be easily sold in the open market. His decision to focus on such goods, Valsan added, "was his calculated approach to theft, choosing only those items that would bring the least attention when sold".

The complaint in the rice robbery case was filed after the security guard of the warehouse, who was injured by the accused, approached police. A case of robbery was registered under sections 309(4), 309(6) and 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). A team led by Inspector Shaileendra Kumar (SHO Alipur), under the supervision of Sushil Kumar Gaur (ACP Samaypur Badli), with the help of CCTV footage and local intelligence identified and arrested the three suspects. Police also recovered a stolen Mahindra Bolero pickup truck, which was used to commit the crime, said officials. "During the investigation, it was found that they also used the vehicle to steal 30 bags of kids wear from Burari earlier this month," an officer said. DCP Valsan added, "They stole the Mahindra Bolero from Moti Nagar before proceeding to Alipur and Burari, where they stole bags of rice and kids' clothing." Valsan said the investigation into this case is ongoing, and the police are continuing to track down additional stolen goods. In addition to the rice and kids' clothing, the authorities are also investigating the theft of a carton of clothes that was found among the stolen goods.

## Bengal govt hindering India-Bangladesh border fencing: Suwendu Adhikari

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Senior BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari on Monday accused the West Bengal government of deliberately hindering efforts to secure land for constructing BSF outposts and other vital infrastructure along the Bangladesh border, thus endangering national security. Addressing a press conference in Kolkata, he said, "The West Bengal government is obstructing the land acquisition process to build Border Outposts (BOPs) and fences to secure the border. While the central government is willing to bear all expenses, the state government is deliberately not providing the land." However, the Trinamool Congress, denied the charges as "baseless" and accused Adhikari of trying to politicise the issue.

"The allegations against the state government are baseless. The state government has provided all possible help to the BSF and other central agencies. Adhikari is trying to pin blame on the state government to divert attention from the failures of the central government," TMC said. According to Adhikari, 456.474 km area along the Indo-Bangladesh border is feasible for fencing, out of which land acquisition cases are on an area of 284.56 km, which is important for preventing infiltration. There are a total of 133 land acquisition cases covering an area of 284.56 km, he said. "The centre has issued directions for creation of Border Protection Grid with institutional mechanism at district level standing committee, to meet on a monthly basis, but this is yet to be implemented by the state government," Adhikari alleged.

Additionally, the Leader of Opposition in Assembly, further alleged that 17 land acquisition cases related to Border outposts, which are important for border protection, are pending. Also 11 key location plans required for headquarters are pending with the State government, he said. He also raised concerns about the delay in the construction of border fencing, saying that 569.254 km of the international border in the state still remains unsecured, with significant portions being vulnerable to infiltration and smuggling. "In Bengal, 95 villages are situated ahead of fences, which are the source of infiltration and trans-border crimes. Despite repeated requests, the state government has not made any effort to shift any of these villages," Adhikari pointed out. Adhikari's remarks came amid growing concerns about infiltration and transborder crimes in the state, particularly along the 2,216 km long India-Bangladesh border.

## Ahead of Delhi polls, DDA launches special scheme for construction workers — 700 flats at 25% discount



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

DDA approving the scheme at a meeting Monday, Lt-Governor VK Saxena, who serves as the Chairman of DDA, said this decision will "prove a monumental turning point in the lives of such people". Ahead of the Assembly elections in Delhi next year, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) Monday launched a special scheme to offer 700 flats in Narela to construction workers at a discounted price. The planning and development agency has also introduced discounts for other categories for its flats at three locations across the Capital. Under the Special Housing Scheme, the DDA will be offering a 25% discount on 700 flats in the EWS (Economically Weaker Section) category in Sector G2, Narela, to construction workers and beneficiaries of the PM Vishwakarma scheme.

Construction workers should be registered under the Delhi Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board (DBOCWWB). The DDA is also collaborating with financial institutions for on-the-spot financing initiatives. Registration under the scheme will only be allowed till March 31 next year. Approving the scheme at a meeting Monday, Lt-Governor VK Saxena, who serves as the Chairman of DDA, said this decision will "prove a monumental turning point in the lives of such people, who would be able to live a life of dignity and earn their livelihood."



It is essential for the BSF and the West Bengal Police to hold joint operation to nab miscreants, the LoP said, adding, "The West Bengal Police hardly participates in any joint operation, in the border related incidents involving miscreants committing trans border crime, police remain reluctant to lodge FIR." He also claimed that cattle smuggling is a trans border crime on Indo-Bangladesh border. "West Bengal has 83 cattle haat located within 50km of the border, which are a big source of cattle smuggling and despite many requests, no cattle haat have been shifted," he said. Meanwhile, the BJP leader also accused the state police of non-cooperation with the BSF in controlling cross-border crimes, particularly smuggling, cattle trafficking, and the movement of drugs. "The state police have failed to take necessary actions against transborder criminals. Many of these criminal elements are operating under the protection of the ruling party," he claimed. Adhikari further alleged, "It is only the BSF that apprehends illegal Bangladeshi nationals. In 2023, a total of 1,454 Bangladeshi nationals were apprehended and in 2024 (till December 15), 1,728 Bangladeshi nationals were apprehended by the BSF. In contrast, the West Bengal Police has hardly apprehended any Bangladeshi nationals. Besides this, many individuals who are handed over to the police by the BSF manage to secure bail and are subsequently apprehended again by the BSF. Similarly, Bangladeshi nationals often obtain fake Aadhaar cards with ease. A list of touts involved has been provided to the state police, but no action has been taken." The Ministry of Home Affairs, has written to the Government of West Bengal, recommending the development of a mechanism to prevent the issuance of fake Aadhaar cards, Adhikari said. The MHA has suggested maintaining biometric data of apprehended infiltrators, he added.

## AAP govt hasn't paid us for 17 months: Imams protest outside Kejriwal's home



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Just as AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal announced the Pujari Granthi Samman Scheme at the party headquarters, promising Rs 18,000 a month to pandits working in temples and granthis in gurdwaras if the party returns to power in next year's Assembly polls, a protest by the All India Imam Association (AIIA) broke out at his residence. Sajid Rashidi, AIIA chairman, claimed the AAP government has not released funds to the Delhi Waqf Board to pay salaries to imams and maulvis for the last 17 months despite several requests. "And now they announce a scheme for pujaris and granthis... as polls are nearing. What about us? Don't you care about the Muslim voters who elected you?..."

Rashidi said salaries to imams have been given by the government since 1970 through the waqf board; at present, there are around 240 imams in the city under the board. "Imams have been running around... We met Chief Minister Atishi, the Lieutenant Governor, and senior and junior officers concerned for the past six months and we

are yet to get our salaries... You are now making hollow promises to pujaris and granthis... How will you pay them? It means you have money to pay them and not us... Musalamno ko chhod di apne... Humara vote nahi chahiye ya maina nahi rakhta apko (You have abandoned Muslims. Either you don't want our votes or our votes don't mean anything to you)," alleged Rashidi. AIIA also gave an ultimatum to the AAP government to release their salaries in two days, else imams will sit on an indefinite protest outside Kejriwal's residence. Delhi government sources, however, said instructions to clear the backlog of salaries were issued two days ago. "We have faced problems with disbursement of funds for several schemes because of differences of opinion with the bureaucracy. But the salaries of imams should be cleared soon," an official said. Rashidi also alleged that the imam association has been trying to meet Kejriwal but he did not make time:

"We first went to meet Kejriwal last Thursday to no avail... Officials gave us time to come on Saturday but he did not meet us that day either... We even visited his house but were not allowed to meet him." Expressing dissatisfaction and anger towards the AAP government, Rashidi said, "There is a good percentage of Muslim voters in Delhi. Non-payment of salaries to imams will not go down well with the community..." The association also criticised the other poll promises of AAP such as the Mahila Samman Rashi Yojana and Sanjeevani Yojana. "You are announcing these schemes and your government is disowning them... Release salaries under already implemented schemes before the polls so that the public can believe your promises..." he said.

## Sambhal violence: Police probe role of gangster 'operating from Dubai'

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Sambhal violence: Probing role of local gangster 'operating from Dubai' The investigation took a turn toward possible foreign links after six empty cartridges were recovered from the scene of the violence, one of which was manufactured in Pakistan, police said Monday. THE SAMBHAL police, investigating last month's violent protest, are looking into the alleged involvement of a wanted local gangster who is reportedly operating from abroad. The investigation took a turn toward possible foreign links after six empty cartridges were recovered from the scene of the violence, one of which was manufactured in Pakistan, police said Monday.

"We are collecting information on Shariq Satha, a gangster who hails from the Deepa Sarai area of Sambhal. He has 54 criminal cases registered against him across Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Uttarakhand," said a police officer investigating the violence. SP, Sambhal, Krishan Kumar, confirmed the police are looking into Satha's possible involvement in the November 24 violence. Acting on a court directive, the police attached the gangster's property in Sambhal, as he has been absconding for several years. Police suspect that Satha is operating his gang from Dubai and allegedly giving directives to his associates in India. The Sambhal police are also working to trace Shariq's local associates for questioning in connection with the violence. It is alleged that Shariq fled to Dubai using a fake passport. Sambhal witnessed violent protests on November 24 after a team of



surveyors arrived at the Shahi Jama Masjid to conduct a survey. The clashes resulted in four deaths and left several others, including police personnel, injured. Seven FIRs have been registered in connection with the incident. Police have arrested 50 persons and identified 91 others who are absconding. Raids are underway to locate them and the arrested suspects are lodged in jail, police said. Meanwhile, a Samajwadi Party (SP) delegation visited Sambhal and met the families of those who died in the violence. The delegation handed over cheques of 5 lakh each to the kin of the deceased, said the party's Sambhal district president Asgar Ali. Last month, Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav constituted a delegation comprising SP MPs and MLAs, including Sambhal MP Zia-ur-Rehman Barq. The delegation was tasked with visiting Sambhal to gather details about the violence and submitting a report to him.

## BJP's Nitesh Rane: Kerala a mini-Pakistan, terror vote for Rahul, Priyanka Gandhi



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

CALLING KERALA a "mini-Pakistan", BJP's Maharashtra Minister Nitesh Rane has said that "all terrorists" vote for Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, referring to their election from Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency in the southern state. Addressing a rally in Pune's Purandar tehsil on Sunday, Rane said in Marathi: "Kerala is a mini-Pakistan... That is why Rahul Gandhi and his sister are elected from there. All terrorists vote for them. This is the truth, you can ask. They have become MPs after taking terrorists with them." As he faced sharp criticism from Opposition parties on Monday, Rane, who holds the Fisheries and Ports portfolios in the state, said he only sought to raise the issue of religious conversion of Hindus and "love jihad" in Kerala.

"Kerala is very much a part of our country. The declining population of Hindus is something that everyone should worry about. Religious conversion of Hindus into Christians

and Muslims is becoming a daily occurrence there. Love jihad cases are also increasing there... I was comparing the situation with the way Hindus are treated in Pakistan. If a similar situation arises in Kerala, then we have to reflect on it. We want our Hindu Rashtra to remain a Hindu Rashtra, and Hindus should be protected in every way... I was just stating the facts so that everyone knows the situation. Whatever I said is based on facts... Let the Opposition, the Congress prove me wrong," he said. Standing by his remarks on Rahul and Priyanka, Rane said: "I said what even the local BJP leadership is saying, and anyone can check who are the people and the organisations supporting them (Rahul and Priyanka) there. Can the Congress come out and say that we are wrong and there is not a single terrorist organisation that supports them in the elections? Let them say that, then we will give more proof. Whatever I said was based on that. Let people know what is happening under the nose of the Congress leadership," he said. "Nitesh Rane became a minister by swearing to keep the unity and integrity of the country intact. But he is calling Kerala a mini-Pakistan, and branding the Opposition's voters as terrorists. Does this person have any right to remain in the Cabinet," Congress spokesperson Atul Londhe said. "The BJP and Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis should clarify their stand on the issue," he said. "If a minister is terming Kerala as Pakistan, then what is the role of the Central Government? What is it doing," senior Congress MLA Vijay Wadetiwar said. "His language is an attack on the Indian identity, terming voters of Rahul and Priyanka as terrorists is an insult to voters," he said. Rahul was elected to the Lok Sabha from Wayanad in 2019 and again in 2024.

## Carterpuri in Gurgaon mourns the death of former US President Jimmy Carter

AT THE imposing Rezang La War Memorial in Gurgaon's Sector 23, a group of men gathered to pay floral tributes to a framed portrait of former United States President Jimmy Carter. "Carter was like one of our own, which is why we decided to pay him our proper respects," said Manoj Rao Yadav, 50, a third-generation Lambardar (village headman responsible for tax collection) from Carterpuri Village, which adjoins Gurgaon's Sector 23. In bidding goodbye to Carter, who died at the age of 100 on Sunday, they remembered the man who gave their nondescript village more than just a sliver of international fame — its moniker, Carterpuri Village.

Yadav said his grandfather was the Lambardar of Daultpur Nasirabad, which was renamed Carterpuri Village in honour of the 39th US President's visit over four decades ago. "My grandfather had welcomed Carter to the village during his visit on January 3, 1978," he said. Though Carter was the third US President to visit India, he holds a

soft spot in the hearts of the residents of Carterpuri Village for his visit in 1978. Carterpuri in Gurgaon mourns the death of former US President Jimmy Carter Former US President Jimmy Carter during his visit in 1978. (Express Archive)

"In the late 1960s, his mother spent a few months in the village doing social work as a member of the United States Peace Corps. During the official visit in January 1978, Carter and his family visited the village purely due to nostalgia. He donated some funds as well as a television set. After his visit, the Haryana government decided to rename the village in honour of President Carter's family," said Major Atul Dev, former INTACH Convenor, Gurgaon Chapter. Mahipal Singh, 50, who owns a cable business, said Carter's mother did a lot of humanitarian work in the area. "At that time, diseases like malaria and chickenpox were spreading like an epidemic," he said. The memory of Carter's visit to the village remains clear in many minds.

"The security arrangements started months before his visit. We, too, started making arrangements for his arrival in advance. On the day of his arrival, the village was decorated like a bride. We invited residents from nearby villages too. The village looked like a village of tents," recalled Ramesh Chand, 71, who owns a grocery store that overlooks the chaulpal (community public place) where Carter was welcomed. "There were so many policemen and Army jawans the day Carter visited our village. We were blown away by it all. He was accompanied by Prime Minister Morarji Desai and Haryana Chief Minister Chaudhary Devi Lal. We made Carter wear a pagdi (turban) and dressed his wife (Rosalynn) in traditional clothes," he said. Back then, residents said, the village had just one pucca house. After the Carters were welcomed at the chaulpal, they were taken to this house, said Attar Singh, 70, a business owner. "There, Morarji Desai told us that they wished to rename the village as Carterpuri."

## Elon Musk reignites debate on H-1B visa programme, calls it 'broken' which needs to be reformed



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

After vowing to "go to war" to defend the H-1B visa programme, tech billionaire Elon Musk has reignited debates surrounding the programme used to bring skilled foreign workers to the U.S. by labelling it "broken" and in urgent need of "major reform." Mr. Musk, along with Indian-American tech entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy, has been tapped by Mr. Trump to lead his Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). Last week, Mr. Musk argued that foreign workers were needed for tech companies like Musk's SpaceX and Tesla. "The reason I'm in America along with so many critical people who built SpaceX, Tesla and hundreds of other companies that made America strong is because of H-1B," Mr. Musk last week wrote on X.

Mr. Musk, however, appeared to retract his earlier statement in response to a post by an X user who said America needed to be a destination for the world's most "elite talent" but argued the current H-1B system was not the solution. "Easily fixed by raising the minimum salary significantly and adding a yearly cost for maintaining the H-1B, making it materially more expensive to hire from overseas than domestically. I've been very clear that the programme is broken and needs major reform," Musk on Sunday said in a post on X.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows U.S. companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China. The tech industry has long called for more

H-1B visas to attract highly skilled workers to the U.S.. Mr. Musk, who was once on an H-1B visa and whose electric vehicle company Tesla has hired workers using the programme, defended the tech industry's need to hire foreign workers. "Anyone - of any race, creed or nationality - who came to America and worked like hell to contribute to this country will forever have my respect. America is the land of freedom and opportunity. Fight with every fibre of your being to keep it that way!" he wrote on X on December 28. Musk's statement also received backing from president-elect Donald Trump whose first administration restricted the programme in 2020, arguing that it allows businesses to replace Americans with lower-paid foreign workers. However, Mr. Trump recently said: "I've always liked the visas, I have always been in favour of the visas. That's why we have them." Mr. Musk has been consistently posting on X in favour of the programme. "There is a permanent shortage of excellent engineering talent. It is the fundamental limiting factor in Silicon Valley," Mr. Musk wrote on December 25 on X. Several of Mr. Trump's supporters and immigration hardliners have been increasingly pushing for scrapping the H-1B visa programme amid debate over immigration. The debate sparked when Laura Loomer, a right-wing influencer, criticised Mr. Trump's selection of Indian-American entrepreneur Sriram Krishnan as an adviser on artificial intelligence policy in his coming administration. Krishnan favours the ability to bring more skilled immigrants into the U.S..

Ms. Loomer declared the stance to be "not America First policy" and said the tech executives who have aligned themselves with Trump were doing so to enrich themselves. The debate intensified when Mr. Ramaswamy criticised American culture for promoting mediocrity instead of focusing on academic excellence and success based on merit. "Trump's election hopefully marks the beginning of a new golden era in America, but only if our culture fully wakes up. A culture that once again prioritises achievement over normalcy; excellence over mediocrity; nerdiness over conformity; hard work over laziness," Ramaswamy said on Thursday. He faced backlash for the comment. In response, Mr. Musk called for removing "contemptible fools" from the Republican Party who oppose his immigration agenda. Mr. Musk later clarified that his statement was addressing the "hateful, unrepentant racists" he considers a threat to the Republican Party's future.

## The Sheikh Hasina extradition demand, India's options

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Months after ousted Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina fled to New Delhi seeking exile during anti-government protests in August 2024, Bangladesh, on December 23, 2024, formally asked India to extradite her for "judicial process". Dhaka sent a note verbale to India's External Affairs Ministry on the same day, with the Press Secretary to Bangladesh's Chief Adviser saying, "We want our relations with India to be based on fairness, equality and dignity", ahead of India's Foreign Secretary's visit to Bangladesh with the hope of rekindling constructive relations between the two countries. Ms. Hasina was declared an absconder for not surrendering after leaving Dhaka on August 5, 2024. A first information report was filed on August 13, 2024 against her and other former associates. She has been charged with conspiracy to eliminate the students involved in protests, and the mistreatment and the killing of hundreds of the protesters, which are labelled as genocide and crimes against humanity. The state machinery is working to collect credible and probative facts for the prosecution to make a strong and winnable case against her. The Dhaka-based International Crimes Tribunal on October 17 issued arrest warrants for Ms. Hasina and 45 others including former Cabinet ministers, advisers and military and civil officials. On November 18, the Tribunal gave the investigation authority a month's time, with the date of December 17, 2024 for them to wrap up the investigation. A charge sheet will be filed soon. Trial in absentia in common law jurisdictions, a trial cannot commence in absence of an accused. To commence this trial, Ms. Hasina must be present before the court and participate either physically or virtually.

As an alternative to this, in some jurisdictions, a lawyer can be presumed to have constructive presence, but it is still contentious in common law jurisdictions. However, Section 339 B of the Code of Criminal Procedure 1898 of Bangladesh says that an accused person can be tried in their absence. Regarding a hearing in absence of an accused, the International Criminal Court (ICC) also has a recent precedent, when on October 29, 2024, its Pre-Trial Chamber III issued a decision to hold a confirmation of charges hearing for suspect Joseph Kony in his absence. Kony, suspected of 36 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity in northern Uganda, was absconding for 19 years. As a matter of fact, Bangladesh appears to be an apt place for trial, as alleged acts have been committed there along with the presence of evidence and victims. While Bangladesh has asked India to extradite Ms. Hasina via a diplomatic channel, the Indian government has not yet commented on this. Although there is an obligation on the state under customary international law under the aut dedere aut iudicare principle to "either extradite or prosecute" any accused facing a grave international crime such as genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, enforced disappearance or torture, India is not obliged to extradite Ms. Hasina to Bangladesh. India's potential defences

India has neither aided, abetted, solicited nor is complicit in the alleged crimes of Ms. Hasina. In 2013, India concluded a bilateral extradition treaty with Bangladesh. It has the Indian Extradition Act 1962, which authoritatively provides a framework for the extradition of nationals and non-nationals. In this case, Bangladesh is the requesting state and India is the requested state. The requested state can take two defences, which bar the claim of Bangladesh to get an extradition. First, India can argue that Ms. Hasina has committed political offences, which are a legitimate ground to reject such a proposal. However, this argument does not look plausible. At least, prima facie there will be no takers to say that the acts of Ms. Hasina appear to be a political offence. Long before her ouster there were reports by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and many other organisations that her regime was involved in state-sponsored violence against the civilian population such as torture, enforced disappearance, persecution and other inhuman acts of high gravity. Therefore, at least, whether she has committed such crimes or not can only be decided by a fair trial. Second, common law follows the rule of non-in-

quiry. It means that, traditionally, extradition is the executive's discretion, and the person concerned cannot seek intervention of the municipal court. However, this practice does not have much support now. Nevertheless, Ms. Hasina, though not an Indian citizen, is still protected by Articles 20 and 21 of the Indian Constitution. In National Human Rights Commission vs State Of Arunachal Pradesh & Anr. (1996), the Supreme Court of India ruled that even a non-citizen is entitled to get protection of Article 21 as it uses the term 'person'. Based on the current situation and the past record of Bangladesh on torture and prison conditions, the Court would have reasonable basis to protect Ms. Hasina and bar the Indian government from extraditing her to Bangladesh. There is, however, a way ahead. The Indian government can allow an in-house arrest of Ms. Hasina in India in the same condition she is staying in and ensure that she participates in her trial through video conferencing with a lawyer of her choice physically present before a Bangladesh court. After this, India can assure Bangladesh that it will fully cooperate in the investigation and evidence gathering. Bangladesh authorities must have access to Ms. Hasina with prior notice. In case the judgment is against her, then too, based on the sentencing agreement, she can undergo her sentencing in India. This measure shows bona fide intent on behalf of India and demonstrates compliance with Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, while safeguarding the risk to and the concerns of the accused.

Ms. Hasina is no longer in power and considering her old age and infirmity, any extraneous treatment is not justifiable for her well-being. She has the right to human rights. This can be achieved through reason and a far-sighted approach. Polemics and emotional arguments can have long-time and serious consequences for India-Bangladesh ties. Bangladesh must understand that Ms. Hasina's trial is important and that she must not be available to face the brunt of vengeance. At the same time, India needs to make room for Bangladesh state agencies to operate and conduct her trial successfully. If this works out, it will show to the international community, a collaborative approach to fair trial as well. ICC's jurisdiction, alternative solution

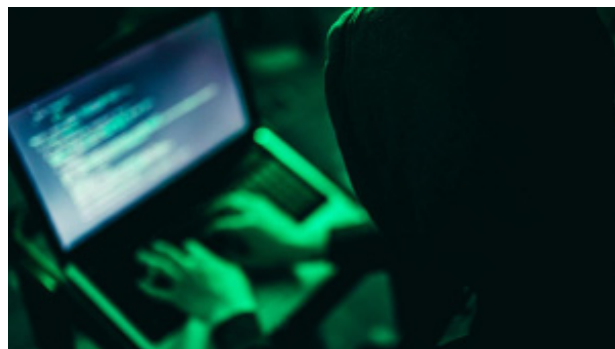
Bangladesh is the 111th state party to the Rome Statute of the ICC. This could be a matter before the ICC, based on Articles 5, 11 and 12 of the Rome Statute, and for fulfilling the ICC's criteria of jurisdictions, i.e., material, personal, territorial, and temporal, as follows: being a 'crimes against humanity', it passes the threshold of gravity (material); it is committed by a citizen of a state party (personal); committed in the territory of Bangladesh (territorial); and occurred after 2002 (temporal). The ICC is a court of last resort, and it must supplement, rather than supplant, national jurisdiction. Its jurisdiction is based on the principle of complementarity, as per Article 17. As Bangladesh has started this trial at the domestic level, the ICC has no reason to intervene. However, Article 53 of the Rome Statute, when read with Article 17, shows that if an accused's rights are in danger, and if proceedings are not conducted independently and impartially, and are conducted in a manner which, in the circumstances, is inconsistent with an intent to bring the person concerned to justice, then there is reasonable ground to believe that the interests of the accused are in grave danger. Ms. Hasina will not be able to get her rights of impartial and independent judicial authority under Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) read with Article 21(3) of the Rome Statute. In that case, the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC (OTP), under Article 15, can start a preliminary examination. Therefore, as an alternative to the first suggestion, it can be possible that under Article 14 of the Rome Statute, Bangladesh can refer this matter to the ICC, or under Article 15 there can be a proprio motu preliminary examination by the OTP. Ms. Hasina can surrender to the ICC with an assurance that she must not be extradited to Bangladesh. Aklavya Anand is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Delhi. Shailesh Kumar is a Lecturer in Law at the Department of Law and Criminology, Royal Holloway, University of London, and a Commonwealth Scholar

## U.S. Treasury says Chinese hackers remotely accessed workstations, documents in 'major' cyber incident

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Chinese hackers remotely accessed several U.S. Treasury Department workstations and unclassified documents after compromising a third-party software service provider, the agency said Monday. The department did not provide details on how many workstations had been accessed or what sort of documents the hackers may have obtained, but it said in a letter to lawmakers revealing the breach that "at this time there is no evidence indicating the threat actor has continued access to Treasury information." It said the hack was being investigated as a "major cybersecurity incident." "Treasury takes very seriously all threats against our systems, and the data it holds," a department spokesperson said in a separate statement. "Over the last four years, Treasury has significantly bolstered its cyber defense, and we will continue to work with both private and public sector partners to protect our financial system from threat actors."

The revelation comes as U.S. officials continue to grapple with the fallout of a massive Chinese cyberespionage campaign known as Salt Typhoon, which gave officials in Beijing access to the private texts and phone conversations of an unknown number of Americans. A top White House official said on Friday (December 27) that the number of telecommunications companies confirmed to have been affected by the hack has now risen to nine. The Treasury Department said it learned of the problem on December 8, when a third-party software service provider,



BeyondTrust, flagged that hackers had stolen a key "used by the vendor to secure a cloud-based service used to remotely provide technical support" to workers. That key helped the hackers override the service's security and gain remote access to several employee workstations.

The compromised service has since been taken offline, and there's no evidence that the hackers still have access to department information, Aditi Hardikar, an assistant Treasury secretary, said in the letter Monday to leaders of the Senate Banking Committee. The department said it was working with the FBI and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and others to investigate the impact of the hack, and that the hack had been attributed to Chinese state-sponsored culprits. It did not elaborate.

## When justice becomes a cruel joke



three-member Bench of the court while empathising with the apartment owners, felt that the buildings could have been saved by imposing heavy costs on the violators. The court had earlier ordered the demolition of Kapico Resorts, built in Nedyathuruthu, an island in Vembanad Lake in Alappuzha district for violating environmental and coastal rules in 2022. Some portions of another resort built on another backwater island were also demolished for violations. The top court also asked the authorities to crack down on the violations along the lake's banks and initiate steps to protect the lake system.

Meanwhile, another multi-storied apartment complex, which was also reportedly built in violation of the CRZ rules at Chilavannur, a few kilometres away from the now-raised Maradu apartments, was spared from the detonators and bulldozers by the top court in 2018. A two-member Bench asked the builder DLF Universal Limited, to remit one crore fine to the authority, which could be used for better enforcement of the CRZ rules.

Last week, the top court deputed Gaurav Agarwal, the amicus curiae, to Maradu panchayat to find out whether construction of new apartments would be possible at the site where the four structures once stood. The changed legal status of the holding under the CRZ 2019 regime and the subsequent requests of some of the builders and the apartment owners for permission for construction prompted the top court to explore the possibility. The holding where the Maradu apartments once stood was included in Zone Three under the CRZ 2011 where the No Development Zone was 100 metres from the High Tide Line.

However, the new CZMP, which was approved for the 10 coastal districts of the State, has included Maradu Municipality in Zone Two, where the restrictions on construction have been significantly eased. The new regime permits construction along the building line of the existing built-up area. It allows construction activities towards the landward side of the authorised structures. As the authorities are busy drawing the building line to demarcate the areas and assess the extent to which constructions are possible, the developments have left the erstwhile residents fuming. Justice delayed, they say, is justice denied. While the demolition of the apartments has sent a strong message that the environmental violators would not be left scot-free, the Maradu apartment owners who lost their abode feel they are the victims of the delayed justice and wisdom that prevailed on the top court. They paid dearly for no fault of theirs. As the top court contemplates undoing what many perceive as an injustice committed to the innocent buyers, its earlier order is unlikely to bring them any solace.

## Uma Thomas Accident: GCDA holds organisers responsible for incident

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

The Greater Cochin Development Authority (GCDA) has pinned the blame on Mridanga Vision, the organisers of Sunday's dance event at the Jawaharlal Nehru International Stadium, for the incident in which Uma Thomas, MLA, was seriously injured after falling from a temporary gallery. "While permitting the event, we made it clear to the organisers that any temporary structure could only be erected with prior approval from the Kochi Corporation, Fire and Rescue Services, and other stakeholders. They were also required to ensure adequate safety and security measures. However, the temporary gallery for guests was set up on Saturday (December 28) night in violation of these conditions." The GCDA, which owns the stadium, said in a statement.

The GCDA added that going forward, it would ensure event organisers strictly adhere to safety norms. This would include steps to improve coordination among the police, Kochi Corporation, Fire and Rescue Services, District Disaster Management Authority, and the Electrical Inspectorate. Ernakulam District Congress Committee (DCC) president Mohammed Shiyas criticised the organisers of the dance event, in which around 12,000 dancers participated in an attempt to enter the Guinness Book of World Records, for their negligence regarding the safety



of guests. "It is shocking that Ms. Thomas fell off the gallery in front of Minister for Culture Saji Cherian, GCDA Chairman Chandran Pillai, and an ADGP. Yet, neither the GCDA, which owns the stadium nor the organisers are taking responsibility. Medical care was also not available within the stadium," he said. The temporary gallery from which Ms. Thomas fell was erected without the mandatory clearances from the police and Fire and Rescue Services, highlighting a complete lack of accountability from the organisers and other stakeholders, he pointed out. The issues, along with allegations of financial irregularities in the event's organisation, should be thoroughly investigated, he added.

## China's manufacturing expands at slower pace in December

Hong Kong: China's factory activity expanded at a slower pace in December, official data showed on Tuesday, despite recent stimulus measures and in the face of increasing trade risks. The Purchasing Managers' Index, based on a survey of factory managers, slipped to 50.1 in December from 50.3 the previous month, the National Bureau of Statistics said Tuesday. It was the third straight monthly reading above 50, a level that indicates an expansion of manufacturing activity.

The slowdown in factory activity was due to a "decline in the output component," according to a note by Capital Economics' Gabriel Ng. "That said, the output price component fell, suggesting downward pressure on prices remains," he said. Overall, new orders rose to an eight-month high, while the exports order index rose to the highest level

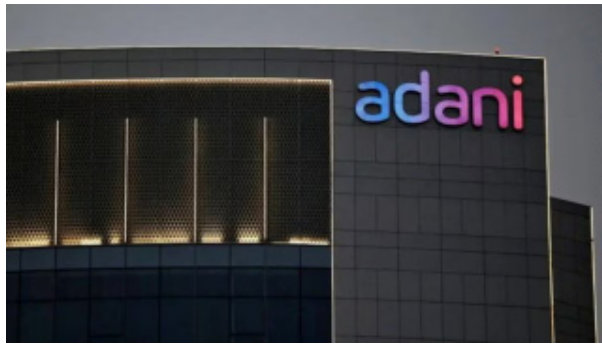
in four months, likely helped by US importers rushing to beat higher tariffs that incoming US President Donald Trump may impose on Chinese goods, Ng said. Trump has pledged to impose 10% tariffs on Chinese goods, raising trade risks for China, the world's largest exporter of goods. China is already grappling with a lagging economy, weighed down by reduced consumption and a real estate crisis. A parallel purchasing managers' index for the non-manufacturing sector, which covers construction and services, rose to 52.2 points up from 50 points in November. The World Bank last week raised forecasts for China's economy growth to 4.9% but warned that reduced confidence among households and businesses, an aging population as well as issues like low consumption and high debt will continue to weigh on China's future growth.

## Adani to exit consumer goods venture Adani Wilmar in \$2 bn deal

Billionaire Gautam Adani's group on Monday announced its exit from FMCG joint venture Adani Wilmar by selling its entire stake to the Singaporean partner and in the open market for over USD 2 billion in a first major deal since the US bribery indictment. In a statement, Adani Enterprises Ltd — which held 43.94 per cent stake in Fortune brand cooking oil, wheat flour and other food product maker Adani Wilmar Ltd — said it will sell 31.06 per cent stake to Wilmar International. The remaining about 13 per cent holding will be sold in the open market to meet minimum public shareholding requirements. Adani will sell up to 40.37 crore shares (31.06 per cent stake) to Wilmar at no more than Rs 305 apiece to net Rs 12,314 crore. Adding the share sale through OFS, whose price will be determined on the day of sales, the total proceeds will exceed USD 2 billion (about Rs 17,100 crore).

"With this, AEL (Adani Enterprises Limited) will fully exit Adani Wilmar Ltd," it said. "Adani's nominee directors will step down from the board of Adani Wilmar Ltd." Pranav V Adani, director of AEL and nephew of group founder and chairman Gautam Adani, and Malay Mahadevia will resign from the board upon execution of the agreement. The transaction is expected to conclude before March 31, 2025. Proceeds from the stake sale will be used to turbocharge the growth of AEL in core infrastructure businesses. With this transaction, Adani is back with a bang, removing the liquidity perception overhang. This is the first major transaction post US federal prosecutors in November filing an indictment against group executives over a USD 265 million bribery scheme to win renewable energy supply contracts. Adani group has denied the allegations as baseless and said it will seek legal recourse. "Adani Enterprises Ltd, Adani Commodities LLP (a wholly-owned subsidiary of AEL) and Lence Pte Ltd (a wholly-owned subsidiary of Wilmar International Ltd) have entered into an agreement on December 30, 2024, pursuant to which Lence will acquire all the paid-up equity shares of Adani Wilmar Ltd held by Adani Commodities as at the date of exercise of the call option or put option, as the case maybe, in respect of a maximum of 31.06 per cent of the existing paid up equity share capital of AWL," the statement said.

In addition, "it has been agreed between the parties that AEL will divest a 13 per cent share in Adani Wilmar to achieve compliance with minimum public shareholding requirements," it said without giving details. Adani Wilmar Ltd is an equal joint venture between Adani Group and Singapore-based commodity trader Wilmar. The two partners currently own a combined 87.87 per cent of Adani Wilmar, far above the maximum permissible 75 per



cent. Market regulator Sebi rules mandate that large firms must have at least 25 per cent of shares available to the public within three years from listing. Established in 1999, Adani Wilmar makes Fortune brand cooking oil, wheat flour, pulses, rice and sugar. It owns 23 plants across 10 states. "It may be noted that with completion of these two legs, AEL would completely exit its near 44 per cent holding in Adani Wilmar," the statement said. "As of Friday, December 27, 2024, Adani Wilmar had a market capitalisation of Rs 42,785 crore (USD 5.0 billion)". AEL, in the statement, said it will use "the proceeds from the sale to turbocharge its investments in the core infrastructure platforms in energy and utility, transport and logistics and other adjacencies in the primary industry". It will continue to invest in infrastructure sectors, which will further strengthen its position as India's largest listed incubator of platforms, playing the key macro themes underpinning India's growth story. The funds from the stake sale will strengthen the incubation capacity of AEL and further sharpen the focus on consumer services under airports and Adani Digital. The transaction demonstrates Adani's disciplined approach to finance — at a portfolio level, Adani Group has about 63 per cent equity deployed as a percentage of overall assets. This will increase further as part of this transaction. Consistent with this, AEL raised USD 500 million in October. Other group companies also raised money in recent months — USD 1 billion by Adani Energy Solutions Ltd, USD 500 million by Ambuja Cement, and USD 444 million by Adani Green Energy Ltd. Adani Wilmar is an equal joint venture between Adani Enterprises and Wilmar Group, both holding 43.94 per cent stake each as of September 30, 2024. The FMCG firm posted a consolidated total income of Rs 51,555.24 crore during the last fiscal. Its market capitalisation on Monday stood at nearly Rs 42,000 crore (around USD 5 billion). Adani Wilmar got listed on stock exchanges in February 2022 after raising Rs 3,600 crore through an initial share sale.

## With over \$32 billion investments in 2025, India tops in clean energy sector

New Delhi: As barren arid land gets covered with solar panels and giant windmills dot the coastline, India made it to the high table of clean energy superpowers with installed capacity crossing 200 gigawatts and projections of investment doubling to over \$32 billion in 2025. According to the International Energy Agency, India's annual renewable capacity additions through 2030 are expected to increase more quickly than any other major economy, including China. It seeks India's capacity addition more than quadrupling from 15 GW in 2023 to 62 GW in 2030. By the end of 2024, its installed capacity touched 205 GW. Alongside, domestic solar PV and wind turbine manufacturing is being scaled up as part of the broader commitment to decarbonise and shift away from fossil fuels. India, which has set 2070 as the target for Net Zero, is aiming 500 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030. To achieve this it is looking to add 50 GW of renewable energy (RE) capacity annually. Talking to PTI, Union New & Renewable Energy Minister Pralhad Joshi said, "We have installed a total capacity addition of 24.72 GW RE in the country during the last 11 months of 2024 (from 1st January 2024 to 30th November 2024), compared to 11.83 GW capacity addition during the same period last year." Back-of-envelope calcu-

lations show that the RE capacity addition of 50GW will entail an investment of Rs 2,75,000 crore or USD 32.35 billion (at Rs 85 per USD) Joshi said that 2024 has been a remarkable year for the RE sector and added, "We are working relentlessly to chart the growth of the sector." He informed that in December 2023, as much as 1.23GW RE capacity was added which means that in the entire 2023, 13.06GW of RE capacity was added. The 24.72 GW capacity added from 1st January 2024 to 30th November 2024 includes 20.85 GW Solar Power, 3.22 GW Wind Power, 0.50 GW Bio Power and 0.09 GW Small Hydro Power and 0.06 Large Hydro Power. It has a share of 86.86 per cent in the total installed power generation capacity added during this period (Jan to Nov) in the country (28.46 GW). "For the very first time in 2024, a record amount of Rs 32.45 lakh crore has been pledged," he said. About the PM-Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana for installing rooftop solar and providing free electricity up to 300 units every month for 1 crore households, Joshi informed that there are more than 1.5 crore registrations so far and over 6.85 lakh installations are done till now. On challenges in 2025, he mentioned about the development of new policies to further reduce the cost of Green Hydrogen as well as pursuing remaining States & UTs to issue their Green Hydrogen Policies.

## Blinkit's 10-minute ambulance service puts the spotlight on why India needs more life support units

Zomato-owned quick commerce platform Blinkit has announced a 10 minute ambulance delivery service, as the firm looks to expand beyond grocery and print out deliveries. CEO Albinder Dhindsa said the service will begin with five ambulances in Gurugram. "As we expand the service to more areas, you will start seeing an option to book a Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulance through the Blinkit app," he said in a post on X. Underlining that the facility was not launched with profit as a goal, Dhindsa said the aim was to expand to all major cities in the next two years. A quick commerce platform jumping into ambulance services has highlighted the stark reality of the state of ambulance availability in India, where such vehicles are often difficult to obtain during critical medical needs, with a section of population also priced out owing to the sometimes high upfront costs, especially for more developed ambulances with advanced life support (ALS) functions. And the government's own data shows many states in India have a big shortage of such vehicles. Blinkit Ambulance As per a picture Dhindsa shared along with his post on X, Blinkit's ambulance service would carry a flat Rs 2,000 fee. Dhindsa said that the company's ambulances are equipped with essential life-saving equipment, including oxygen cylinders, AED (Automated External Defibrillator), stretcher, monitor, suction machine, and essential emergency medicines and injections. Each ambulance has a paramedic, an assistant and a trained driver. "Profit is not a goal here. We will operate this service at an affordable cost for customers and invest in really solving this critical problem for the long term," he said. As per a picture Dhindsa shared along with his post on X, Blinkit's ambulance service would carry a flat Rs 2,000 fee. Why India needs more ambulances on its roads



tients, and come equipped with advanced airway management, IV access, medication administration, and advanced cardiac life support. As per data available with the National Health Mission, India had only 17,495 operational basic life support (BLS) ambulances until December 2023. The number of advanced life support ambulances was even lower, with 3,441 such operational vehicles. The data also showed the wide regional disparity in ambulance availability, particularly in the north eastern states, where ALS ambulances are hard to come by. Patient transport vehicles (PTVs), take a larger share of the currently available ambulances in India. These ambulances are typically used for non-emergency medical situations, as they do not have most of the advanced systems present in an ALS ambulance. However, the share of ALS ambulances needs to increase in the country, to reduce trauma-related mortality within the critical "golden hour" timeframe. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched the National Ambulance Services (NAS) under the NHM. As per the ministry, an ALS ambulance is supported for an average population of 5 Lakh and a BLS ambulance is supported for over one lakh population. States are at liberty to propose the number of ambulances as per the norm to fill the gap. As per a report from June by the consultancy firm Primus Partners, the India Ambulance Services market in 2022 stood at \$1502.8 million which is expected to grow at a rate of 5.12% CAGR between 2024-2028. The report also said that over the period of 2020-2023, an average of 11,648 ambulance registrations annually were recorded. The year 2020 marked a notable starting point with 7,814 registrations, followed by a significant upsurge in 2021, reaching a peak of 14,236 registrations.

## Why a 40-year-old woman, who drank 4 litres of water after waking up, experienced seizure and loss of consciousness

Consuming adequate water is known to help stay healthy and keep many hair and skin issues at bay. But did you know that excess water intake can do the opposite? Take, for instance, the case of a 40-year-old who drank plenty of water in the morning for "detoxification," but it resulted in a "life-threatening complication." 40-year-old Ms Rajni (name changed) was told to drink water in the morning to detoxify her body. It was claimed that drinking excess water in the morning after waking up would clear all the wastes from her body, making her healthier. In addition, it was claimed that her skin would also get rejuvenated. Rajni took the advice seriously and drank about 4 litres of water in the morning after waking up. Within an hour, she developed a headache and nausea and vomited once. A few minutes later, she felt confused and disoriented, which was followed by a seizure and loss of consciousness," consultant neurologist Dr Sudhir Kumar, Apollo Hospitals, Hyderabad, wrote on X as he shared the case study.

"She was rushed to the emergency room. The diagnosis was obvious — it was most likely hyponatremia (low sodium level in blood) caused by water intoxication. The blood test confirmed our suspicion. The serum sodium level was 110 mmol/L (normal: 135-145). Ms Rajni was admitted to the ICU, and hyponatremia was corrected over the next 3 days. She responded to the treatment, and her mental status returned to normal within 24 hours. She was discharged on the 4th day," added Dr Kumar. "Excess water intake in the morning is NOT needed for detoxification. "Kidneys naturally clear the body of 'toxins' through urine. Just a normal hydration status is needed," he stressed. "The recommended amount of water intake is 2.5 to 3.5 liters per day, which should be spread throughout the day." "About 20 per cent of daily water requirement also comes from food (especially fruits) and other drinks (such as milk, tea, juice, etc)," said Dr Kumar.

"Water requirements could vary depending on age, gender, temperature, humidity, exercise, and comorbid illnesses." Dr Kumar stated that though healthy kidneys can handle excess water intake, there is an upper limit. "Water intoxication can result if water intake is more than 1.5 liters per hour or more (this can vary from person to person),"



said Dr Kumar. "Prompt recognition and early initiation of treatment in cases of severe hyponatremia due to water intoxication can be life-saving.

Dr Manjusha Agarwal, senior consultant, internal medicine, Gleneagles Hospital Parel Mumbai, explained that water intoxication or hyponatremia "generally occurs when you drink too much water within a few hours". "This may not be good for your kidneys as they may not be able to get rid of excess water quickly. It can cause the sodium levels to dilute into your bloodstream. Sodium is crucial for various bodily functions, such as balancing fluids in your body and maintaining the proper functioning of the nerves and muscles," said Dr Agarwal. According to Dr Agarwal, it can further lead to fluid buildup inside the cells, including the brain cells. "Water intoxication does not happen frequently; it is rare. It can occur where athletes may overhydrate themselves for long workouts like marathons, people trying to force themselves to drink too much water due to some weight loss or detox trends, and medical conditions," said Dr Agarwal. Water intoxication can be harmful to your body as the diluted sodium can cause the cells to swell. Dr Agarwal said that it is perilous if the swelling occurs in the brain as it can lead to serious complications like coma, seizures, or even death if it is not treated promptly. "One should look for symptoms like throbbing headaches, nausea, fatigue, and confusion. This is why it becomes crucial to take proactive steps and follow safety measures regarding drinking water. Avoid drinking water in excess quantity," said Dr Agarwal.

## The last of Lucknow's bone carvers: Family strives to save a 400-year-old art

For Jalaluddeen, 55, bone carving is not just an art but a family legacy he has carried forward for nearly five decades. Based in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, Jalaluddeen and his family are among the last artisans practicing this traditional craft using discarded buffalo bones from slaughterhouses. They transform these into exquisite handicrafts, home decor, and office items. In a candid conversation with indianexpress.com, Jalaluddeen and his son Akhil Akhtar traced their craft's origins back to the kings and kingdoms' era, when bone carving involved ivory tusks. "Mughals brought nakashi (mirror work) and spices to India. During that time, craftsmen used ivory for their craft. When ivory was banned, artisans switched to camel or buffalo bones sourced from slaughterhouses after the meat was sold," Jalaluddeen said.

Inspired by the Nawabi era, bone carving involves multiple labour-intensive steps, including cutting, cleaning, and bleaching, before the materials can be crafted into products like jewellery boxes, lamps, frames, pens, and paperweights. However, sourcing bones is not always easy. "Sometimes, we don't get bones for months. That's why we stockpile seven to eight months' worth of raw material, costing around Rs 1 lakh," Akhtar said. Jalaluddeen and Akhtar said that while the demand for these handcrafted items exists, the painstaking nature of the work makes it less appealing to younger generations. "We are doing our best to preserve this legacy. We train people, but our capacity is limited," Jalaluddeen said. In 2009, Jalaluddeen received the National Award from former President Dr Pranab Mukherjee, a recognition he still cherishes. His home doubles as a workshop where he trains aspiring artisans, works on his creations using delicate knives and chisels, and meets customers who come to admire and purchase his work. Despite the new-found attention (and opposition), the family remains focused on their craft and hopes for broader support. "It would be wonderful if NGOs could help train more people in this 400-year-old art. This way, we can keep it alive," Jalaluddeen and Akhil said. Recently, content creator Shenaz Treasurywala introduced the family's work to a wider audience via Instagram.

"I met this bone carver in Lucknow — such a humble man — he has traveled all over the world with his bone carving art. He's been to places I've never been, like Brazil and Korea too. He's won many National Awards. He sends packages across the globe — one going to Brazil today. I know



what you're thinking — is this ethical? Is this PETA Friendly? I was thinking that, too. But they assured me that these bones are when the animal is already dead — it's just using the bones that would otherwise be buried," she wrote in a post. According to the nonprofit organisation, carving on animal bones — whether from buffalo, cattle, or other animals and the use of animal remains in art and artifacts is "disrespectful and unnecessary." "The demand for bone products, whether for bone char, bone china, or artefacts, surpasses the incidental use of animals killed for beef, fueling the targeted slaughter of animals for their very bones and treating them as commodities, each body part adding to the incentive to make profit from slaughter," Dr Kiran Ahuja (B.P.Th, DNHE), manager of Vegan Projects, PETA India, told indianexpress.com.

## Shahid Kapoor's wife 'ready to fly' in 2025

Mumbai: Shahid Kapoor's wife, Mira Rajput, took to social media to share a heartwarming video reflecting on the year gone by and expressing her excitement for 2025. In her post, Mira described 2024 as a year marked by new beginnings, family, and the pursuit of dreams, while looking ahead to 2025 with renewed enthusiasm. Taking to her Instagram account, Mira posted a video showcasing memorable moments with her husband Shahid, their children, and close friends. For the caption, she wrote, "2024 was the year for new beginnings, family & a dream. 2025, I'm ready to fly." The video features intimate glimpses of her life with Shahid and their two children, Misha and Zain. Mira, an avid social media user, had previously posted a video showing how she prepares for New Year's Eve. She captioned the post, "GRWMira — A New Year's Eve look calls for a camera-ready face, and skin that feels comfy until the wee hours! So here's how I layer my skincare with makeup." A few weeks ago, Mira also posted a photo with Shahid from their trip, writing, "Long walks that lead to large appetites and cozy evenings." Shahid and Mira began their married life in 2015 through an arranged marriage. Mira, a Delhi native, and Shahid are proud parents of two children. Their daughter, Misha Kapoor, was born in 2016, followed by the birth of their son, Zain Kapoor, in 2018. On the work front, Shahid is set to appear in the upcoming action-drama 'Deva'. The film's release date has been moved forward, with the makers announcing that Deva, originally scheduled for a February 14 release, will now hit theatres on January 31, 2025. The production team shared the exciting news on Instagram, saying, "Sit tight, 'cause the wait just got shorter! Deva is



Taking to her Instagram account, Mira posted a video showcasing memorable moments with her husband Shahid, their children, and close friends. For the caption, she wrote, "2024 was the year for new beginnings, family & a dream. 2025, I'm ready to fly."

coming your way sooner than you think January 31st, 2025! The hype is real, the energy is through the roof, and we're beyond excited to bring you this action-packed thriller earlier than expected! Mark your calendars and get ready for a heart-pumping experience that you won't forget."\*

## 'Sridevi was distraught after break up with Mithun Chakraborty; Rajinikanth would talk to his own reflection,' recalls Sujata Mehta



Veteran actor Sujata Mehta recently opened up about the dynamics between female actors during the 1970s and 80s. Known for her performances in films like Pratigahaat, Yateem, and Kanwarlal, Sujata reflected on her experiences working with Sridevi and shared insights about the star's demeanour. She also touched upon the alleged rivalry between Sridevi and Madhuri Dixit, her impressions of Rajinikanth's humility, and compared late veteran actor Rishi Kapoor and his son, Ranbir Kapoor. In a conversation on the YouTube channel Hindi Rush, Sujata addressed the perception that Sridevi "had an attitude." However, Sujata revealed she never felt that way. Recalling an incident on set, she shared how Sridevi, often accompanied by a relative, once asked her niece to vacate a seat for Sujata. "She

gave me respect," Sujata said, adding that Sridevi was an "introvert" who didn't speak much but was always kind to her. Sujata also reflected on Sridevi's emotional state following her breakup with Mithun Chakraborty. "She used to be so distraught, but she was so professional. The moment the camera turned on, she belonged only to the camera. But after the shot, she would sit quietly in a corner," Sujata recalled, adding, "They were madly in love."

When asked about the rumoured tension between Sridevi and Madhuri Dixit, Sujata said, "They would sit at a distance on the set. Madhuri wouldn't talk to anyone. She would sit in her corner with her Walkman." Sujata also reminisced about working with Rajinikanth in the 1987 film Zameen. She described him as a humble star with a unique charm. "He doesn't have the conventional hero look, but he's a superstar. When I asked him how he pulls it off, he told me, 'I sit in front of the mirror the whole night and talk to myself.' He would skip lunch and only have buttermilk," she said. Sujata added, "He has no ego and is incredibly down-to-earth." Turning her attention to Rishi Kapoor, Sujata compared the late actor to his son, Ranbir Kapoor. "Ranbir is mind-blowing. For an actor to make it big despite having superstar parents is a big achievement—it doesn't happen often," she said. Sujata admitted she hasn't watched any of Janhvi Kapoor's films yet. "I don't think Janhvi is like Sridevi, but you never know. I've only seen her ads," she noted. Speaking about her favorites among the younger generation, Sujata praised Alia Bhatt. "Alia is my favorite. I'd love to work with her someday," she said.

## Varun Dhawan's Baby John reveals how stardom can be both a blessing and a curse for a mass entertainer



Against expectations and the weight of popular opinion, I found myself quietly enamored by Bollywood's recent big-budget remakes of southern actioners. They seemed to carve a delicate path, blending their own essence with southern fervor. Take Vikram Vedha, for instance: It didn't just cast Hrithik Roshan — it built a world around him. As a mythical gangster, his larger-than-life persona shimmered, the role becoming an extension of his stardom, both magnetic and meta. Then there was Bholaa, a bold reinterpretation of Kaithi. While the latter remains a masterpiece, Bholaa dared to craft something new. Ajay Devgan wasn't merely a character; he was a legend in the making. A savior pulled from the pages of pulp fiction. Yes, both films stumbled at the box office and faced critical ire. However, they dared to reimagine, refusing the callousness of scene-by-scene mimicry. They understood the alchemy of stardom and story. They understood that in tales like these, the hero's presence is the heartbeat. A tightrope walk between star power and character writing.

After all, most masala films are a spectacle of stardom. A star flexing his presence to ignite cheers from the masses. And much of your experience hinges on where you watch them, and with whom. In a theater brimming with die-hard fans, you might find yourself swept away, loving a film you know offers little beyond that electric fervor. In mass films, this dynamic intensifies. They transcend the masala entertainer, diving headfirst into hero worship. Everything — the plot, the world, the myths — exists to amplify the star, ensuring his presence feels less human, more divine. It's a spectacle of devotion, built entirely around him. These films, then, become more than cinema. They're a sacred dialogue between a star and their fan constituents. It's a kind of darshan, where the star graces the screen, not breaking the fourth wall, but speaking directly to his people. Every frame feels alive with that exchange, leaving you to wonder: Is it the star shaping the character, or the character reshaping the star? There is a textbook example of this phenomenon. A quintessential mass film crafted to harness the unmatched frenzy of Thalapaty Vijay's stardom. It understood him innately, as if his presence and the film were inseparable, like a fish to water. He towered over the narrative, his aura far outshining the story itself. The film existed as a vehicle for his stardom, a stage for him to flex his charisma and command. So, when remaking it for a Hindi audience, the choice of lead became paramount. You needed someone as dynamic as Vijay. Someone whose pull was magnetic, whose aura could render plot contrivances invisible. The hero had to be invincible, capable of sweeping the audience off their feet and making them fall in love all over again. The makers found their answer in Varun Dhawan. Or so they thought.

Varun Dhawan's career so far has been a fascinating blend of choices. For every brainless commercial comedy,

he's delivered a gripping Badlapur, proving what he's capable of when he tries. For every breezy rom-com, he's given us a contemplative October, showing his softer, nuanced side. And for every predictable turn, he's embraced risk with films like Bhediya and Sui Dhaaga: Made in India. The one frontier he hadn't ventured into was the realm of a full-blown mass actioner. With Baby John, he makes his first voyage — only to reveal he isn't quite ready to captain such a ship. It's not about his talent, but his aura. Mass films don't just need actors; they need idols. These spectacles thrive on fanatical devotion. And Varun lacks that divine magnetism. He doesn't have the myths that electrify the screen or the cult-like fandom to transform applause into an anthem. So instead of adoration, there is only deafening silence.

It isn't entirely his fault. The real culprit lies in the text. A framework that fails not just him, but the audience, director Kalees, and producer Atlee, who helmed the original Theri. This is a script sculpted for a star, not for someone striving to become one. And without the gravitational pull of a true blue mass hero, the entire structure collapses like a house of cards. What emerges in the wreckage is a glaring truth: The filmmaking itself offers no sanctuary. Dhawan is given no time to cultivate his mythos, no space to let his presence simmer and rise. The narrative unfolds with neither patience nor nuance. Its structure — both in scripting and editing — forsakes the art of build-up, delivering nothing but payoffs. Gone are the micro-moments that ground a story. Instead, the film indulges in relentless macro flourishes, each more amplified than the last. Transitions are sacrificed for crude jump cuts, resolutions arrive almost as quickly as conflicts, and connective tissue is discarded for a cascade of disconnected highlights. The entire experience feels as if it's played on an unending time-lapse. A frantic sprint toward nowhere, where the absence of rhythm leaves no room to breathe, to feel, or to believe. Take, for instance, a cool montage in the second half of Baby John. Here, Dhawan dismantles the villain's empire within minutes, set to a superb BGM — crafted, no doubt, to elicit thunderous applause. But, the moment lands with a hollow thud, offering nothing new, nothing earned. By this point, the film has already played out like an extended montage, that when the stakes are meant to peak, there is no resonance — just simple exhaustion. The narrative's super fast pace erases the space for stillness and silence. The twin forces that lend weight to a spectacle. Highs blur into monotony; dialogue-baazi devolves into caricature. In failing to honor its hero's presence, the film undermines its own intent. Worship requires reverence, a quiet acknowledgment of grandeur, but none arrives. Instead, the film races against its protagonist, only to discover too late that the true journey required walking beside him, not outrunning him.

In this light, a traditional masala film would have been a far more fitting choice for Varun Dhawan's first foray into this space. Masala films still cling to the art of buildup, to a sense of gradual payoffs, and to the emotional foundation that sustains their spectacle. They care about narrative continuity and character arcs, allowing a hero the space to shine. In contrast, mass films are a different beast. They are already designed around heroes who shine nonetheless. Atlee's Jawan faced similar pacing issues and narrative ambition as Baby John, but there, the gravitational force was Shah Rukh Khan. That film needed him far more than he needed it. After all, there's a reason they're called mass entertainers. They rely on the sheer magnitude of the deity at their center. Their strength, their allure, emanates from the mass pull of the star. But when there is no deity, only an actor in search of reinvention, what becomes of the mass? What remains of the entertainment?

## Jason Momoa to play anti-hero Lobo in DC movie

Los Angeles: Hollywood star Jason Momoa is set for a new inning in the DC universe with a new character, which will be introduced in the upcoming movie "Supergirl: Woman Of Tomorrow". Momoa, who played Aquaman in four films of the erstwhile DC Extended Universe (DCEU), has been cast for the character of alien bounty hunter Lobo, reported entertainment news outlet The Hollywood Reporter.

Starring "House of the Dragon" actor Milly Alcock in the titular role, "Supergirl: Woman Of Tomorrow", the story will focus on Kara Zor-El, who is the cousin of Superman. The movie will also feature Matthias Schoenaerts as villain Krem of the Yellow Hill and Eve Ridley as Ruythe Mary Knolle. Lobo is a popular anti-hero and bounty hunter in the DC Universe, known for his over-the-top, violent, and irreverent persona. Originating from the alien planet Czarnia, Lobo is the last of his kind after wiping out his race for fun. Created by Roger Slifer and Keith Giffen, Lobo first appeared in "Omega Men 3" in 1983. Momoa has previously expressed his interest in the role and officially confirmed his involvement today through an Instagram post, sharing a screenshot of comments from a past interview.

"So Lobo was... I collect comics, and I don't do so much anymore, but he was always my favourite, and I always wanted to play Lobo, because I'm like, 'Hello! It's the perfect role.' I mean, listen. If they call and ask me to play him, it's a f\*ck yeah. I haven't received that call, so I don't want to put any fake news out there, but if they ever call me



and ask me to play, or ask me to audition, I'm there," he said. "Supergirl: Woman Of Tomorrow" will be the second film in James Gunn and Peter Safran's rebooted DC Universe following the highly anticipated "Superman", starring David Corenswet as the Man of Steel and Rachel Brosnahan as Lois Lane. Momoa was the face of the "Aquaman" franchise under the previous DC leadership, debuting as Aquaman with a cameo in "Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice" (2016), followed by a leading role in Justice League (2017), and ultimately headlining "Aquaman" (2018). His most recent film in the franchise, "Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom" in 2023, had performed poorly at the box office.

## Yash appeals to fans to prioritise safety and mindfulness

Rocking Star Yash, who rose to global stardom with the 'KGF' franchise, has always enjoyed a special bond with his fans. As the year comes to an end, the star urges his fans to prioritise their safety and mindfulness during celebrations, particularly his birthday. He emphasised that his happiness lies in knowing that his fans are thriving and pursuing their goals, rather than engaging in extravagant displays. In a heartfelt letter addressed to his fans, Yash emphasised the need to change the way love is expressed. He reflected on the unfortunate incidents that occurred during his birthday celebrations in the past, tragically resulting in the loss of lives.

Earlier this year, on his last birthday (January 8, 2024), three of his fans in the Gadag district of Karnataka lost their lives while erecting a large birthday cutout. The actor had immediately travelled to meet the bereaved families, offering support and condolences. After this tragic event, Yash urged his fans to refrain from hanging banners, engaging in dangerous bike chases, and taking reckless selfies. He insisted that these actions were not a genuine expression of love. In a media interview, Yash stated, "If you are a true fan of mine, then do your work diligently, dedicate your life to



yourself, and be happy and successful." In another incident in 2019, a fan tragically self-immolated after being unable to meet Yash on his birthday. Even then, Yash appealed to his fans that such actions were not a true reflection of fandom and implored them never to resort to such drastic measures. Ahead of his birthday this year, he is taking a proactive step to protect his fans' safety. He made a sincere plea for restraint, emphasising that their safety and well-being were the greatest gifts he could ever receive.

## Anurag Kashyap declares he is moving out of Mumbai because he is 'disgusted' by Hindi film industry: 'I was ghosted by friends'

"I am moving out of Mumbai," filmmaker Anurag Kashyap declared in a recent interview. The Gangs of Wasseypur director expressed his discontent, stating that the joy of filmmaking has been "sucked out." He blamed talent management agencies for setting the wrong trends by pushing aspiring actors to become stars rather than having them focus on becoming better actors. Kashyap accused these agencies of exploiting young actors for profit and abandoning them when they fail to deliver. Speaking to The Hollywood Reporter India, Anurag lamented the escalating costs of filmmaking, attributing it to rising salaries and other factors. He said, "Now it is difficult for me to go out and experiment as it comes at a cost, which makes my producers think about profit and margins. Right from the beginning, before the film starts, it becomes about how to sell it. So, the joy of filmmaking is sucked out. That's why I want to move out of Mumbai next year. I am going to the South. I want to go where there is stimulation. Otherwise, I will die as an old man. I am so disappointed and disgusted by my own industry. I am disgusted by the mindset."

Kashyap emphasised how a film like Manjummel Boys would never be made in Hindi cinema but, if successful, would likely be remade in Hindi. "The mindset is to remake what's already worked. They won't try anything new," he said. He was particularly critical of agencies for fostering a damaging culture among budding actors. Kashyap explained, "The first-generation actors and the really entitled ones are very painful to deal with. Nobody wants to act—they all want to be stars. The agency won't make anybody a star, but the moment someone becomes a star, the agency makes money off them. The onus of finding talent is on you—you have to take a risk and firefight with 50 people. And when the film is made, the agency grabs them and turns them into a star. They will brainwash them and



tell them what they need to do to become a star. They won't send them to workshops but to the gym—it's all glam-glam because they have to be massive stars."

Kashyap further accused agencies of creating a barrier between actors and filmmakers. He shared an incident about an actor who disappeared on the advice of his agency but later returned to him for career guidance after being dumped by the same agency. "This is what the agency does—they just make money off you. They aren't invested in building new careers," he said. The filmmaker also expressed disappointment with actors he had previously considered friends. "My actors, whom I thought of as friends, ghost you because they want to be a certain way. That happens mostly here; it doesn't happen in Malayalam cinema," he added. Anurag recently made his acting debut in the Malayalam film Rifle Club, which also marked the acting debut of rapper Hanumankind.

## Siddharth says Payal Kapadia's All We Imagine As Light 'won't be watched in India despite all its wins'

The Indian film industry is no stranger to paradoxes. On one hand, films like Payal Kapadia's All We Imagine As Light win accolades at prestigious international festivals like Cannes and receive nominations at the Golden Globes. On the other hand, these same films struggle to find an audience back home, with many failing to secure even a single show in theaters. Actor Siddharth, who produced the acclaimed 2023 film Chithha, highlighted that a film's success can be measured in different ways. In a Galatta Plus interaction, he recalled one of filmmaker Payal Kapadia's interviews, where she shared her experience of releasing her internationally recognised film in India. According to Siddharth, Kapadia said: "My film released, nobody came, and they cancelled the shows." When individuals expressed interest in watching the film, Kapadia responded, "If you want to watch the film, start a signature campaign to bring it back for one show." Siddharth noted the irony that despite Kapadia's success at Cannes and the Golden Globes, her film may not reach the audience that appreciates it. As Siddharth pointed out, "Her producers think they made the greatest success of a film, but that film is never going to be seen by the audience that calls their film a good film."



## Guess who is Vaani Kapoor's 'jaan' and 'closest companion'



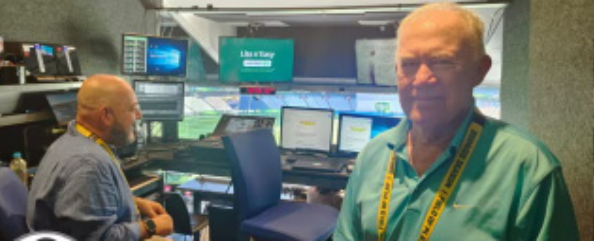
Taking to Instagram, the 'War' actor shared a heart-warming birthday wish for her sister Nupur Chopra, calling her a "forever friend". Vaani posted a series of candid photos with her sister, capturing their special moments together. In the caption, Vaani wrote, "Happy Birthday my

jaan, my forever friend, my heart's closest companion. You deserve a day as special as you are, filled with love, joy, and all the little things that make you smile. Missing you!! Our funny endless chats, our silly jokes, and just being together today. But no matter the distance, know that I'm here loving you endlessly. #happybirthday #siblings. (sic)"

The images shared by Vaani feature heart-warming moments from their trips and family gatherings, reflecting the strong bond she shares with Nupur.

Last month, Vaani made headlines for hosting a 'Qawwali night' at her home, attended by her close friends, including Aditya Seal, Anushka, and Akanksha Ranjan. In one of the clips from the evening, the group, along with the host, sang 'Na Tum Jano Na Hum' by Lucky Ali and R Ramya. Akanksha posted a fun caption, "When Vaani Kapoor forces you to have Qawwali night (sic)," to which Vaani humorously replied, "Hahahaha liar, say you had fun (sic)."

## 'Sandpaper-gate was a horrible exercise of stupidity,' commentator Jim Maxwell recounts, among other tales



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

He is sitting at the ABC radio studio on Sunday, gazing at the MCG arena in front of him, where the players are warming up before the start of the play. This is Jim Maxwell's 51st year of commentating on the game, and he seems still excited about what the day will throw up. "It's a game of many moods". But the intent is to drag him through time at least to a couple of momentous episodes. So we begin with a cow in Mumbai airport. Jim and his broadcasting partner Glenn Mitchell were taking their luggage out of taxi when they see a cow walking out of the car park. It walked and the electronic doors slid open and Maxwell goes, "It obviously isn't going out for long, it doesn't have luggage!" It's a story told by Mitchell to this newspaper before and Maxwell laughs. "Oh crazy fun times with Glenn in India," he says.

Not everything is funny, though. Like the 2018 sandpaper gate in South Africa that left a huge dent on the holy cow of Australian cricket. It happened in the third Test at Cape Town, but Maxwell was aghast at what went down in the first Test in Durban. "Australia's behaviour was outrageous in that Durban Test. I remember being on air and telling the audience that, 'no need to talk here, let me just wind up the 'effects' microphone' ... the level of abuse aimed at Quinton de Kock from Nathan Lyon and Mitch Starc in particular was obnoxious. The umpires were deaf, really not doing anything. [Kumar Dharmasena and S Ravi were the officials]. They should have stepped in. So, all that was building up a bit of feeling between the two teams."

But Maxwell had seen enough of the game over the years that he sensed that Australians were out of line, and about to enter into dangerous territory. He wrote to James Sutherland, the chief executive of Cricket Australia just after that Durban Test, before their ball-tampering shenanigans. "I emailed him that you need to be having a look and eye on the behaviour of this Australian team because something is going to go wrong. I didn't necessarily think of ball-tampering, but more from the behavioural side of things." Then came the Kagiso Rabada incident, his collision with Steve Smith. "He got a one-match ban but that was overturned. It ramped up the feelings between the teams a notch. I remember Australia were a bit on the back foot in Cape Town; they were getting desperate to manufacture a wicket. They had a bad incident or two with Warner and de Kock in that infamous stairwell episode where Warner's behaviour was well for everyone to see. Meanwhile, a couple of South African board officials had posed laughing with some fans wearing the mask of 'Sonny Williams' - stupid silly thing to do," Maxwell recounts. The details of Williams and Warner's wife Candice when she was younger and single aren't worth here going into any detail; enough to say that the tabloid coverage of that episode had pushed Candice to a cliff-top, thinking about suicide before her brother rushed to avert tragedy. "So that was all going on in that series, things just kept escalating," says Maxwell, shaking his head six years later. "Stupid, naive"

Maxwell remembers being on air that fateful morning with Mark Nicholas. "We had a little chat about Steve Smith as captain before everything blew up on the field. Mark was saying he was a very naive leader just the way he behaved with DRs as he would get it wrong all the time, being swept with emotions." Maxwell pauses, looks through the windowpane at the field, and wags the finger. "That day Smith went out after lunch and he saw Warner talking to Bancroft, giving him advice. That was his moment to intervene. He didn't. Obviously, Warner knew he was a marked man by the SA

television and they had shift the blame out there to Bancroft," he says. "The stupidity ... the blokes were done not for ball tampering but for dishonesty. Because they had created this bullshit at the press conference about what had happened. That was a lie. That's why they got done," he adds.

Maxwell remembers another development. "I remember the story was, in all the aftermath, that when the officials looked at the ball in the game there was no evidence of tampering happening! Australia, I feel, had pulled back their horns a bit because I presume they were told they were being watched. It was a horrible exercise of stupidity, naivety ..." Darren Lehmann saunters into the ABC radio box where we are sitting, says his hellos to Maxwell, who responds with a wisecrack and Lehmann picks up something with a laugh and exits the booth. The question blurts out, "Jim, Lehmann was the coach in that sandpaper gate series..." and Maxwell smiles. "Darren was certainly a part of that whole 'must win at all costs attitude'. He was the driver of that behaviour. He may not have been complicit in the tampering episode, but the overall behaviour of that team, he has to take his blame in that part at the very least."

He anticipates the next question and turns to look in the eye, and says: "Son, remember as a journalist, you have to be aloof from the players to an extent. You get too close, you get burned. Emotions can colour you. I am fine with Darren now, since he has become a commentator but not then. The famous radio commentator Alan McGilvray, my senior, would say, 'it will affect your judgement, don't get too close Jim even if it seems tempting and all. Be careful!'" Eden Miracle

We return to India and that Eden Gardens day in 2001 when Rahul Dravid and VVS Laxman stunned the Aussies. "Oh, even as those two were batting on, I remember a TV falling off from the next cubicle, another commentary booth. It toppled over and fell into the stands! Unbelievable. Luckily that bit was untenanted. Phew. The show must go on and it went on!" Maxwell remembers a dinner the night before Laxman-Dravid shook hands with history. "I had met an architect, who had incidentally done some work at the Eden Gardens, a friend of my academic mother, and he told me, 'Jim, get ready for Australian loss. Indians are going to do it' and I went, 'whaaa? How? ... whatever tea-leaves he was reading, he was spot on, eh?!' India's Virat Kohli barges into Australia's Sam Konstas on Day 1 of the fourth Test between Australia and India at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. (Screengrab via X/@7Cricket) India's Virat Kohli barges into Australia's Sam Konstas on Day 1 of the fourth Test between Australia and India at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

The chat shifts to Kohli's shoulder-charge incident with the teenaged debutant Sam Konstas. "I was talking to Sunny (Sunil Gavaskar) and nudging him about the incident at Lords in 1981. John Snow, the fast bowler, didn't just tap him but ran him over! There was no official process but the England cricket board banned him for the next Test at Oval, and of course India won that game and the series. That was the punishment!" he says. "I had said on air this about Kohli: that he should go on a holiday but I am not a lawyer and don't understand level 1 and Pycroft, the match-ref, is a lawyer; they didn't even have a hearing. The punishment didn't fit the crime and maybe that's what's the prescribed thing to do but you have to ask the question: Is that kind of behaviour really acceptable?" The chat winds down as it's time for Jim to go on air, but he serves up another story as closure to that sandpaper gate scandal and Smith. "The funny thing is during their ban, both Smith and Warner came to play grade cricket in Sydney - Eastern Suburbs vs Sutherland. They were playing for Sutherland. Elections too were on then, a polling booth was near the ground. I asked Smith, 'have you voted yet?' And he replied that he shall after he gets out. He goes out to bat at No.3, Harry Conway is bowling and just as we have seen a couple of times this summer, it's a ball on the leg side, flick, strangled down leg for nought! He comes back muttering and unhappy, and I couldn't resist: 'Steve, mate, you can go vote now!'"

## How the Australian noose broke India's doomed resistance as Pant and Jaiswal were taken out surgically, under menacing MCG stands

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

An elderly Indian lady badgered the security guard at the MCG, an hour after India's stunning capitulation in the final session that allowed Australia clinch a stupendous win. "Can I go and peep at the ground?" No, Ma'am, you can't, but come tomorrow morning, you can. Why do you want to see it now, anyways? And she drew, a shopping bag in her hand, "A couple of hours ago, my grandson texted me to take a photograph, you see, but I had to shop for groceries. And then I stopped at a cafe. Apparently India have managed a famous draw. Can you at least go in for me and take a photo from my phone?" The young Australian guard did an admirable job of suppressing a smile, and broke the bad news to her. A puzzled look settled on her face, and she mumbled, "but my grandson said ...". Neither the grandson's hope nor the grandmother's bewildering look were wrong even as India buckled by 184 runs. Couple of hours before the game ended, it did look like a draw. Perhaps, not a 'famous' one, but a regulation draw. Australia had to take out seven wickets in just a session of play. The pitch had looked flat. The Indians in the crowd were screaming away. Pre lunch, every time the Australian fans tried to get into the game, be it booing Kohli, the Indians fans would silence them with chants of Kohli's name. In the middle session, when the Aussie fans were chanting the name of the MCG cult hero 'Scotty' Boland, Indians would scream 'Jaiswal' or 'Pant'.

But the Australian team wanted the win more than Indians sought the draw. Or rather they were more mentally alert and disciplined than the Indians. And it had come about by an out-of-box move from Pat Cummins, who had deployed Travis Head into the attack, not just for a while before tea, but even after that. Until then, Rishabh Pant and YB Jaiswal were steering India with great determination towards a draw. Cummins must have realised that to break this auto-pilot mode, there was no use pressing on the specialist bowlers. Or asking his pacers to break their backs. They, including him and Mitch Marsh, had all tried that. The way to drag Pant out of this zone was to dangle a temptation. Make him perhaps think about an implausible win or at least easy boundaries. But Pant in fact was the more stable one, initially, leaving balls

outside off and bunting around for singles. At one stage, even after tea, when Sam Konstas started chirping away at Jaiswal from silly-point, and the young Indian was somewhat disturbed by it as he would once pull away from the strike at the last instance, and point at the teen-aged Greek-Australian, it was Pant who sought to calm him down. Pant had realised what was happening and walked across for a chat. On other occasions, he would gesture at Jaiswal to take deep breaths and calm down, and nod encouragingly when Jaiswal settled down again with punchy drives off Nathan Lyon and Head. Suddenly, something snapped in Pant himself. In the 57th over of the innings, Head offered a shortish-ball outside off and Pant went for a drag-pull to the left of long-on where Mitch Marsh would make a good stop. As he reached the non-striker's end, Pant would shadow-practice that pull, seemingly aiming to pull it wider of long-on. That was the seed of the trouble. In the next Head over, the fourth ball he faced after that pull, came a similar ball, and Pant went for that shot again, but couldn't get it wide enough or keep it down - and Marsh, nicknamed 'Bison', moved smartly to pouch a good catch. India were 121 for 4 in the 59th over at that stage, needing to play out the next 33 overs to draw.

Not just Pant, but Virat Kohli, who had chased a well-outside off ball from Starc in the last over before lunch, and Rohit Sharma, who had tried an across-the-line flick to a Cummins delivery around off stump had dragged India down to this position. It's at Pant's exit that Cummins and his men swooped in for the kill. Head was quickly swapped for Boland, who got one to kick up from back of length and Ravindra Jadeja, India's best bet to play out a safe draw, was surprised into stabbing at it - edge and gone. It was 127 for 5 in the 63rd over and now the question hovering in the air was whether Jaiswal can hold his poise. Cummins had smartly replaced Head with Konstas as the close-in fielder if only one had to be breathing down the batsman. Konstas has the reputation in domestic cricket as the lippy kid, who loves to annoy batsmen with constant chatter. And here he was not only having a go at Jaiswal, but also gesturing the Australian fans to get into the act, whipping up their emotions. Needing no second invitation, they obliged the teenager. Tension was in the air. It exploded when Nathan Lyon, who had looked every bit his age in this series, came up with a real beaut: an over-spun ball that landed on a length just outside off and went on straight.

## Ahead of Sydney Test, Australia concerned about Mitchell Starc's availability



GNS News Agency, Jan 4, Australia's Mitchell Starc appeal unsuccessfully for the LBW of India's Yashasvi Jaiswal during play on the last day of the fourth cricket test between Australia and India at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Melbourne, Australia. (AP) Australia's Mitchell Starc appeal unsuccessfully for the LBW of India's Yashasvi Jaiswal during play on the last day of the fourth cricket test between Australia and India at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Melbourne, Australia.

Mitchell Marsh, who has been struggling for runs in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy is unlikely to lose his spot at Sydney with Australia selectors maintain that his fitness has nothing to do with his bowling which has been under utilized. If anything, the big concern for Australia going to the fifth and final Test at Sydney, starting on January 3 is the fitness of fast bowler Mitchell Starc.

## Did over-rate play a role in Pat Cummins bringing on Travis Head who went on to dismiss Rishabh Pant?

GNS News Agency, Jan 4

Australia's captain Pat Cummins, (center), Travis Head, (left), and Sam Konstas celebrates the wicket of India's Rishabh Pant during play on the last day of the fourth cricket test between Australia and India at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Melbourne, Australia. (AP) Australia's captain Pat Cummins, (center), Travis Head, (left), and Sam Konstas celebrates the wicket of India's Rishabh Pant during play on the last day of the fourth cricket test between Australia and India at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Melbourne, Australia. When Travis Head came on to bowl with India placed well to draw the Boxing Day Test, it raised eyebrows. But the move was totally vindicated when Head dismissed Rishabh Pant and though it was his celebration of that wicket that created plenty of attention, the move to hand the ball to Head may have well been down to Australia not wanting to repeat their past mistake.

With South Africa already confirming their World Test Championship final spot, the race is now between Australia, India and Sri Lanka with the former best placed to book a second-successive final. And with over-rate being a cause of concern for Australia - they missed out on the 2021 WTC final because they were penalised for slow over-rate - Australia captain Pat Cummins has admitted it was one of the reasons for bringing on Head. Head and Lyon sped through with their overs in the final session before the Test changed on its head following the dismissal of Pant. "He's got a bit of

## AC Milan appoints Sergio Conceição as coach after relieving Paulo Fonseca of his duties



GNS News Agency, Jan 4

AC Milan on Monday sacked coach Paulo Fonseca after only six months in charge, following an erratic run of results that sees the team sitting eighth in Italy's top football league. The club has named Sergio Paulo Marceneiro da Conceição as its new head coach. "AC Milan announces that Sérgio Paulo Marceneiro da Conceição has been appointed as the Head Coach of the men's First Team until 30 June 2026. The Club extends a warm welcome to Sérgio and his staff, wishing a journey full of success and fulfillment," the club said. Milan sacked Fonseca earlier on Monday after only six months in the job after an inconsistent run of form left the club eighth in the Italian top flight.

## 'His finger is so hot that...': Pat Cummins reveals meaning of Travis Head's unusual celebration

Travis Head celebration Rishabh Pant dismissal Pat Cummins Australia's captain Pat Cummins, center, Travis Head, left, and Sam Konstas celebrate the wicket of India's Rishabh Pant during play on the last day of the fourth cricket test between Australia and India at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Melbourne, Australia, Monday, Dec. 30, 2024. (AP Photo/Asanka Brendon Ratnayake) Travis Head made headlines once again in the Border Gavaskar Trophy but this time for his unusual celebration where he pointed one finger into his other hand's palm which was shaped like an O. This happened after Head dismissed a well-set Rishabh Pant for 30 runs giving Australia an in into the match. With social media abuzz over the celebration, Australia skipper Pat Cummins would reveal the meaning behind it in the post-match press conference.

"Oh, sorry! Yes, okay! I can explain that. His finger is so hot that he is going to put it in a cup of ice. Yes, that's what it is. That's normally the running joke. Was it at the Gabba or somewhere, where he got a wicket as well and just got straight to the fridge, grabs a bucket of ice, puts his finger in and just walks in front of Lyo (Nathan Lyon). Just like that, thinks its very funny. So that's what it would have been, nothing else," Cummins said to reporters on Monday.

On the final day of the Boxing Day Test at Melbourne, Starc had issues with his back and having already lost Josh Hazlewood to an injury, another blow with the series on the line is not what the hosts ideally want at this stage. But in Beau Webster, Jhye Richardson and Sean Abbott there are back-up options in the squad, but head coach Andrew McDonald and captain Pat Cummins remain optimistic that Starc should be available at Sydney.

"Anytime you get through the game, it's always a good indicator that you're a chance at the next game," McDonald said. "It didn't stop him. Clearly, there was a little bit of discomfort early on in spells, but once he got warm, it seemed as though he was pretty free. His ball speeds were good. We'll see how everyone recovers. Bowling last, it was a pretty attritional game, something that we're not used to in the last few years. Clearly Starc's carrying something of some description. We'll assess that," he added. Apart from Starc, McDonald also touched on the issue surrounding all-rounder Marsh. "No, there's no concern," McDonald. "And I think people have probably been reading too much into that. We haven't required him with the ball as often as what we would have thought. He bowled again today. His speeds are up in the high 120s [kph]. There are no injury concerns there. I think to sort of head that down that angle is a little bit unfair. We just haven't required him at certain times for whatever reason, so that's more a tactical implementation, as opposed to a body. I think the amount of overs that we've bowling across the series is probably going to be to a benefit to us."



a Midas touch," Cummins said of Head's bowling at the presentation. "I'll give the coach credit for that one [bringing him on]. Also, we were a bit behind on the over rate, so we thought, get Trav in there, [he] might get a breakthrough and help us out with some overs," he added. Head then went on to explain. "I got told I was bowling [at tea], wasn't too pleased about things. We are a pretty relaxed group, [we] don't change too much, we knew what we had to do. Pat and Ronnie [head coach Andrew McDonald] come up with the plans, had a chat and we were able to go out and execute it," Head said. With regards to Pant's dismissal, Head joked, "Bowl a rank [long hop] and have everyone on the fence. I just threw them down there, see what happens and it turned our way."

Conceicao, 50, had been without a team since leaving Portuguese giants Porto in June despite signing a four-year contract extension only two months before. In his seven-year tenure he became the club's most successful coach, guiding them to three championships, four Portuguese Cups, a League Cup, and three Super Cups. Milan, who drew 1-1 at home against struggling AS Roma on Sunday, has won only two of their last seven league games. The 19-time Italian champions are eight points behind the top four, with one game in hand, and 14 points behind leaders Atalanta. Fonseca was appointed in June to succeed Italian Stefano Pioli, who led Milan to a single league title in 2022 during his five-year stint, finishing second and 19 points behind champions Inter Milan in his final season. Former Roma coach Fonseca, who arrived after two seasons at French Ligue 1 side Lille, faced high expectations from the start. However, Milan started slowly under the 51-year-old, drawing 2-2 with Torino and Lazio before losing 2-1 to promoted Parma. Fonseca guided Milan to their first win of the season in mid-September, a 4-0 home triumph over Venezia, before defeating Inter 2-1. After a similarly bad start to their Champions League season, with back-to-back losses to Liverpool and Bayer Leverkusen, they went on a four-game winning streak, defeating champions Real Madrid along the way. Fonseca previously won the Portuguese Super Cup with Porto in 2013, the Portuguese Cup with Braga in 2015-16, and three straight Ukrainian Premier League titles with Shakhtar Donetsk from 2017 to 2019.



In the match, India slumped to a demoralising 184-run loss to Australia in the fourth Test with contemporary greats Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli failing to come good yet again, signalling that their walk towards the exit door is not too far. Chasing a near improbable target of 340, both Rohit (9 off 40 balls) and Kohli (5) failed to battle their technical frailties and mental cobwebs as India lost seven wickets for 34 runs in just 20.4 overs in the final session to be all out for 155 in 79.1 overs. Cummins (3/28 in 18 overs) was superb as usual and Scott Boland was also magnificent (3/39 in 16 overs) in his every spell.