

INDIAN CHRONICLE

CWC seeks detailed info on Andhra Pradesh's Godavari-Banakacharla linkage project

Hyderabad: The Central Water Commission (CWC) on Wednesday requested for detailed information regarding the proposed Godavari-Banakacharla linkage project announced by Andhra Pradesh. The CWC's letter, sent to the river management boards of the Godavari and Krishna, as well as the Polavaram Project Authority, has brought to the fore key issues involving Godavari water sharing. The project, with an estimated cost of Rs 85,000 crore, aims at diverting 2 TMC of water from the Godavari river at the Polavaram project. This water is intended to address both drinking water and irrigation needs in the Rayalaseema region and the coastal districts of Nellore and Prakasam in Andhra Pradesh.

Mecca, Medina flooded after heavy rains, hailstorms lash parts of Saudi Arabia

Hyderabad: Heavy rainfall, thunderstorms, and hailstorms caused mayhem in Saudi Arabian cities of Mecca, Medina, and Jeddah, according to the Saudi Press Agency (SPA). Videos going viral on social media from these areas show cars being swept away by the floodwaters, while buses are stuck in the middle of the road. Reportedly, several people are stuck in the floods, and rescue operations are underway. In some videos, men can be seen forming human chains to rescue children trapped in the floods. The harsh weather conditions are unlikely to subside, as Saudi Arabia's Meteorological Department has issued a red alert for Mecca, Medina, and its surrounding areas. Here are some videos posted by netizens showing the devastation caused by the floods:

Vizagites gripped in 'Namo' mania

Visakhapatnam: Mobile phones were taken out to capture special moments, flower petals showered and people waved enthusiastically shouting 'Modi', 'Modi' as the roadshow of Prime Minister Narendra Modi commenced from Siripuram to Andhra University Engineering College grounds in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday evening.



Standing atop a saffron-tinted decked-up vehicle, the Prime Minister waved back at the people all along the roadshow that stretched up to over one-km distance. Accompanied by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Deputy Chief Minister K. Pawan Kalyan and BJP state president Daggubati Purandeswari, the Prime Minister charmed the people, who were curious to

get a glimpse of him, by waving back at them during the roadshow.

Cutouts, flexies and banners were placed to welcome the Prime Minister in various parts of the city,

more so, along the roadshow route. After the NDA government came to power in Andhra Pradesh, it's a maiden visit of the Prime Minister to Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. Earlier, the Prime

Minister was accorded a warm welcome by Governor S Abdul Nazeer, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Deputy Chief Minister K. Pawan Kalyan, among others, at INS Dega as soon as he arrived in Visakhapatnam.

PM Modi Receives Grand Welcome in Vizag

GNS News Agency, Jan 8

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was greeted with a warm reception upon his arrival at Visakhapatnam airport, where he was welcomed by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and other senior officials. During his visit, the Prime Minister is set to launch an impressive array of development projects valued at over Rs. 2 lakh crore. Among the initiatives, he will lay the foundation stone for several key projects, including a new railway zone, an industrial hub, a green hydrogen hub, and a bulk drug park, all aimed at boosting economic growth in the region.

In addition to these significant announcements, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu is scheduled to hold a large road show alongside Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, further showcasing the government's commitment to fostering development in Visakhapatnam. In anticipation of the Prime Minister's visit, extensive arrangements have been made, with heightened security measures implemented to ensure a smooth and secure event. The local government



is keen to make this visit a landmark moment for both the city and the state. As the day unfolds, excitement builds among residents and officials alike, looking forward to the transformative impact these development projects are expected to bring.

Telangana High Court Accepts KTR's Lunch Motion Petition in Formula-E Case



GNS News Agency, Jan 8

Hyderabad: The Telangana High Court has ac-

cepted a lunch motion petition filed on behalf of Minister K.T. Rama Rao (KTR) in connection with the high-profile Formula-E case, where he has been listed as Accused No. 1 (A-1). The petition requests the court to allow a lawyer to be present during the Anti-Corruption Bureau's (ACB) interrogation of KTR. The High Court is set to hear the petition later this afternoon, marking a critical development in the ongoing investigation. The Formula-E case has drawn significant attention due to allegations of financial irregularities and quid pro quo arrangements involving major corporations and political entities. KTR's legal team argues that the presence of a lawyer during questioning is essential to ensure a fair process. The High Court's decision in the afternoon session is expected to shape the course of the investigation. Meanwhile, the ACB continues to probe the case, which has already led to multiple raids and intensified scrutiny of high-ranking officials and private companies.

Interim bail for Asaram Bapu: Security tightened for rape victim's family

GNS News Agency, Jan 8

"The family members of Asaram Bapu's rape victim have been provided with additional security, a day after he was granted interim bail on medical grounds by the Supreme Court," police said on Wednesday (January 8, 2025). Additional Superintendent of Police (City) Sanjay Kumar Sagar said after the Supreme Court's order, he personally visited the victim's residence and interacted with the family.



"A police guard is already deployed at the victim's home and her father has a gunner for security. Additional police personnel are now being assigned, and necessary instructions have been issued to the relevant police station and circle officer to ensure the family's safety," Mr. Sagar said. "Orders have been given to repair the dysfunctional CCTV cameras around the victim's house, and the victim's father has been advised to inform authorities before stepping out. We are continuously monitoring the family's safety as this is a high-profile case," Mr. Sagar added. The victim's father expressed that he was shocked to learn that Asaram had been granted interim bail. He said, "I haven't been able to sleep since, as I am deeply concerned about my family's safety. Even while in jail, Asaram was responsible for the murder of four witnesses - Rajkot's Amrut Prajapati, Akhil Gupta (a cook), Lucknow's Rahul Sachan, and Shahjahanpur's Kripal Singh." He alleged, "While in jail, Asaram orchestrated false cases against me in Jammu, Jodhpur, Delhi, and Surasagar. Two of my witnesses,

Bholanand and Sureshanand, are still missing. The government says laws are in place to ensure capital punishment for crimes against minors, but in Asaram's case, the court continues to show leniency." Asaram, who is serving a life sentence in a sexual assault case, was granted interim bail by the Supreme Court until March 31, 2025, on medical grounds. The court imposed specific conditions before granting him bail. Previously, Asaram was granted a 7-day parole in 2018, which was extended by five days. More recently, he received a 17-day parole on December 10, 2024. In 2013, Asaram was convicted of sexually assaulting a minor from Shahjahanpur at his Jodhpur ashram. The case, filed by the victim's father in Delhi, led to Asaram being sentenced to life imprisonment.

PM Modi moved nation from 'chalta hai' to 'hoga kaise nahin' attitude: EAM Jaishankar at 18th PBD meet



GNS News Agency, Jan 8

Bhubaneswar: The 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) convention commenced at Bhubaneswar on Wednesday with the inauguration of Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi. Speaking on the occasion, EAM Jaishankar said that it was customary to hold a conclave of the younger generation of the Indian diaspora as a part of the PBD celebrations to recognise the special contributions that young minds make, at home and abroad. "At home, we have just started our journey towards Viksit Bharat in the Amrit Kaal. This is an endeavour that is very much about the future generation," said EAM Jaishankar.

He stated that a large part of the efforts of the Government of India is to give the right motivation to the younger generation to accelerate their efforts. Referring to the statement of famous badminton star, P.V. Sindhu, EAM Jaishankar said Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a youth icon who moved our nation from 'chalta hai' to 'badal sakta hai' to 'hoga kaise nahin?'. He urged the delegates to promote India as a preferred tourism destination

abroad.

"Let me take the opportunity to urge you on behalf of Prime Minister Modi to promote India as a tourism destination. If young Indian PIOs bring their equally young friends from abroad to explore our uniquely rich and diverse heritage and culture, this will surely become a lifelong habit," said EAM Jaishankar. The EAM expressed satisfaction over the growing popularity of the Know India Programme and Bharat Ko Janiye Quiz among the diaspora. Jaishankar noted, "This state offers a tremendous opportunity to experience personally much of what we would be discussing in the course of the PBD. Its cultural festivals and religious and archaeological sites are a reminder of why we in India consider ourselves to be a civilizational society."

Mother & daughter killed, father battling for life after truck hits bike near ORR

GNS News Agency, Jan 8

Hyderabad: A woman and her daughter were killed, while her husband is fighting for his life in a hospital, after their motorcycle was hit by a truck on the city outskirts on Wednesday. Tragedy struck the family when the rashly driven truck hit the motorcycle, which the trio was riding, at Tukkuguda in Pahadishareef.

Ch Gopal (36), his wife Lakshamma (33) and their daughter Vijaya (14), a Class VIII student, all from Wanaparthy, were going to the Osmania General Hospital on a bike for Vijaya's treatment. According to the police, when the trio reached Tukkuguda road near the Outer Ring Road (ORR), a rashly driven truck hit the motorcycle. As a result, the family fell on the road and suffered grievous bleeding injuries.

ED Summons Former HMDA Chief Engineer in Formula-E Race Case

GNS News Agency, Jan 8

Hyderabad: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has intensified its investigation into the high-profile Formula-E race case, summoning BLN Reddy, the former Chief Engineer of the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA). The probe focuses on allegations of money laundering and violations of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA). BLN Reddy is alleged to have played a crucial role in the transfer of funds related to the case, which has raised concerns about financial irregularities and procedural lapses in organizing the global Formula-E racing event in Hyderabad. The ED officials are set to question him shortly, seeking clarity on the monetary transactions and his involvement in the alleged violations.

The investigation comes amid mounting scrutiny over the event's financial dealings, with the ED exploring multiple angles, including potential money laundering and illegal foreign transactions. Sources suggest that the agency is determined to uncover the extent of financial misconduct,



focusing on BLN Reddy's role in the matter. This development follows the ED's ongoing efforts to ensure compliance with financial regulations and its commitment to holding individuals accountable for economic offenses. Further updates on the interrogation and the case's progress are awaited.

KTR rallies BRS cadre for fight against 'fraudulent' Congress government



GNS News Agency, Jan 8

Hyderabad: Striking a defiant tone, BRS working president KT Rama Rao on Wednesday called on the party cadre to continue their fight against the fraudulent Congress government in the new year. He wanted them to ignore the false cases filed against him and focus on exposing the Congress government's betrayal of farmers and other sections of the State.

He termed the Formula-E race case against him a politically motivated case, aimed to distract public attention from the Congress government's failed promises. "There is nothing to fear when there is no wrongdoing. The current case against me is baseless and politically motivated. I will fight it legally, and we will expose the Congress's frauds," he declared, stating that all decisions taken as the then Min-

ister were for the growth of Hyderabad and Telangana.

Releasing the party diary along with the party leaders at Telangana Bhavan on Wednesday, Rama Rao stated that compared to the sacrifices of agitators during Telangana statehood struggle and challenges faced by farmers in Lagacherla case, the case against him had no significance. "The situation today is minor compared to the hardships faced by our Telangana martyrs. Congress is cheating the farmers, and we must rally people against this injustice," he declared. The BRS working president lambasted Congress leaders for corruption and unfulfilled promises, including Rs 15,000 per acre owed to farmers and benefits to tenant farmers, under Rythu Bharosa scheme. He slammed the Delhi Congress leaders for making false claims of providing Rs.2,500 per month to women in Telangana, to cheat the voters of Delhi once again.

Rama Rao wanted every activist of BRS to fight like party chief K Chandrashekhar Rao, against Congress's false propaganda and failures. Announcing plans for 2025, he urged the cadre to focus on initiatives like forming new committees, registering memberships, and electing party leaders.

Former Minister and senior MLA T Harish Rao castigated the Revanth Reddy government for neglecting promises made to the people. He pointed out that soon after coming to power, Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemanth Soren fulfilled his promise and provided financial support of Rs 2,500 per month to women, but Revanth Reddy made no such attempt even a year after assuming power.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Trudeau's travails

Pushed to the wall by growing discontent over his leadership, Justin Trudeau has chosen to step down as Canada's PM and the head of the ruling Liberal Party. Having lost the confidence of party members as well as voters, he has rightly decided not to run for a historic fourth term. The news has surely brought a smile to the faces of Indian mandarins, in the light of Trudeau's undiplomatic statements, especially over the last year, even though no serving diplomat will publicly acknowledge the joy. Driven by vote bank politics, he raised New Delhi's hackles over the Hardeep Singh Nijjar murder case. He antagonised an old ally that has been contributing significantly to Canadian economy through its students and skilled workers. New Delhi will be hoping that his exit will help the two democracies press the reset button. However, Trudeau's absence may not be enough to boost the Liberals' prospects vis-à-vis the Conservatives in the national elections which are due in late October. At the helm for almost a decade, the Liberals are battling strong anti-incumbency. It's laudable that the embattled PM has taken this tough decision well before the elections, unlike his counterpart from across the border, US President Joe Biden, who had to abandon his re-election dream midway through his turbulent campaign. Trudeau has not only tried to control the damage caused to his party by his unpopularity but also spared himself the ignominy of a potential poll defeat. He also won't have to deal in the long run with Biden's successor Donald Trump, who has ridiculed Trudeau by calling him the 'governor' of the 51st US state. Trudeau did well to prioritise public health during the Covid-19 pandemic, but he faltered as the cost of living escalated and economic growth slowed down. After having taken a stand in favour of immigration, he did a climbdown on the divisive issue amid housing and social service challenges. Trudeau's successor won't find it easy to turn the tide.

Four 'medical college board members' con Mumbai woman by promising MBBS seat to daughter



GNS News Agency, Jan 8

The Mumbai police on Thursday registered a cheating case against four people on Thursday for allegedly duping an Andheri-based woman to the tune of Rs 45 lakh under the pretext of giving admission to her daughter in a medical college in Sindhudurg around four years ago. One of the accused claimed himself to be the relative of a top BJP leader from Sindhudurg and while the other three posed as trustees of the board that runs a medical college in the region and won the confidence of the complainant, a widow, who was trying for her daughter's admission in a reputed medical college in March 2021, the police said. One of the accused, Meghna Satpute, was an old acquaintance of the complainant, the police said. They offered to give a seat to the complainant's daughter, who had cleared the NEET examination in October 2020 with 315 marks, in their medical college's management quota for Rs 15 lakh, to which the complainant agreed.

The woman works as a medical assistant with a private hospital while her 23-year-old daughter was then doing a BHMS course in Bangalore, the police said. The com-

plaintain told the police that she came across an old friend, Meghna Satpute, who promised her that she could help get her daughter MBBS admission with the help of some influential people whom she knows. Satpute arranged a meeting with the complainant and her "influential" friends Nitesh Pawar and Rakesh Gawde who introduced themselves as the trustees of SSPM Medical College and Lifetime Hospital, Padave in Sindhudurg at a hotel, Seven Bungalows, Versova, on March 14, 2021, the First Information Report stated.

However, despite payment, the admission was "put on hold" due to lockdown and the fraudsters said the admission fee has been increased to Rs 45 lakh due to change of rules. To convince the complainant, Satpute and Nitesh Pawar introduced her to one Sawant Kaka, who claimed himself to be a close relative of a top BJP leader from Sindhudurg, the woman told the police. The accused showed a merit list to the complainant and told her that her daughter's admission has been done, the police said, adding that the complainant arranged the rest of the money and paid them Rs 45 lakh through electronic bank transactions and in cash in the presence of two witnesses. As the scammers then told the woman that the college will be opened in December 2021, she contacted the medical college to enquire about the admission of her daughter and her joining letter. She was shocked to be informed that admission of no such student was done in their college, the police said, all the accused have switched off their cell phones by then. After waiting for a few years with the hope that she would get back her money, the woman eventually approached the Mumbai police. The police have filed a case against Satpute, Pawar, Gawde, and Sawant Kaka under sections 420 (cheating) and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code and are further investigating the matter.

3 men part of online cricket betting syndicate arrested in Central Delhi, Rs 20 lakh seized



GNS News Agency, Jan 8

The Delhi Police on Thursday arrested three men who were allegedly part of an online cricket betting syndicate from a flat in Central Delhi and recovered cash to the tune of Rs 20 lakh. The police also seized six mobile phones – two of which were used for live streaming – one laptop, one tablet, and other paraphernalia linked to the gambling operation, including a cash counting machine.

M Harsha Vardhan, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central Delhi), on Friday said the accused were arrested following a tip-off about a "high stake online betting operation" linked to the ongoing Big Bash League cricket matches in Australia. "They (the accused) attracted clients through phone calls and managed bets live during the Big Bash League matches. Two mobile phones were actively streaming live commentary, while bets were systematically logged using laptops and tablets," said DCP Vardhan. The accused confessed to using advanced i-Book software to facilitate betting during live cricket matches, the police said. "A dedicated police team, led by Inspector Rohit Kumar, raided a property in LIG Flats in Motia Khan on January 2, and arrested Rohit Mahajan, 46, a repeat offender and mastermind of the operation; Nagesh Bhasin, 55, who managed live match streaming and client interactions; and Rajeev Chopra aka Kala, 56, the property owner and on-site facilitator," the officer said. Mahajan aka Rinku was previously arrested in 2022 and 2024 under the Delhi Public Gambling Act for similar gambling operations said the officer. The three men have been booked under Sections 3, 4 and 5 of the Act at Paharganj police station.

3 illegal Bangladeshi migrants working in Pune's Talegaon MIDC held

GNS News Agency, Jan 8

Bangladeshi The accused took up jobs at a private company in Talegaon MIDC. The accused took up jobs at a private company in Talegaon MIDC. The Pimpri Chinchwad police recently nabbed three alleged Bangladeshi nationals, working at a private company in Talegaon MIDC, for residing illegally in India. The police have identified the three accused as Hussain Shaikh, 31, Monirul Gazi, 26, and Amirul Sana, 34.

Acting on a tip-off to Police Constable Roshan Pagare of the anti-terrorist cell (ATC) of the Pimpri Chinchwad police, a team led by sub-inspector Prashant Relekar raided a room in the Talegaon MIDC area and arrested the three accused persons on December 30. An FIR was lodged against the accused persons as per sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the Passports Act, and the Foreigners Act. As per a press release issued by senior police inspector Ranjit Jadhav, the police seized Aadhaar cards and Indian PAN cards from the accused. "Bangladeshi passport was seized from a suspect. Also, Bangladeshi birth certificates and other documents showing that the suspects are natives of Bangladesh were seized from their possession. It was found that the accused made several cell phone calls to people in Bangladesh," said police inspector V D Raut of the Anti-Terrorist Bureau of the Pimpri Chinchwad police.

Accused procured forged Indian birth certificates, then Aadhaar and PAN cards. A probe revealed that the accused came to India from Bangladesh by crossing the international border in West Bengal without any essential permissions and documents about four years ago. The police said the accused persons first procured forged Indian birth certificates and then used them to obtain Aadhaar and PAN cards. The accused took up jobs at a private company in Talegaon MIDC. The police said some Rohingya nationals from Myanmar, who too had infiltrated India via Bangladesh, were found to be working in the same company earlier. The police have started searching for the person allegedly involved in providing jobs to illegal Bangladeshi and Rohingya migrants at this company. A court on Thursday remanded the three accused to judicial custody.

Maharashtra got Rs 1.13 lakh crore FDI in 6 months: CM Devendra Fadnavis

GNS News Agency, Jan 8

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis interacts with the 'jawns' and villagers at the 'Bhavya Janajagr Melava', at Pengunda in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra. (PTI Photo) Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis interacts with the 'jawns' and villagers at the 'Bhavya Janajagr Melava', at Pengunda in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra.

Maharashtra has attracted the highest foreign direct investment (FDI) in the country in the second quarter of the 2024-2025 financial year ending September, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said on Friday. "Within six months (April to September), Maharashtra received Rs 1,13,236 crore FDI," Fadnavis said in a statement issued by the CM's Office.

"If the average for the last four years is taken into account, the FDI in the state comes to Rs 1,19,556 crore, which means almost 94.71 per cent of total expected investment has come in six months," the statement adds.

Expressing satisfaction over the achievement, Fadnavis said: "I congratulate Maharashtra's people. I congratulate deputy CMs Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar and cabinet colleagues...we reiterate our pledge to work and take Maharashtra to greater heights in the coming days."

NIA court convicts 28 for murder during 2018 Kasganj Tiranga Yatra

GNS News Agency, Jan 8

A special NIA court here has convicted 28 persons in connection with the murder of Chandan Gupta, who was shot dead in a communal clash that broke out during a 2018 Tiranga Yatra in Kasganj. Special judge Vivekanand Sharan Tripathi said that the sentence will be announced on Friday. The accused were convicted on charges of murder, attempted murder, rioting and insulting the national flag on Thursday. The case has drawn significant attention after Chandan Gupta's death sparked riots in the region. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) court also acquitted Nasiruddin and Asim Qureshi, citing a lack of sufficient evidence to convict them. On the morning of January 26, 2018, Chandan Gupta and his brother Vivek Gupta took part in a Tiranga Yatra. When the procession reached near the Government Girls Inter College gate on Tehsil Road, a group, including Salim, Wasim and Naseem, allegedly blocked the road and stopped the procession, a government counsel said. When Chandan objected, the situation escalated and stone-pelting began from the side of the accused, the lawyer said.

Salim, one of the main accused, shot Chandan, seriously injuring him, he said. Despite the grave injury, Vivek and his companions managed to rush Chandan to the Kasganj police station, from where he was immediately transferred to the district hospital where he was declared dead shortly after arrival. The murder of Chandan led to widespread riots in Kasganj for three days, fueling communal tensions in the region. Chandan's father Sushil Gupta lodged a murder complaint. In September 2019, the Kasganj Sessions Court framed charges against 23 individuals. Later, in November 2019, charges were framed against an additional seven persons. The charges included Sections 147 (rioting), 148 (rioting with deadly weapons), 307/149 (attempted murder), 302/149 (murder), 341 (wrongful restraint), 336 (endangerment), 504 (intentional insult), 506 (criminal intimidation), and Section 124K (insult to national flag) of the Indian Penal Code. Additionally, several of the accused



faced charges under the Arms Act for possession of firearms. The trial was transferred to the Lucknow court after initial proceedings in Kasganj. After Thursday's conviction, Chandan's parents said they had faith in the judicial process. "We have full faith in the court, and we will be satisfied with whatever verdict is given," said Chandan's father, Sushil Gupta. However, he also voiced his frustration with the lack of support from political leaders.

He said none of these promises made by BJP leaders have been fulfilled, which included the construction of a square in Chandan's name and the provision of a government job for a member of his family. "My son is getting justice from the court, but the government leaders have failed to deliver on their promises," Sushil Gupta added. Out of the 28 convicted, 26 were present in court, while one, Munajir Rafi, appeared via video conferencing from jail. The court issued an arrest warrant for another accused, Salim, who was absent from the proceedings. The accused were taken into judicial custody after the verdict and were sent to jail. Salim, Wasim, Naseem, Mohsin, Rahat, Bablu and Salman have also been convicted under the Arms Act for carrying weapons during the incident. The prosecution, led by government lawyers MK Singh and LK Dixit, presented 18 witnesses, while the defence brought forward 23 witnesses during the trial.

'Moral responsibility to resign': Supriya Sule slams Dhananjay Munde; says Pawar family as united as always

GNS News Agency, Jan 8

NCP (SP) working president Supriya Sule on Friday hit out at NCP minister Dhananjay Munde over not resigning on moral grounds from the state cabinet following allegations of his links with the accused in the sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh murder case. "It is the moral responsibility to resign from the post but the concerned political party and government should decide on it. In the past, during the Congress-led state government under Sharad Pawar, few ministers had resigned after facing allegations of corruption. Then chief minister Ashok Chavan too had resigned after facing allegations," Sule said.

She did, however, put in a good word for Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, adding, "Fadnavis has taken forward the legacy of the late NCP leader R R Patil to take responsibility of Naxal-affected districts and the good work should be praised. The situation is changing in Naxal-affected districts." On aunt Asha Pawar's statement that Sharad Pawar and Ajit Pawar should come together, Sule said she does not want to say anything as she does not mix her professional life with her personal life. "The Pawar



family is as united as it has been. My relationship with my aunt has not changed," she said.

Referring to NCP leader Chhagan Bhujbal and her father and NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar sharing the dais at a function in Chakan organised by NCP (SP) MP Amol Kolhe to mark the birth anniversary of social reformer Savitribai Phule, Sule said that her family has always been close to the Bhujbals and this was not unusual.

2 Pune IndiGo flights cancelled, New Year plans of fliers disrupted

GNS News Agency, Jan 8

An IndiGo flight (6E 6129), scheduled to fly from Amritsar to Pune at 11:50 pm on Thursday and expected to arrive at 2:10 am on Friday, was also cancelled due to adverse weather conditions. (File) An IndiGo flight (6E 6129), scheduled to fly from Amritsar to Pune at 11:50 pm on Thursday and expected to arrive at 2:10 am on Friday, was also cancelled due to adverse weather conditions. Inclement weather forced the cancellation of an IndiGo flight (6E 258) from Pune to Bhopal on Thursday. Airline officials cited reduced visibility and adverse conditions as the reasons for the cancellation. Several passengers complained that they were not promptly assisted with an alternative flight. Lavanya Mishra, a student in Pune who was expected to be in Bhopal on Thursday, expressed her frustration. She said, "The airline staff confirmed that my flight was rescheduled; however, they didn't reschedule it and told me I would receive

an email from the airline for rescheduling. I waited for a long time, and when I reached out again for an inquiry, the staff was unresponsive and unaware of the situation." Another passenger, who intended to travel to Bhopal to be with his family for the New Year, spoke on condition of anonymity. He said he rarely gets holidays, and the flight cancellation forced him to book another flight. "Although I reached the next day, I lost one day of my small, peaceful vacation from work," he added. An IndiGo flight (6E 6129), scheduled to fly from Amritsar to Pune at 11:50 pm on Thursday and expected to arrive at 2:10 am on Friday, was also cancelled due to adverse weather conditions. Vijay Lonkar, a passenger traveling to Pune, said that upon reaching the Amritsar airport, he was informed about the flight cancellation due to low visibility and poor weather. "Three flights were rescheduled due to the weather: Amritsar to Delhi, Amritsar to Mumbai, and Amritsar to Pune."

SC panel cancels meeting with farmer leaders after SKM bails out



The Supreme Court had constituted a committee under former Punjab and Haryana High Court judge Nawab Singh to resolve the grievances of the farmers agitating at the Shambhu border.

GNS News Agency, Jan 8

farmers protests The panel has already met leaders of the SKM (non-political). However, only the second-rung leadership had attended the meeting. The high-powered committee constituted by the Supreme Court to hold negotiations with the farmers protesting at the Shambhu border between Punjab and Haryana on Friday cancelled a meeting with union leaders in Panchkula on Friday after the Punjab unit of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) decided not to attend it.

"We had only called farmers leaders of SKM. They refused to be a part of the meeting. Hence we had to postpone it. It has been deferred till we decide on the further date," a source privy to the developments said. Earlier, Balbir Singh Rajwal, president of Bhartiya Kisan Union (Rajewal), and Prem Singh Bhanu, president of All India Kisan Federation (AIKF), had said in a joint statement that the mandate given to the committee formed on September 2 last year was to reach out to protesting farmers at the Shambhu border. They said that since the SKM was not part of the agitation at the Shambhu border, they would not attend the meeting. The panel has already met leaders of the SKM (non-political). However, only the second-rung leadership had attended the meeting. The committee was constituted on September 2 under former Punjab and Haryana High Court judge Nawab Singh to resolve grievances of farmers agitating at the Shambhu border. It comprises retired IPS officer BS Sandhu, agriculture expert Devinder Sharma, economist Professor Ranjit Singh Ghuman and Punjab State Farmers' and Farm Workers' Commission chairman Sukhpal Singh. What the committee said in its interim report submitted to the Supreme Court on November 22, the panel listed reasons behind agrarian distress, including stagnant yield, rising costs and debt and inadequate marketing system.

The committee suggested solutions, including examining the possibility of giving legal sanctity to minimum support price (MSP) and offering direct income support. In its 11-page interim report, the panel had stated, "The farming community in the country in general and that of Punjab and Haryana, in particular, has been facing an ever-increasing crisis for over two decades. The stagnation in yield and production growth since the mid-1990s marked the beginning of the crisis." It added, "In 2022-23, the institutional debt on farmers in Punjab was Rs 73,673 crore, while in Haryana it was Rs 76,630 crore as per the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). There is also a significant burden of non-institutional debt on farmers, which is estimated to be 21.3 per cent of total outstanding debt on farmers in Punjab and 32 per cent in Haryana, according to the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO)." The report had stated that the farming community across the country was also struggling with a suicide epidemic. "In India, over 4 lakh farmers and farm workers have committed suicides since 1995. In Punjab, a house-to-house survey conducted by three public sector universities recorded 16,606 suicides among farmers and farm workers in 15 years (2000 to 2015)," it said.

Who is Justice (Retd) Nawab Singh who heads the SC-appointed committee to resolve grievances of protesting farmers?



GNS News Agency, Jan 8

Nawab Singh Protesting farmers at Shambu and Khanauri on the Punjab-Haryana border are currently preparing to mark a year of their stir seeking the implementation of 14 demands, including a legal guarantee on Minimum Support Price (MSP). In September 2024, the Supreme Court constituted a committee headed by former Punjab and Haryana High Court judge Justice (Retd) Nawab Singh to amicably resolve the grievances of protesting farmers at the Shambhu and Khanauri borders. The bench comprising Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan directed the committee to hold meetings with the farmers. One such meeting which was scheduled to take place in Haryana's Panchkula on Friday has been cancelled after the farmers refused to attend it.

Who is Justice (Retd) Nawab Singh?

Born on December 11, 1951 in a family of farmers and lawyers, Justice (Retd) Nawab Singh completed his law graduation from Kurukshetra University in 1974. Hailing from an agricultural background, he is considered to be well-versed in the issues that farmers face on the ground. During a press conference at the Chandigarh Press

Club in April 2024, Justice Singh strongly advocated a new capital and a separate high court for Haryana. "The demand... is absolutely justified and the state government will have to pay attention to this on a priority basis," he had said. After retiring from the Punjab and Haryana High Court in 2013, he was appointed president of the Haryana Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission, the apex body to decide cases pertaining to the state's consumer disputes.

In his initial years, Singh worked as a lawyer in Haryana's Ambala district before he was selected to the state's Superior Judicial Services in 1984 as additional district and sessions judge. In 1999, he was promoted as district and sessions judge and served in various districts. He was also registrar (vigilance) of the Punjab and Haryana High Court. Before his elevation as a high court judge in April 2007, Justice Singh also served as the registrar general of the high court. During his stint as a high court judge, he served as a member of various committees, including the building committee, juvenile justice monitoring committee, Board of Governors' Judicial Academy Chandigarh and the committee for recruitment to superior judicial services. His father, a prominent landlord, practiced as an eminent lawyer in Haryana. Besides Justice Nawab Singh, the committee formed to hold talks with the farmers includes retired IPS officer and former Haryana DGP P S Sandhu; Dr Devinder Sharma; Ranjit Singh Ghuman, Professor of Eminence at Guru Nanak Dev University (GNDU), Amritsar; Agricultural Economist from Punjab Agriculture University Dr Sukhpal Singh; and Professor B R Kambhoj, Vice Chancellor of Chaudhary Charan Singh Agriculture University, Hisar as special invitee. Protesting farmers at Shambu and Khanauri on the Punjab-Haryana border are currently preparing to mark a year of their stir seeking the implementation of 14 demands, including a legal guarantee on Minimum Support Price (MSP).

Bengaluru temperature on weekend to dip to lowest January range in over a decade

GNS News Agency, Jan 8

bengaluru temp The lowest minimum temperature ever recorded in Bengaluru is 7.8 degree Celsius on January 13, 1884, as per the IMD's historical records. The cold wave conditions prevailing in north India over the last two days are set to result in a sharp dip in minimum temperatures in Bengaluru over the next couple of days. The India Meteorological Department, Bengaluru, has predicted a lowest minimum temperature of as low as 10.2 degree Celsius for Saturday in Bengaluru which is well below the average minimum temperature of 15.8 degree Celsius seen in the city in the month of January. The lowest minimum temperature ever recorded in Bengaluru is 7.8 degree Celsius on January 13, 1884, as per the IMD's historical records. The lowest temperatures recorded in the city in January in the last 15 years is 12 degree Celsius on January 16, 2012 and 12.3 degree Celsius on January 15, 2019. The IMD prediction for the minimum temperature for Bengaluru over the next two days indicates temperatures going as low as 10 degree Celsius to 12.5 degree Celsius, while the average minimum temperature would be in the range of 15 degree Celsius.



after no large change in minimum temperature over Interior Karnataka. No large change in minimum temperatures in Coastal Karnataka," the IMD said in its forecast for Karnataka on Friday. For Bengaluru city and its surrounding areas, the IMD forecast "fog/mist likely in early morning hours in some areas. Maximum and Minimum temperatures are very likely to be around 27°C and 15°C respectively". The extreme cold wave conditions in north India resulted in severe cold wave conditions in parts of north Karnataka between December 15 and 20 Bengaluru recorded a minimum temperature of 12.4 degree Celsius on December 16 which was lower than the lowest minimum temperature of 12.8 degree Celsius recorded since 2011 on December 24, 2011.

Karnataka High Court grants interim stay in rave party case against Telugu actor Hema

GNS News Agency, Jan 8

At the time, Hema had issued a statement that she had actually been in her own farmhouse in Hyderabad at the time of the raid. At the time, Hema had issued a statement that she had actually been in her own farmhouse in Hyderabad at the time of the raid. The Karnataka High Court has granted an interim stay to criminal proceedings against Telugu actor Hema with regard to a Narcotic Drug and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) case registered following a police raid on a rave party held at a Bengaluru farmhouse last May. Narcotic substances including cocaine, MDMA, and hydro ganja were allegedly found at the party venue. At the time, Hema had issued a statement that she had actually been in her own farmhouse in Hyderabad at the time of the raid. The order was passed on December 31 by a vacation bench consisting of Justice Hemant Chandangoudar. "Learned counsel for the petitioner submits that petitioner has been charge sheeted for the offences punishable under Section 27(b) of the NDPS Act only on the confession statement of the co-accused and there is no corroborative material to substantiate that petitioner had consumed MDMA in a rave party. Interim order as prayed



for insofar as it relates to petitioner herein till the next date of hearing," the court said. The matter is set to be heard in a months' time. In the aftermath of the raid, The Indian Express had reported that the party, which had over 100 guests at a Bengaluru farmhouse, had initially been the site of five arrests. Meanwhile, the Karnataka High Court last September had closed proceedings in the same matter against the owner of the venue, as the owner, a senior citizen, did not appear to have known about the goings-on.

UGC-NET: In Shimla, protest breaks out as aspirants allege college closed entry gate before time

GNS News Agency, Jan 8

UGC-NET, Shimla A police team from Jutogh police post, led by Head Constable Ravi Kumar, was dispatched to the college after reports of a verbal altercation between students and staff. A protest broke out outside a UGC-NET exam centre in Shimla on Friday after around two dozen aspirants were denied entry after they allegedly arrived late. While the aspirants lodged a police complaint accusing HP College of Education of closing the gates before time, the college authorities filed a counter-complaint denying the allegations. "We were informed that the entry gate would close at 8.30 am. However, it was shut at 8.25 am. Many of us reached the gate between 8.25 am and 8.28 am. Despite our pleas to be allowed entry, the authorities denied us access," the aspirants, mostly women who had recently completed their master's degrees, claimed in their complaint. They further alleged, "We were shocked when some aspirants who were with us at the gate climbed over it, entered the examination centre, and were allowed to sit for the exam. We demand the cancellation of this examination centre and a re-conduct of the exam." In their counter-

complaint, the college authorities said that the entry gate was closed as per guidelines. Some students arrived late and were consequently denied entry, they added. A police team from Jutogh police post, led by Head Constable Ravi Kumar, was dispatched to the college after reports of a verbal altercation between students and staff. "We interacted with the examination centre observer, who confirmed that hundreds of students were allowed entry as they arrived on time. The observer refuted the claims of the latecomers. Complaints were received from both sides. One of the staff members at the centre reported a verbal altercation with the students. A police team was sent to the spot," a police officer told The Indian Express. "We reached the centre before 8.30 am but the gate was closed. I arrived at 8.28 am and saw about a dozen students already standing there, also denied entry. We begged the staff to let us in but our requests were ignored. This exam is crucial for our careers, and we have been preparing for it for over a year," Sangeeta Verma, one of the aspirants denied entry, said. Another aspirant Manoj Kumar said, "This is about our future. We were on time, but for some reason, the officials closed the gate earlier than the scheduled time of 8.30 am.

Mumbai woman stabs mom to death for 'favouring elder sister'



GNS News Agency, Jan 8

mumbai woman murder case, current affairs, indian express The accused, Reshma Qazi, surrendered to the police and had a history of arguments with her mother over the issue. A woman in Kuria, Mumbai, allegedly stabbed her 65-year-old mother to death at her residence on Thursday evening for "loving her elder sister more", the police said. The woman, identified as Reshma Muzaffar Qazi, 41, reportedly called up her sibling after the crime and surrendered before the police later in the day. The police said that Reshma believed that her mother Sabira Bano Azgar Sheikh always showed favouritism to her elder daughter, Zainabi,

and on Thursday she picked up an argument with her mother over the issue when the elderly woman visited Reshma's residence in Qureshi Nagar area of Kuria (east). Sabira Bano Azgar Sheikh has a son Akhtar and three daughters, of which Reshma is the youngest, the police said.

According to the police, the argument took an ugly turn when Reshma took a knife from the kitchen and stabbed Sabira to death. Around 8 pm, Reshma called up her brother Akhtar who in turn informed another sister Zainabi, 42, residing close to Reshma's house. Zainabi saw her mother lying in a pool of blood on reaching Reshma's residence and informed the police. In her statement to the police, Zainabi said that since she paid for the medicines of her mother, Sabira stayed with her most of the time, leading to a fight between the two sisters in the past. Reshma had also filed a police complaint against Zainabi over one such fight in 2021, the police said. Sabira's body was taken to Rajawadi hospital where she was declared dead. In the meantime, Reshma surrendered herself at Chunabhatti police station. The police have registered a murder case and placed Reshma under arrest. Zainabi told the police that while at Reshma's house, Sabira would speak high of Zainabi, something that did not go down well with the youngest sibling, often leading to verbal duels.

Sambhal violence case: Allahabad HC rejects SP MP Ziaur Rehman Barq's plea to quash FIR against him

GNS News Agency, Jan 8

The Allahabad High Court on Friday rejected Samajwadi Party MP Ziaur Rehman Barq's plea to quash the First Information Report (FIR) against him in the Sambhal violence case and said that the police investigation will continue. The high court, however, directed the police not to arrest the Sambhal MP and asked him to cooperate with the local police. Barq was booked after violence broke out in Sambhal on November 24 after a court-ordered survey of the local Shahi Jama Masjid, leading to five people being killed and several policemen getting injured. The high court developments came a day after the Chandausi court-appointed commissioner Ramesh Singh Raghav submitted a survey report of the masjid in a sealed packet to the office of Aditya Singh, the civil judge (senior division), on Thursday.

The 45-page report is said to contain more than 1,200 photographs taken during the survey of the mosque on November 19 and 24. It was the second survey that had sparked violence in the town. A pen drive with 4.5 hours of video footage of the surveys has also been placed in the sealed packet. "As per directives of the honourable Supreme Court, the survey report has been submitted in a sealed packet which cannot be opened even by the judge till fur-



ther directives of the apex court. The court has accepted the report and sealed it in another packet before placing the same in the records room," Raghav said. The mahant of the Kaila Devi temple in Chandausi, Rishi Raj Giri, and six others had filed a 95-page petition in a local court on November 19 claiming that the Shri Hari temple was converted into the Shahi Masjid in Sambhal by a lieutenant of Babar in 1529. The petition also claimed that the remains of the temple are present inside the mosque. Judge Aditya Singh took up the petition on the same day and ordered a survey of the mosque after appointing the court commissioner. He had also directed that the report be submitted on November 28.

After Zeenat, another tiger located in Jharkhand, about 20 kms from Bengal border

GNS News Agency, Jan 8

Jharkhand forest department officials have spotted another tiger near Chowka in Khunti, which is approximately 20 kilometres from West Bengal. The location of the tiger is within 20 kilometres from the Bengal border, which connects to Ajothya Pahar in Purulia district. "We have found pug marks in the area. Possibly it is a female tiger. We have put camera traps in the area. So far we could only see some Jackals. However we are hopeful of capturing the tiger," said Satyajit Singh, chief conservator of forest, Jharkhand. "We still do not know where it came from. There are various possibilities," said Singh adding that, "Our quick response teams are making rounds of the area 24 hours, our officials are in the area. We have also alerted the administration and police."



est department officials stated that they are yet to be informed of any sighting of a tiger.

This sighting comes after the recent handover of Zeenat, a three-year-old female tigress who had escaped from Odisha's Simlipal Tiger Reserve in December and was captured in Bankura district in West Bengal. Zeenat was handed over to Odisha on Tuesday. According to sources in the forest department, on Tuesday morning a calf was killed by a wild animal and they also found tiger pug marks. As part of their investigation, Jharkhand forest officials recorded the statement of a young boy who claimed to have seen the big cat. When shown images of tigers and leopards, the boy identified the tiger as the animal he had spotted. Unlike Zeenat, which was equipped with a radio collar for easy tracking, this new tiger does not have any tracking device, making it difficult for forest department officials to track the animal. Meanwhile, the West Bengal for-

Enforcement Bureau team attacked during inspection of illegal mining operation in Haryana's Nuh

haryana Surajmal, SHO of the Haryana State Enforcement Bureau police station in Nuh said the stone pelting injured him and his employees and they escaped with great difficulty. Two Haryana State Enforcement Bureau officers were allegedly injured in an attack by suspected mining mafia during inspection of an illegal mining operation in the Ghata Shamshabad village of Nuh district, police have said. The accused also forcefully freed a tractor-trolley that was caught engaging in the illegal mining operation, they said. An FIR was registered against three named accused and 22 unidentified people under provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and other laws at Ferozpur Jhirka police station on the basis of a complaint filed by inspector Surajmal, SHO of the Haryana State Enforcement



Bureau police station in Nuh. Surajmal alleged that he, assistant sub-inspector Rakesh and driver Rafiq were on their way to Ferozpur Jhirka-Beevan Road to inspect an alleged illegal mining operation. When they were close to the Ghata Shamshabad police naka, Surajmal said he tried to stop three tractor-trolleys laden

with stones but the vehicles did not stop. "They drove the tractor-trolleys into the forest... a tractor driver drove into the village. Two tractor-trolleys were moving in front of me and (the driver of) one of them emptied the trolley and ran away. After that, I called the Ferozpur Jhirka SHO for help and, within a short time, 20-25 people came and pelted us with

stones," he alleged. The inspector said the stone pelting injured him and his employees and they escaped with great difficulty. During this, someone drove away with the abandoned tractor-trolley, he added. The Ferozpur Jhirka SHO arrived after some time with his mobile staff and a mining department team but the accused had escaped by then.

Advances in bone marrow transplantation in India: a testament to progress and hope



GNS News Agency, Jan 8

Occasions such as World Bone Marrow Day offer an opportunity to celebrate medical advancements that save countless lives while raising awareness about the transformative power of bone marrow transplantation (BMT). Over the years, India has emerged as a significant player in this field, making remarkable strides in technology, infrastructure, and accessibility. We, at our hospital, have performed about 500 or more transplants including allogeneic, autologous, mismatched, haplo, bloodless and mini transplants. Bone marrow transplantation involves replacing damaged or diseased bone marrow with healthy cells, often used to treat conditions such as leukaemia, lymphoma, aplastic anaemia, thalassaemia, and certain immune disorders. BMT is broadly categorised into: Autologous Transplantation, where we use the patient's own stem cells; and Allogeneic Transplantation where we use stem cells from a donor, often requiring precise matching of Human Leukocyte Antigens (HLA). BMT in India

India has witnessed advancements in both categories of bone marrow transplants, catering to an increasing number of patients needing these life-saving procedures. The first bone marrow transplant in India was performed in the 1980s. Limited infrastructure and the high cost of procedures meant that only a few centres offered this service. However, the dedication of pioneering medical professionals laid the groundwork for future advancements. As a result, today, India boasts over 100 centres specialising in BMT, equipped with state-of-the-art facilities. Hospitals in cities including Bengaluru, Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, and Hyderabad have become hubs for advanced treatments, offering world-class care at a fraction of the cost compared to Western nations. There have been some key improvements that have enabled this kind of growth in the country. Firstly, improved donor registries have made a huge difference. A significant challenge in allogeneic transplants is finding a compatible donor. India's burgeoning population presented both a challenge and an opportunity. Organisations such as DATRI and MDRI (Marrow Donor Registry India) have worked tirelessly to expand donor registries. With millions of registered donors, the probability of finding matches for Indian patients has increased significantly.

The development of haploidentical (half-matched) transplants has been a game-changer. It allows parents, children, or siblings to serve as donors, increasing the pool of potential matches. This innovation has been particularly beneficial in a country where finding unrelated donors is still a challenge. Today, bloodless transplants too are possible, and the availability of growth factors has facilitated this. If you are wondering why this is significant, Jehovah's Witness is a religious group whose members reject blood transfusions. Another crucial factor is Reduced Intensity Conditioning (RIC) also called as Mini Transplants. Traditional BMT often required high-dose chemotherapy or ra-

diation, which is taxing on patients, especially older individuals or those with comorbidities. Reduced intensity conditioning has made transplants safer and more feasible for a broader demographic. India has also made progress in utilising umbilical cord blood as a source of stem cells. Cord blood banks have proliferated, offering an alternative for patients who cannot find a suitable bone marrow donor. Graft vs host disease, a significant portion of mortality and morbidity in allogeneic transplantation is due to graft vs host disease which affects the skin, intestine, liver and antimicrobial immunity. The availability of new and advanced drug therapies and the usage of cellular therapy like mesenchymal cells and concentrated T-regulatory cells has revolutionised the treatment of this once-fatal complication. Most patients can be saved with these new approaches. However, infections do remain a significant risk for BMT patients due to their immunocompromised state. Indian hospitals have adopted stringent infection control protocols, including specialised isolation units and advanced antimicrobial treatments, reducing post-transplant complications. Emerging therapies such as CAR-T cell therapy and CRISPR gene editing hold promise for conditions such as leukaemia and thalassaemia. While these are still in the nascent stages in India, research and trials are ongoing, paving the way for cutting-edge treatments. Technology has been the cornerstone of advancements in BMT. From advanced HLA typing techniques to AI-driven algorithms that match donors with recipients, India has embraced innovation to enhance success rates. Telemedicine has also played a crucial role, allowing experts from urban centers to guide treatment in remote areas.

Despite all of these achievements, several hurdles remain: primary among them is donor awareness. While registries have grown, awareness about bone marrow donation remains limited. More educational campaigns are needed to dispel myths and encourage participation. It is also true that access to advanced BMT facilities is still concentrated in urban areas, leaving rural populations underserved. Another issue that is of concern is long-term care for BMT patients, including monitoring for relapse and managing complications. All of these require further strengthening. Clearly, greater investment in research is needed to make cutting-edge therapies like gene editing widely available.

Every success story in BMT is a testament to human resilience and scientific progress. From children cured of thalassaemia to adults given a second chance at life after battling leukaemia, these stories inspire hope. They also underscore the importance of continuing advancements and making these life-saving procedures accessible to all. The way forward is now essential to reflect on the strides made in BMT and the path ahead. Collaborative efforts between the government, medical community, non-profits, and the private sector are crucial to overcoming existing challenges. Emphasis on research, donor awareness, and equitable healthcare access will ensure that India continues to be a beacon of hope for patients worldwide. India's journey in bone marrow transplantation is a remarkable example of how innovation, dedication, and collaboration can transform lives. Let us honour the pioneers in this field, support ongoing advancements, and renew our commitment to saving lives through this miraculous medical intervention. Together, we can ensure that bone marrow transplantation remains a ray of hope for countless individuals battling life-threatening diseases. (Dr. Radheshyam Naik is Consultant Medical Oncologist and Hematologist and Bone Marrow Transplant Physician with Samprada Hospital, Bengaluru.)

IIT Bombay's space start-up tests its green propulsion system in space

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Space tech start-up, Manastu Space, started by Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay has successfully test fired their first Green Propulsion System VYOM 2U onboard PSLV C60 in space on December 31, 2024, at 8:50 p.m. in Lucknow. The Green Propulsion System is a non-toxic, environmentally friendly alternative to conventional chemical propulsion systems that are being researched to find efficient propellants that have a minimal impact on the environment and human health. Manastu Space was founded in 2017 by alumni Tushar Jadhav from the Department of Aerospace Engineering 2014 batch and Ashtesh Kumar from the Department of Mechanical Engineering 2017 batch. Led by a team of experts in propulsion systems, satellite technology, and advanced materials, the technology has been developed in collaboration and mentoring with IIT Bombay, where many initial prototyping and critical technologies were developed under Professor Jayesh Bellare from Chemical Engineering, Professor Parag Bhargava from Metallurgical Engineering & Materials Science, and Professor Amol Gokhale from Department of Mechanical Engineering. Tushar Jadhav, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Manastu Space said that the PSLV Orbital Experimental Module, or POEM, is a versatile initiative by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) designed to provide a cost-effective platform for on-orbit experiments. POEM forms the fourth stage of the PSLV rocket into a free-flying testbed in low Earth orbit, offering startups, research institutions, and universities an affordable way to validate their technologies in space.

"We test-fired our green propulsion system Vyom-2U onboard the POEM-4 on the New Year's Eve. We are deeply grateful to the ISRO and the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe) for providing an incredible platform like POEM to test our product and many others," Mr. Jadhav said. For emerging players like Manastu Space, POEM serves as a vital enabler. Launching proprietary systems into space has traditionally been prohibitively expensive for smaller entities. By leveraging POEM, startups can bypass high launch costs and focus on innovation, fostering a more inclusive and dynamic space ecosystem in India.

Professor Jayesh Bellare said that the system, launched aboard ISRO's POEM, has now reached Technology Readiness Level 8 (TRL-8), marking its readiness for commercial deployment. Demonstration of seed germination in outer space, a robotic arm to catch a tethered debris there, and testing of green propulsion systems are some of the experiments planned on the POEM-4. The POEM is carrying 24 experiments, 14 from various ISRO labs and 10 from private universities and startups to demonstrate various technologies in space. "The mission, aptly named Adyanta, demonstrated the propulsion system's exceptional capabilities through a series of critical maneuvers. Over the coming weeks, the system will achieve more than 500 seconds of cumulative firing time in orbit, solidifying its performance under real-world conditions. This milestone represents a paradigm shift in satellite propulsion, offering a safer, more efficient, and cost-effective alterna-



The PSLV Orbital Experimental Module is a versatile initiative by the Indian Space Research Organisation designed to provide a cost-effective platform for on-orbit experiments

tive to conventional toxic propellants," Mr. Bellare said. Mr. Jadhav said that this success marks a transformative moment as the team transitions from development to commercialisation. "With our green propulsion technology validated in space, we are poised to meet the growing global demand for sustainable satellite propulsion. To fuel our growth and commercialisation efforts, we are actively expanding our team by hiring experienced professionals in the space domain. Their expertise will drive innovation, scale operations, and accelerate our mission to redefine propulsion standards in the global space industry. This accomplishment also positions us strongly as we prepare for our next funding round, building on the momentum of our \$3 million pre-Series A raise in 2023," Mr. Jadhav explained. On the technological impact, Ashtesh Kumar, Chief Technology Officer of Manastu Space said, "Reaching TRL-8 underscores the maturity and reliability of our technology and marks a defining moment for sustainable space propulsion. The extensive space testing of our VYOM 2U propulsion system, withstanding approximately 400 hours in orbit, demonstrates its robustness and readiness for long-duration missions." In a thrilling 30second firing onboard PSLV POEM-4, the Green Propulsion System tilted the platform by 24 degrees, spinning it at 0.5°/s before onboard systems seamlessly regained control, Mr. Kumar added. Over the coming days, PSLV will execute critical manoeuvres, culminating in 500+ seconds of cumulative in-space firing time across the next 1500 hours. "This In-Orbit Demonstration (IOD) is a historic leap for sustainable propulsion, paving the way for cleaner and more innovative space exploration—where Manastu Space is proudly leading the charge," Mr. Kumar said.

What Kochi wants



As we grow, our city grows with us. And, we make connections with it over time. Be it a favourite food joint, the beach side, an old corner-of-the-road store, we each have our favourite things about the city we live in. We have dreams for it and want it to better itself too. Kochi is not just a city, it is a feeling — a place that has given me so much joy and inspiration. This New Year, I dream of a greener, healthier, and kinder Kochi. I hope to see more good food education happening in schools and more people growing food in balconies and terraces. Streets lined with more trees and neighbourhoods filled with the aroma of community kitchens, ensuring no one goes to bed hungry. I have always dreamt of our waterways across the city running clean and sparkling, with people travelling in small boats. Along with a better waste management system, my Kochi will turn into a paradise. I also hope more people talk about civic sense this year, believing that proper education on this can transform our city's atmosphere and public spaces. Kochi has so much potential, and together we can make it shine. A massive drive to bring awareness of civic sense, from the family unit to the text book, to schools and residents associations and visiting tourists/migrant population. The amount of plastic everywhere requires the consumer to stop buying and making better choices. A digital detox for parents and children — reduce screen time and spend more time on real connections and the outdoors.

We hope to see more inclusive spaces for art. When we started Nisarga Art Hub, the idea was to create a space that broke the conventions of a traditional performance space. And now, we have artists reaching out to us. For 2025, we want to host collaborations across genres and offer the space to promote lesser-known art forms and those that don't often get mainstream platforms. Designed by architect Vinu Daniel, the space lends to the experience of the performer and the audience. We have had artists from all over the world performing here; some of them reached out to us, seeing the uniqueness of the setting. Nisarga Art

Why inflation will matter more in 2025: Explained

It has been what one may call, a bittersweet year for the economy, with a sweet first half, when growth surprised everyone, including the government. And a difficult latter half by the end of which the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Finance Ministry mandarins are sparring, as diplomatically as possible, over who is to be blamed for spluttering growth, a persistently resurgent inflation trajectory and the flux this creates for policy making.

Why is there a clamour for a rate cut?

Top government functionaries have been making noises since late November about the need for RBI to cut rates, with some suggesting it should ignore volatile food prices and prioritise growth and investments. The reason for their seemingly urgent pitches became clearer when the Q2 GDP numbers revealed a 7-quarter low growth of 5.4%, with urban demand tottering and showing up in underwhelming corporate results that also affected market sentiment.

How were things this time last year?

India's stock markets were at record highs, the Gross Domestic Product was reported to have risen 7.7% in the first half of 2023-24, from 7.2% a year earlier. The Finance Ministry expected growth to be "over 6.5%" for the full year, as it geared up for an interim Budget ahead of the Lok Sabha polls. The RBI was expected to start an interest rate cut cycle in the second half of 2024 as it had projected inflation to average 4% — its median target — through July-September.

But didn't the economy do far better in 2023-24?

Yes, the National Statistical Office (NSO) growth estimates for 2023-24 turned out to be way healthier than all projections, partly because of revisions in earlier quarters' numbers. The first half of 2023-24 was reckoned to have grown around 8.1%, followed by an 8.6% spike between October and December 2023 (third quarter, or Q3), a 7.8% growth in the first three months of 2024. 2023-24 had ended up with a remarkable 8.2% uptick. The first quarter of 2024-25 was largely taken up by the election process. The BJP suffered some reverses, but attained 240 seats in the Lok Sabha and the NDA returned to office with a little help from some allies, and a semblance of continuity was maintained in the cabinet, especially for key economic portfolios like Finance and Commerce.

What did the post-poll Budget offer?

In the full Union Budget for 2024-25 presented in July, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman ramped up references to employment and the middle class and unveiled schemes to spur skilling and job creation with some token tax cuts for income tax payers, that were hoped to alleviate the effects of inflation and boost consumption. While a sustained consumption pick-up was necessary to stimulate greenfield and brownfield private investments, Ms. Sitharaman acknowledged that public spending on infrastructure had to lead the way yet again this year and announced a ₹11.11 lakh capex plan. The government exuded confidence that India would record its fourth successive year with 7% or higher growth, since COVID-19 had tripped the economy.

How did things pan out?

The first growth data for 2024-25, released after the Budget, showed GDP had risen at a five-quarter low of 6.7%. However, this didn't ring any alarm bells at the time — the prolonged polling process had affected capital spending plans by the Centre and the States which effectively scuppered a major growth lever. The mood was still upbeat but some had begun to worry. "Growth moderated in the April-June quarter as high interest rates temper urban demand," said Louis Kuijs, Asia-Pacific chief economist at S&P Global Ratings in September. The firm expected India to grow 6.8% this year at the time, well below the 7.2% projected by the RBI. After the Q2 growth shock, many have pared their 2024-25 growth projections down, including the Finance Ministry which now expects it to be around 6.5%, while some worry India has entered the throes of a prolonged cyclical slowdown.

Meanwhile, though consumer price inflation remained under 6% through most of the year, it didn't get near the

Hub is a house owned by musician couple Vishnudev KS and Lakshmi V, in Angamaly. In the heart of a rural setting, flanked by fields, Nisarga's tiled roof that doubles up as seats, has hosted a number of open air concerts.

For 2025, I wish to see a Periyar full of pure water. As a child, I have drunk clear, pure water from the Periyar. When we started the Periyar Malineekarana Virudhdha Samithi to fight pollution caused by industrial units along the Floor-Edayar stretch, in 1998, our vision was to have a cleaner Periyar by 2025. Though a lot of work has been done in this direction and we have constantly questioned and challenged policy makers, we are yet to see visible changes. However, we are hopeful. In 2024, the National Green Tribunal issued notices to the Kerala government and the Central and State Pollution Control Boards to explain a mass fish kill in the Periyar. We hope it will be done in 2025 along with the remediation of the Kuzhikkandam canal. I am also hopeful that the free insurance scheme and free drinking water scheme for the people of Floor-Edayar belt will become a reality in 2025. As a sustainable tourism entrepreneur, I envision a Kochi where city dwellers, especially the youth, reconnect with nature and our heritage. Our suburban communities have long practiced a traditional, self-sustained lifestyle that holds valuable lessons for modern living. I hope more people draw inspiration from these practices to embrace sustainability. While travelling, I urge everyone to adopt the Leave No Trace principles — minimizing waste, respecting wildlife, and leaving destinations as pristine as they found them. Kochi is surrounded by a rich biodiversity and hidden ecological treasures. With initiatives like our electric boat cruise, we aim to help people explore and appreciate these natural wonders responsibly. Beyond nature, Kochi boasts a heritage filled with untold stories and timeless values. Through experiences like our interactions with ethnic communities at Mamalakandam, we hope to ignite curiosity in the youth to learn about the rich traditions and values still preserved in these regions. Together, we can make Kochi a shining example of sustainable urban living that cherishes its past while protecting its future. In 2025, I manifest a year of more live comedy shows! I urge all comedy enthusiasts to attend shows, as nothing beats the energy of watching stand-up live. For those who haven't yet, this is your year to experience it first hand. As one of the mentors of Comedy Lounge Kochi, Kerala's largest comedy collective, I encourage more artists to take the stage—don't fear the mic, we've got your back! and last but not the least After a successful 2024 at our performance venue Spotlight Socials, we, the founders, look forward to creating more events, giving artists more stage time, and keeping the laughter flowing across Kerala.



RBI's goal till July when it hit a five-year low of 3.5%, followed by another benign print in August. Yet, rate cut hopes in the October monetary policy review were scotched by food prices that shot up, starting in September, lifting the headline inflation closer to 6% again. With food prices still a worry and edible oils spurring up, the RBI did not budge on interest rates this month as well, even as it noted the growth-inflation situation is no longer well-poised, slashing its 2024-25 growth projection to 6.6% from earlier hopes of 7.2%.

With slowing growth and high inflation, what next?

While high interest rates hurt demand and lower rates will help private consumption and, in turn, investments too, inflation hurts consumption spending as well. The government has appointed a new Governor at the RBI, but a change of guard may not suffice for a rate cut in February as inflation needs to ebb quickly too. That North Block and Mint Street are not seeing eye to eye on who needs to blink first to break this growth-inflation flux was apparent as the year drew to a close. An RBI article made a solid case for 'excoriating inflation now' to get consumption, growth and investment going on a strong footing. The latest economic review by the Finance Ministry, in turn, sought to blame the "monetary policy stance" for some of the recent demand slowdown. The growth and inflation rebalancing act, therefore, will be the one to watch out for in 2025, apart from any surprises the next U.S. President throws up.

RTC fare hike: Will Telangana govt follow Karnataka?

HYDERABAD: The repercussions of Karnataka cabinet's decision to increase RTC bus fare hike by 15 percent are already being felt in Telangana with many fearing that the Congress government here may also follow suit. The Karnataka cabinet's decision will come into force from January 5. It is expected to generate additional revenue of Rs 7.84 crore per day for the cash-starved four-State operated road transport corporations. The decision has already triggered verbal duels between the BJP and Congress leaders. The BJP blamed the Congress government's free bus travel scheme for women for the financial crisis in the four corporations, besides imposing additional burden on the travellers.

Considering the fact that Telangana government is also implementing the free bus travel scheme for women in the State many are apprehensive that RTC fares could be increased here as well. There was no option left for the Congress government but to follow its counterpart in Karnataka. Given the increasing fuel prices and operational costs, Telangana government would also increase the fares, charged BRS Greater Hyderabad in charge Dasoju Sravan.

The State government has failed to manage the economy effectively. Investments were getting affected and things had come to a standstill due to poor administration, he slammed, stressing that the corporation should be made self-resilient. With many women boarding RTC buses (Express and Palle Velugu), men are complaining that they do not get seats despite paying the fares. On the contrary, the Congress government has been claiming that the free bus travel scheme for women had in fact aided in increasing the seat occupancy ratio in RTC buses.

Israeli airstrike hits Gaza as Benjamin Netanyahu authorises delegation to continue negotiations in Qatar towards ceasefire deal



GNS News Agency, Jan 8

Israeli airstrikes killed at least 50 people, including several children, across the Gaza Strip, hitting Hamas security officers and an Israeli-declared humanitarian zone. As the bombardment continued on Thursday (January 2, 2025) and into Friday (January 3, 2025), Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said he had authorised a delegation from the Mossad intelligence agency, the Shin Bet internal security agency and the military to continue negotiations in Qatar toward a ceasefire deal. Gaza rescuers say 93 people killed in Israel air strike in north

Israeli media said the delegation would depart on Friday (January 3, 2025). There was no immediate Hamas comment. The U.S.-led talks have repeatedly stalled during 15 months of war. The Israeli strike in the seaside humanitarian zone known as Muwasi occurred as hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians have been huddling there in damp winter weather. "Everyone was taking shelter in their tents from the cold and suddenly we found the world turning upside down. Why, and for what?" said Ziyad Abu Jabal, displaced from Gaza City. The early morning strike killed at least 10 people, including three children and two senior Hamas police officers. Israel's military said it targeted a senior police officer, saying he was involved in gathering intelligence used by Hamas' armed wing in attacks on Israeli forces. Another Israeli strike killed at least eight people in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza. The men were members of local committees that help secure aid convoys, according to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, which received the

bodies. An Associated Press journalist there confirmed the toll. There was no immediate comment from Israel's military. In southern Gaza, the military killed five policemen in eastern Khan Younis. Israeli government spokesman David Mencer said the strike targeted the head of the Hamas internal security force in southern Gaza. "Where did we find him? Where else, but of course hiding in the humanitarian zone in Khan Younis, where Gazans are sheltering from this war," Mr. Mencer said. Israel has repeatedly targeted Gaza's police during the war, contributing to a breakdown of law and order that has made it difficult for humanitarian groups to deliver aid. Israel accuses Hamas of hijacking aid for its own purposes. The Hamas-run government had a police force numbering in the tens of thousands that maintained a high degree of public security before the war, while also violently suppressing dissent. Now officers have largely vanished from the streets in many areas. Meanwhile, three Palestinians were killed in an Israeli strike that hit a group of people walking in the street in Maghazi in central Gaza. Their bodies were taken to Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital. Late Thursday and early Friday (December 26 and 27, 2024), Israeli strikes in central Gaza, including Maghazi and the Nuseirat refugee camp, killed at least 24 people, including children, according to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital.

The war was sparked by Hamas-led militants' October 7, 2023 attack into Israel. The militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted around 250. Around 100 hostages are still inside Gaza, at least a third believed to be dead. Israel's offensive in retaliation has killed more than 45,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to the territory's Health Ministry, which says women and children make up more than half the dead. The Ministry does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in their tally. Israel's military says it only targets militants and blames Hamas for civilian deaths because its fighters operate in dense residential areas. The army says it has killed 17,000 militants, without providing evidence. The war has caused widespread destruction and displaced some 90% of Gaza's population of 2.3 million, many of them multiple times. Hunger is widespread. Children, some barefoot or in sandals, waited in line with metal pails or other containers at a food distribution centre in Deir al-Balah on Thursday (January 2, 2025.)

Reflections as the world grows more 'polarised'



GNS News Agency, Jan 8

Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 U.S. presidential election prompted contemplation of a "divided" United States in terms of politics and society, bolstered by waves of fake news amid a post-truth era. In his book *Polarization: What Everyone Needs to Know* (2019), academic Nolan McCarty explores the social, economic, and geographic factors that contribute to polarisation in America, walking readers through both what is known and unknown about the causes, evolution, and ramifications of the nation's growing political conflicts. America has recently appeared to be defined by profound political, cultural, and societal divides as Mr. Trump won a second term in 2024. And along with nine other words, "polarization" was chosen as the 2024 word of the year by Merriam-Webster, the U.S.'s premier dictionary.

The term "polarization" — defined as "division into two sharply distinct opposites; especially, a state in which the opinions, beliefs, or interests of a group or society no longer range along a continuum but become concentrated at opposing extremes" — has become widely used in the media and in public discourse, and has become a significant aspect of modern life. While MSNBC perceived the 2024 presidential election as having left America "more polarized than ever", and Fox News reports that "[Vice-President-elect J.D.] Vance's debate answer on immigration crisis shows voter polarization", Forbes has cautioned that "cultural polarization is becoming a pressing challenge" in workplaces. Indeed, in October, Merriam-Webster stated that new terms such as "far left" and "far right," as well as "MAGA" — the abbreviation for Mr. Trump's divisive "Make America Great Again" movement — would be included in its dictionary in 2024. Vice-President Kamala Harris warned of fascism under Mr. Trump during the heated election, while Mr. Trump used derogatory language and said his opponent was running on "destruction". The election was so divisive that many Americans believed that the other candidate posed an existential threat to the U.S. when they cast their ballots.

About eight out of 10 Harris supporters were very or somewhat concerned that Mr. Trump's beliefs, but not Harris', were too radical, while roughly seven out of 10 Trump supporters felt the same way about Ms. Harris, but not Mr. Trump, according to AP VoteCast, a poll of over 1,20,000

people. The usage of the word is one aspect that is not polarised. According to Peter Sokolowski, editor at large for Merriam-Webster, "it's something that actually everyone agrees on," to put it in a slightly sardonic way. However, "polarization" has more than only political meanings. The controversy over Taylor Swift's use of a private jet and the Drake-Kendrick Lamar feud (they are rappers) are perceived to be polarising. "Polarization" refers to beyond America also. Globally, centrist policies are being destroyed. Maybe Emmanuel Macron, the centrist French leader, or Olaf Scholz, the centre-left German leader, can better attest as to what it means if society is increasingly polarised. The insanity of the "other side" — in our politics, at work, or at home — confounds us. Even the "us vs. them" rift may frequently be trembling a political society such as ours.

A germination that began much earlier. However, to believe that polarisation is as recent as Mr. Trump's presidency or that Trump or Trump-like individuals are to blame for today's polarised world would be a grave mistake. The seeds were sown a long time ago. Although it is evident from the current political environment that extreme viewpoints are growing in popularity, McCarty contended that these divisions have been developing for several decades and are firmly anchored in the way politics and society are structured.

For instance, American culture has seen significant transformation in recent decades, from changing social group relationships and language and behavioural standards to the rising importance of a college degree. In fact, the 1950s-60s civil rights struggles influenced the partisan culture conflicts of today. And decades before the parties' split on these issues, opinions regarding civil rights were already associated with a variety of other culture war beliefs — much earlier than previous scholarship realised. However, since the 1970s, income and wealth disparities have increased dramatically, which has exacerbated existing polarisation.

In the modern context in recent years, there has been a notable technological revolution. Thus, "polarization" in the modern world can also be viewed through the prism of the shifting global order brought about by social media, the Internet, and artificial intelligence. Yes, Professor Chris Bail critically investigated the underlying causes of political tribalism on social media in his book, *Breaking the Social Media Prism* (2021). It raises an interesting question: do our social media networks impact people's political views? Or do people's political views shape our networks? Prof. Bail's research highlights how today's political polarisation is exacerbated by the widening gap between social media and in-person encounters. His analogy of social media as a prism refracting, rather than mirroring, perfectly captures how it can skew how people see themselves and other people. And the AI genie also continues to transform social media and our way of life. The "us vs. them" drift grows as society, politics, and culture descend further into the rabbit hole, rendering the world more and more polarised.

Apple to pay \$95 million to settle lawsuit accusing Siri of snoop eavesdropping

GNS News Agency, Jan 8

Apple has agreed to pay \$95 million to settle a lawsuit accusing the privacy-minded company of deploying its virtual assistant Siri to eavesdrop on people using its iPhone and other trendy devices. The proposed settlement filed Tuesday in an Oakland, California, federal court would resolve a 5-year-old lawsuit revolving around allegations that Apple surreptitiously activated Siri to record conversations through iPhones and other devices equipped with the virtual assistant for more than a decade. The alleged recordings occurred even when people didn't seek to activate the virtual assistant with the trigger words, "Hey, Siri." Some of the recorded conversations were then shared with advertisers in an attempt to sell their products to consumers more likely to be interested in the goods and services, the lawsuit asserted.

The allegations about a snoop Siri contradicted Apple's long-running commitment to protect the privacy of its customers — a crusade that CEO Tim Cook has often framed as a fight to preserve "a fundamental human right." Apple isn't acknowledging any wrongdoing in the settlement, which still must be approved by U.S. District Judge Jeffrey White. Lawyers in the case have proposed scheduling a Feb. 14 court hearing in Oakland to review the terms. If the settlement is approved, tens of millions of consumers who owned iPhones and other Apple devices from Sept. 17, 2014, through the end of last year could file claims. Each consumer could receive up to \$20 per Siri-equipped device covered by the settlement, although the payment could be reduced or increased, depending on the volume of claims. Only 3% to 5% of eligible consumers are expected to file claims, according to estimates in court documents.

H1B visa row: Ahead of Donald Trump's inauguration as US president, debate on visas intensifies



GNS News Agency, Jan 8

Three weeks ahead of Mr. Trump's inauguration here on January 20, the debate on foreign guest workers' visas for highly skilled professionals, the H-1B, has intensified which has literally created divisions in both the Democratic and the Republican parties. Indians are the main beneficiaries of the H-1B visas, which bring in the best of the talent and brains from across the world. Highly skilled professionals from India walk away with the overwhelming number of H-1B visas — which is Congressional mandated 65,000 every year and another 20,000 for those who received higher education from the U.S. President-elect Donald Trump, who will be sworn in as the 47th President of the United States on January 20 in front of the U.S. Capitol, has come out in support of the H-1B, so has two of his close confidants, Tesla owner Elon Musk and entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy, both of whom have been tasked to head the newly created Department of Government Efficiency. "I've always liked the visas, I have always been in favour of the visas. That's why we have them," Mr. Trump told the New York Post over the weekend. "I've always felt we have to have the most competent people in our country. We need competent people, we need smart people coming into our country, we need a lot of people coming in. We're going to have jobs like we've never had before," Mr. Trump told reporters at a New Year's Eve party hosted by him at Mar-a-Lago.

Both Mr. Musk and Mr. Ramaswamy have argued that H-1B visas are essential to attract the best of the talent, as the U.S. falls short in many of the specialised fields. They have been joined by Indian American Democratic lawmakers including Ro Khanna, Raja Krishnamoorthi and Shri

Thanedar who have come out in support of H-1B visas, after a sudden backlash against it as soon as Trump appointed Sriram Krishnan as his Senior Policy Advisor for Artificial Intelligence. Such a backlash initially came from the supporters of Mr. Trump who argued that this is eating away at the jobs of Americans. Both Mr. Musk and Mr. Ramaswamy immediately weighed in and supported the H-1B visas. On Thursday, influential Democratic Senator Bernie Sanders asserted that the two close confidants of Trump are wrong. "Elon Musk and a number of other billionaire tech company owners have argued that this federal programme is vital to our economy because of the scarcity of highly skilled American engineers and other tech workers. I disagree." "The main function of the H-1B visa programme and other guest worker initiatives is not to hire 'the best and the brightest', but rather to replace good-paying American jobs with low-wage indentured servants from abroad. The cheaper the labour they hire, the more money the billionaires make," Mr. Sanders said on Thursday. His own party colleague Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi disagreed on Monday. "The number one competitive advantage America has is our workforce. The H-1B programme attracts the best and brightest talent from around the world and strengthens that advantage as we also invest in American workers," he told CNN as he supported Mr. Musk and Mr. Ramaswamy in the debate. "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 H1B. Take a big step back and FxxK YOURSELF in the face. I will go to war on this issue the likes of which you cannot possibly comprehend," Mr. Musk had said in a post on X as a portion of the MAGA crowd started attacking Krishnan on his appointment which soon expanded to the debate on H-1B visas. "The reason top tech companies often hire foreign-born and first-generation engineers over 'native' Americans isn't because of an innate American IQ deficit [a lazy and wrong explanation]. A key part of it comes down to the C-word: culture. Tough questions demand tough answers and if we're really serious about fixing the problem, we have to confront the TRUTH," argued Mr. Ramaswamy. "To compete with China, we want to attract the best engineers and technologists. But the H-1B programme has been abused. That's why I have been co-leading the bipartisan H-1B and L-1 Visa Reform Act to make sure American workers are never replaced and that H-1B workers aren't paid below market wages that hurts the compensation of American employees," he said. "All Americans make America great, including immigrants. We must increase H1B tenfold and eliminate country quotas. Make it easy to check immigration status, give EAD to all green card applicants, and quadruple the USCIS staffing budget to expedite legal immigration. This is how you make America the greatest ever," Indian American Congressman Thanedar said.

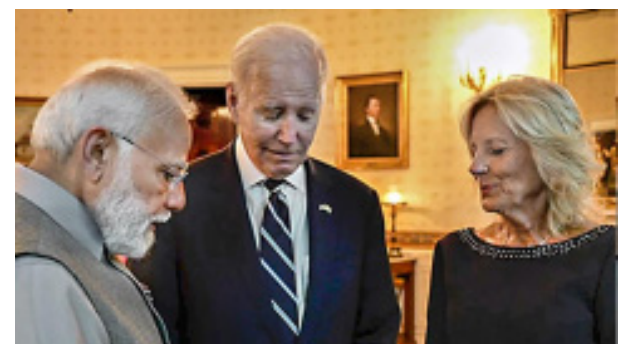
Jill Biden gets \$20,000 diamond from PM Modi, priciest gift from any foreign leader in 2023

GNS News Agency, Jan 8

President Joe Biden and his family were given tens of thousands of dollars in gifts from foreign leaders in 2023, according to an annual accounting published by the State Department on Thursday (January 2, 2025), with first lady Jill Biden receiving the single most expensive present: a \$20,000 diamond from India's leader. The 7.5-carat diamond from Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was easily the most costly gift presented to any member of the first family in 2023, although she also received a brooch valued at \$14,063 from the Ukrainian ambassador to the United States and a bracelet, brooch and photograph album worth \$4,510 from the president and first lady of Egypt.

The U.S. President himself received a number of expensive presents, including a commemorative photo album valued at \$7,100 from South Korea's recently impeached President Suk Yeol Yoon, a \$3,495 statue of Mongolian warriors from the Mongolian prime minister, a \$3,300 silver bowl from the Sultan of Brunei, a \$3,160 sterling silver tray from the president of Israel, and a collage worth \$2,400 from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Federal law requires executive branch officials to declare gifts they receive from foreign leaders and counterparts that have an estimated value of more than \$480. Many of the gifts that meet that threshold are relatively modest, and the more expensive ones are typically — but not always — transferred to the National Archives or put on official displays. The \$20,000 diamond was retained for official use in the White House East Wing, according to a State Department document, while the other gifts to the President and First Lady were sent to the archives.

Vanessa Valdivia, a spokesperson for Jill Biden, said the diamond will be turned over to the archives after they leave office. She did not say what it was being used for. Recipients also have the option to purchase the gift from the U.S. government at its market value, although that is rare, particularly with high-end items. According to the State Department's Office of Protocol, which compiles the list that will be published in Friday's edition of the Federal Register, several employees of the CIA reported receiving lavish gifts



of watches, perfume and jewelry, nearly all of which were destroyed. Of the gifts destroyed, they were worth more than \$132,000 combined.

CIA Director William Burns received a \$18,000 astrograph, which is a telescope and astrological camera, from a foreign source whose identity is classified. That is being transferred to the General Services Administration. But Burns reported receiving and destroying an \$11,000 Omega watch, while numerous others did the same with luxury timepieces.

Below the rank of director, the CIA employees who reported gifts are not identified, but one of them logged an Omega Seamaster Aqua Terra watch, a ladies Omega Constellation watch, a diamond necklace, earring bracelet, and a ring that were valued together at \$65,100. All of those were destroyed, according to the report, as was a \$30,000 women's jewelry set from the Libyan jeweler AJ Grew consisting of a necklace, bracelet, ring and earrings received by another CIA employee. Another CIA employee reported receiving a men's Yacht Master II Rolex Oyster Perpetual watch worth \$18,700, another reported getting a lady's Rolex Oyster Datejust watch valued at \$12,500, and one other got a \$7,450 Rolex Air King watch. All three of the watches were destroyed, according to the list. Another employee reported receiving a collection of pricey Amouage Perfume worth \$10,670, the destruction of which is pending, the report says.

Pro-Kurdish Turkiye leaders continue efforts for dialogue

A delegation from Turkiye's pro-Kurdish Opposition People's Equality and Democracy party (DEM) party met Thursday with the parliamentary speaker and far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) leader amid tentative efforts to resume dialogue between Ankara and the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militant group. DEM's three-person delegation met with Speaker Numan Kurtulmus and then with MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli.

The aim was to brief them on a rare weekend meeting with Abdullah Ocalan, the jailed founder of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) who is serving life without parole on Imrali prison island near Istanbul. It was the Ocalan's first political visit in almost a decade and follows an easing of tension between Ankara and the PKK, which has waged a decades-long insurgency on Turkish soil and is proscribed by Washington and Brussels as a terror group.

The visit took place two months after Bahçeli extended a surprise olive branch to Ocalan, inviting him to parliament to disband the PKK and saying he should be given the "right to hope" in remarks understood to moot a possible early release. Backed by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the tentative opening came a month before Syrian rebels began a lightning 12-day offensive that ousted Bashar al-

Assad in a move which has forced Turkiye's concerns about the Kurdish issue into the headlines. During Saturday's meeting with DEM lawmakers Sirri Sureyya Onder and Pervin Buldan, Ocalan said he had "the competence and determination to make a positive contribution to the new paradigm started by Mr Bahçeli and Mr Erdogan".

Positive talks Onder and Buldan then "began a round of meetings with the parliamentary parties" and were joined on Thursday by Ahmet Turk, 82, a veteran Kurdish politician with a long history of involvement in efforts to resolve the Kurdish issue. "The meeting was positive. We are hopeful," Onder said after meeting the speaker in remarks quoted by Turkiye's private NTV broadcaster. The delegation would meet with Erdogan's ruling AKP party and the main opposition CHP on Monday after which they would offer a full briefing, he said. They also met with Bahçeli for 40 minutes, local media reported, without commenting on the content of the talks. In a weekend posting on X, DEM party co-chair Tuncer Bakirhan hailed what he described as a "historic opportunity to build a common future". "We are on the eve of a potential democratic transformation across Turkiye and the region. Now is the time for courage and foresight for an honourable peace," he said.

Onion price increases to Rs 70 per kg, Odisha asks NAFED to intervene



Onion, prices, indian express Odisha imports onions from Nashik in Maharashtra and Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh where the Kharif crop has suffered. With onion prices reaching Rs 70 per kilogram (kg) in the market, the Odisha government on Wednesday said it has asked the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (NAFED) to sell the vegetable at the rate of Rs 30 per kg in the state.

State Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister K C Patra attributed the price rise to the market situation at Nashik in Maharashtra from where the onions are procured. He

said the base price of onions remained at Rs 45 per kg in Nashik. "Onions are not produced in Odisha and hence, the state is dependent on other states. Prices of onion and garlic are high outside the state and it has contributed to the price rise here. We have asked (NAFED) to sell onions at Rs 30 per kg in Odisha," the minister told reporters. According to traders, Odisha imports onions from Nashik in Maharashtra and Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh. The Kharif crop in both regions suffered due to the rains during September. While the price of good quality old onions brought from Nashik has soared to Rs 70 per kg, those from Kurnool (new but medium quality onions) are available at Rs 40-Rs 55, depending on the quality.

The price of onions in the retail market was Rs 50 a kg a week ago, traders said. The price of garlic has also increased to Rs 400 per kg in retail market in the state. Odisha Byabsayee Mahasangha General Secretary Sudhakar Panda said that the prices might come down in the next four to six days with the supply of new onions in the market. To a question, the minister said the new ration cards will be provided to the people in the New Year as the e-KYC verification process will be completed in November. He said at least 16 lakh ineligible beneficiaries have been identified.

As senior living picks up in India, a 25-year old policy set to get a refresh

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is working on amending the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007 and updating the National Policy for Older Persons, 1999 to promote India's senior care economy, including the senior living sector. Speaking at an event organised by the Association of Senior Living India (ASLI), Secretary Amit Yadav highlighted the need to address challenges around property rights and the key role of the private sector in developing senior living in India.

"Right now, the ministry is working on two areas. We had come out with a policy in 1999 on senior citizens. Now, we are in a position where, after wide consultations with stakeholders, the new policy is in the making. It will give us a direction for the next 25 years. The other thing is amendments to the 2007 act, based on challenges or inputs that have been received over a period of time. This shows very clearly the intent and the way the government is preparing the country for the senior citizens," Yadav said. Both the 1999 policy and the 2007 act, which was amended in 2019, include clauses dealing with protection of property rights and old age homes. The changes are likely to address the evolving landscape of senior care, now characterised by active participation from private service providers, developers, and operators. In their current form, both policy and legislation deal primarily with old age homes supported by state or local governments. However, the senior living market now encompasses a much broader array of players, services, unit types, and a new dynamic between buyers, developers, and operators. 60% market concentrated in South India. The share of citizens aged 60-plus is set to increase from 157 million in 2024 (11 per cent of total population) to 260 million in 2040 (16 per cent) and 346 million in 2050 (21 per cent). "The challenge is the growing numbers. (The government) has to work with the private sector... The other thing is the feminization (of senior population), as people above 60 are more women and widows than men because the life expectancy for women is much higher than for men," Yadav said.

Since 2022, senior living launches in India have averaged 2,000 units per year, almost double of around 1,100 units launched annually between 2014 and 2021, according to a new JLL report launched at the event. The report added that 60 per cent of India's senior living market is concentrated in the south, followed by 20 per cent in the north, 16 per cent in western India, and 4 per cent in east India. The report also found that the top 10 players in the senior living market, including Ashiana Housing, Columbia Pacific, Antara, Pranjape, Athulya, Primus Life, and Covai Care, account for 81 per cent of India's total senior living inventory. Moreover, 81 per cent of launched units are priced between Rs 50 lakh to Rs 1 crore and 86 per cent are sized between 500 to 1,500 square feet. The demand for senior living units is set to touch 2.3 million units by 2030 compared to 1.6 million units in 2024. "By 2050, one in every five Indians will be a senior. That represents about 70 per cent of the world's population of seniors. It's a very large and staggering number. Life expectancy has gone up in India, fortunately, but so has the disease burden. As you grow



older, there are four Is—instability, immobility, impairment and incontinence," Rajit Mehta, ASLI Chairman and CEO of Antara Senior Living said. Mehta added that post-Covid, seniors are increasingly seeking an active lifestyle and have also become very digitally savvy. "They also want people to curate services for them. Now, you see a lot of travel portals coming up for curating travel procedures. A lot of geriatric care hospitals are also coming up for seniors. Many have now expressed a desire to live amongst people who are non-seniors," he said. Antara has also launched its first intergenerational project where seniors and non-seniors live together. Need for a single nodal agency In terms of government support, Mehta suggested there should be one nodal agency that deals with senior care, which deals with issues of social justice, health, housing, and infrastructure. He added that a taskforce can also be created to study best practices followed in countries like Japan and Switzerland, where senior care is very developed. Mehta also suggested that when master planning is done for cities, land should be demarcated separately for senior living so that allocation is easier and costs more manageable. Anticipating rapid expansion in the senior living segment, policymakers and regulators are moving quickly. In February, the government's apex think tank NITI Aayog released a report recommending reforms, including accreditation for senior care facilities and a single window approval to fast-track projects. The latter recommendation is especially crucial, given the time-sensitive needs of senior buyers and the real estate sector's reputation for long delays in handing over possession. Moreover, in March, the social justice and empowerment ministry set minimum standards for senior citizen homes, followed by Maharashtra's Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) drafting model guidelines for senior living projects in May. The central government's focus on senior care is also set to intensify, evident from its recent decision to extend the Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY insurance programme to citizens aged 70 and above and Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority's (IRDAI's) scrapping of age limits on purchase of health insurance policies. In its report on elderly-friendly living/housing sector reforms, NITI has recommended the development of a regulatory framework "to support the development of the private sector and provide necessary market stewardship while ensuring the highest quality of service delivery". It also advocated for a single window approval as a "4-5-year development cycle is not a desirable condition for seniors".

The Onion buys Infowars, Alex Jones's site, out of bankruptcy

The Onion, a satirical publication that skewers newsmakers and current events, said Thursday that it had won a bankruptcy auction to acquire Infowars, a website founded and operated by conspiracy theorist Alex Jones. The Onion said the bid was sanctioned by the families of the victims of the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School, who in 2022 won a \$1.4 billion defamation lawsuit against Jones and his company, Free Speech Systems.

Everytown for Gun Safety, a nonprofit dedicated to ending gun violence that was founded in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook shooting, will advertise on a relaunched version of the site under The Onion. The publication plans to reintroduce Infowars in January as a parody of itself, mocking "weird internet personalities" like Jones who traffic in misinformation and health supplements, Ben Collins, the CEO of The Onion's parent company, Global Tetratron, said in an interview. Family members of the victims of the Sandy Hook shooting, which claimed the lives of 20 first graders and six educators, sued Jones in Connecticut Superior Court in 2018 after he spread the baseless claim that the rampage was a fabricated pretext for confiscating Americans' firearms.

The Onion declined to disclose the price it paid for Infowars and its assets, including its production studio and diet supplement business. Jones could not immediately be reached for comment, but he said on the social platform X this week that he planned to continue producing his online program, "The Alex Jones Show," until he was forced to stop. In September, a Houston judge ruled that Infowars and other assets owned by Free Speech Systems could be auctioned off in bankruptcy to compensate Jones' creditors, which include the families of the Sandy Hook victims. Jones declared bankruptcy in 2022 as the Sandy Hook case made its way to court. Collins said he was informed late Wednesday by the trustee in charge of the bankruptcy auction that The Onion's bid had prevailed. In a video posted online

Thursday, Jones said his lawyers had been told by the trustee about the sale to The Onion. "We thought this would be a hilarious joke," Collins said. "This is going to be our answer to this no-guardrails world where there are no gatekeepers and everything's kind of insane." Collins declined to disclose the value of the advertising deal with Everytown but said it was a multiyear agreement that would include banner advertisements and sponsored articles on the site, which will be redesigned to fit its new editorial direction. While the alliance between Everytown and The Onion might seem like an odd fit, the two organizations share an interest in curbing gun violence, said John Feinblatt, president of Everytown. Feinblatt said that mission was underscored with depressing regularity in the aftermath of mass shootings, when The Onion goes viral with its oft-shared headline: "No Way To Prevent This." Says Only Nation Where This Regularly Happens. "This was an opportunity for us to give The Onion the facts, the storytelling, the data and the research that's at our fingertips," Feinblatt said. "And for them to give us the creativity of how to turn all of that information into new messaging to a new audience."

Collins said the relaunched Infowars might publish its own satirical stories that underscored the epidemic of gun violence in America in addition to sponsored content from Everytown. Chris Mattei, a lawyer for the families of the victims of the Sandy Hook shooting, said in a statement that taking possession of Infowars amounted to accountability for "Alex Jones and his corrupt business."

"By divesting Jones of Infowars' assets, the families and the team at The Onion have done a public service and will meaningfully hinder Jones' ability to do more harm," Mattei said. Collins said The Onion began contemplating a bid for Infowars this summer, when he read online that it was going to be auctioned off. The publication's leadership team saw an opportunity to play a very funny, very public joke on Jones if things broke their way.

Arjun Bijlani opens up about wife Neha Swami's 14 kg weight loss: 'While it may have taken a lot of time...'



Actor Arjun Bijlani opened up about his wife and actor Neha Swami's drastic weight loss nine years after their son Ayaan was born in 2015. "Neha has lost 14 kilos now. I kept telling her to try and pay attention to her health without making her feel bad. I didn't give up. I knew once she saw the results, she would go into auto mode. Even if I say it or not, she hits the gym every day at 8-8.30 am. She goes (to workout)," said the Rocky aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani actor. On alternate days, Swami does kickboxing, too. "I am very proud of her. While it may have taken a lot of time, I didn't give up, and now she is not going to give up because it is now a lifestyle. It took time, but you can't give up on your partner if you love them. What she has achieved is remarkable," the 42-year-old said on the Bharti Singh and Haarsh Limbachiya's show.

Bijlani and Swami got married in 2013 after several

Can wearable technology revolutionise healthcare through early detection?

In today's tech-driven world, wearable devices are emerging as transformative tools in healthcare. From tracking steps and heart rates to monitoring sleep patterns and stress levels, wearables hold the promise of early detection and improved health management. Some doctors are excited about catching health problems early using these devices, but this potential comes with challenges that must be addressed to fully integrate these tools into the healthcare ecosystem. In conversation with indianexpress.com, experts weigh in on both the promise and limitations of this rapidly evolving technology. The promise and limitations of cardiac monitoring

Wearable ECG (electrocardiogram) and PPG (photoplethysmography) technologies have made significant strides in cardiac monitoring, but their capabilities come with important caveats. "Wearable ECGs often provide single-lead readings, unlike the ECGs used in clinical settings, which limits their diagnostic accuracy," Dr C M Nagesh, senior consultant cardiologist, told indianexpress.com. He pointed out that while wearables can effectively detect conditions like atrial fibrillation, they may miss other arrhythmias. Dr Ajay Kaul, chairman of cardiac sciences at Fortis Hospital, Noida, said, "These devices should be seen as tools to raise awareness rather than definitive diagnostic solutions, and patients should be cautious of over-reliance and misinterpretation." Newer technologies like extended loop recorders (ELRs) provide more precise, continuous monitoring, surpassing the capabilities of wearables, says Dr Anjan Siotia, consultant interventional cardiologist. "Wearables offer convenience but lack the sensitivity of clinical tools," he said.

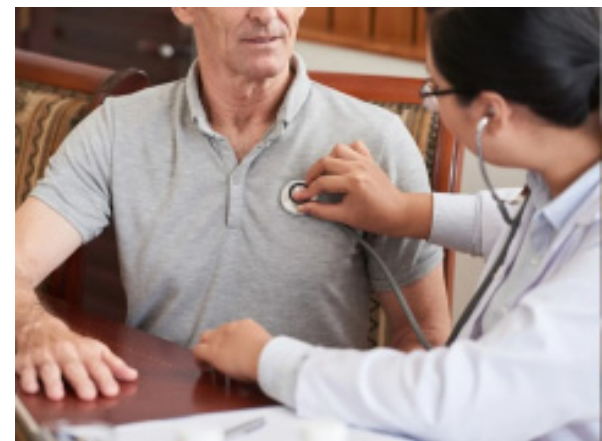
According to Dr Praneeth Polamuri, cardiologist at Care Hospital Banjara Hills, Hyderabad, and member of Doctube, healthcare professionals (HCPs) should play a key role in designing wearable devices to ensure they provide accurate health data, maintain patient data safety, and are accessible to doctors. He also stressed the need to evaluate telemonitoring for heart disease patients and explore how AI can improve health data analysis and interpretation for better results. Wearable ECG (electrocardiogram) and PPG (photoplethysmography) technologies have made significant strides in cardiac monitoring. Wearable ECG (electrocardiogram) and PPG (photoplethysmography) technologies have made significant strides in cardiac monitoring. (Source: Freepik) Respiratory health monitoring: current capabilities and future potential

Wearables face similar limitations in the realm of respiratory health. Dr Shivakumar K, MD respiratory medicine and chief consultant at Kauvery Hospital, Marathahalli, said, "Currently, wearables cannot diagnose conditions like asthma or COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), which require clinical assessments such as spirometry and lung function tests." While features like biosensors and pulse oximetry aid continuous monitoring, their accuracy can vary. "Measurements like VO2 max and SpO2 levels may have error margins of 2-15 per cent," said Dr Kuldeep Kumar Grover, consultant, Pulmonology, CK Birla Hospital, Gurugram. These features are valuable tools for continuous health monitoring. He adds that although wearables offer promising capabilities, they are not always entirely accurate. "For instance, they may have a margin of error of ±3% in certain measurements. VO2 max values may be overestimated by as much as 15%, while SpO2 levels can have an error margin of around 2%."

Dr Vikas Mittal, pulmonologist and director, Wellness Home Clinic and Sleep Centre Pashim Vihar, and director, department of respiratory medicine, C K Birla Hospital, Punjabi Bagh, acknowledges the potential of wearable devices as supplementary tools. "While wearables are helpful for tracking respiratory metrics, there is still room for improvement in their reliability, especially in real-time detection of early respiratory issues." Variables like movement, temperature, or battery levels can influence readings, he said. Enhancing the reliability of wearables, especially for real-time monitoring, could involve improving sensor technology and refining the algorithms that interpret this data. The Artificial Intelligence revolution in wearable technology The integration of artificial intelligence could be the key to un-

years of dating. Let's take a cue to understand a partner's role in prioritising one's fitness and health. Communication between couples needs to be loving, caring, and practical at the same time. "Encouraging and motivating each other is part and parcel of interactions. This needs to be done positively without getting irritated or agitated with each other," said psychologist Kamna Chhibber. "Concurrently ensuring that you're not getting stuck and too insistent is important as it becomes nagging. The onset of negative ways of communicating leads to a breakdown in communication and creates patterns of withdrawal and avoidance. To ensure the relationship's health, it is important to be mindful of these aspects," said Chhibber. Here are some simple tips to stay consistent with your fitness transformation goal

Fitness expert Garima Goyal shared the following in an earlier interaction: Set realistic goals — Break your overall fitness goal into smaller, manageable objectives. Have a routine — Design a workout schedule that aligns with your daily routine. Consistency is key, so choose a time you can commit to regularly. Find activities you would enjoy — Identify physical activities you genuinely enjoy. Whether cycling, yoga, swimming, or team sports, doing things you like turns exercise into a pleasurable experience. Accountability partner — Share your fitness goals with someone who can offer support and encouragement. Celebrate achievements — Acknowledge and reward yourself when you achieve milestones. This could involve treating yourself to a healthy meal, a relaxing day, or even buying new workout gear.



locking the full potential of wearable health technology. Sajeev Nair, founder and chairman of Vieroots, offers an optimistic perspective on this convergence: "AI can definitely improve the accuracy of analysing the data from these devices, as due to their 24x7 monitoring of metrics like heart beats, blood sugar or sleep patterns, these wearables tend to generate a lot of data noise." He said that remarkable innovations like the advent of AI based health super apps that use a typical camera to do an AI Face Scan "that works like a bloodless blood test," reveal "vital health metrics including blood glucose and heart rate variability." Wearables are increasingly effective in assessing certain neurological indicators like sleep patterns and stress levels. Wearables are increasingly effective in assessing certain neurological indicators like sleep patterns and stress levels. (Source: Freepik) Neurological monitoring: A new frontier

Wearables are increasingly used to assess neurological health, tracking sleep patterns, stress levels, and even early signs of disorders like Parkinson's disease. "By monitoring motor patterns and cognitive shifts, wearables can flag abnormalities for further investigation," said Dr Chandril Chugh, senior neurologist and director of Dr Good Deed Clinic. However, challenges remain in tailoring devices to individual needs and ensuring data accuracy. Concerning, Dr Sandip Pal, a neurologist from Kolkata and a member of Doctube, said that this, in turn, will help the patients to manage their condition more effectively while proactively reducing stress-related neurological symptoms. "Algorithms may miss subtle changes in neurological function, especially in early disease stages," cautions neurologist Dr Pal. Advanced sensors and data security innovations in sensor technology are expanding wearable capabilities. "Flexible micro-nano fibre (MNFs) sensors, packed in a 10-µm film, can detect subtle changes in pressure, temperature, and strain, enabling more precise monitoring," said Ashu Kasera, co-founder and CTO at Clirnet. Manish Tewari, co-founder, Spydra Technologies, said that "new technologies that could accommodate the development of miniaturised sensors capable of monitoring a variety of biological markers, including glucose, hydration, and even lactate in sweat, are becoming available." However, as wearables collect sensitive health data, data security becomes paramount. Kasera said there is a need for "setting up a structured data management system with layered security for data protection and flow control." Tewari said that security can be achieved through "data encryption technologies that secure information, secure clouds, even through compliance with legal norms and regulations such as HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act)," introduced in the United States.

The future of healthcare monitoring While wearables cannot replace clinical diagnostics, they are carving out a niche in preventive healthcare and continuous monitoring. Future advancements could include sensors capable of measuring lung function and respiratory distress markers, according to Dr Shivakumar. Meanwhile, improving sensor technology and refining algorithms will enhance real-time monitoring. "Patients should understand the limitations of wearable technology and consult healthcare providers for concerns," said Dr Mittal. Conditions affecting blood flow, for example, can skew readings, underscoring the importance of professional oversight.

If you are on statins to reduce cholesterol, then you can have muscle pain and weakness

Hyderabad: If you are on statins, the commonly used medications, which lower cholesterol and other fats in the blood by individuals with diabetes, heart ailments and those between 45 years and 60 years, then chances are high that you may suffer muscle pain and weakness. Such symptoms of pain in muscles are quite common in people taking statins. The symptoms are mild and they get better on discontinuation of statin or lowering the dose. Calves and thigh muscles are more commonly affected, however, upper extremity muscles may be uncommonly affected, noted neurologist from Hyderabad, Dr Sudhir Kumar on Friday said. Talking to social media platform X, Dr Sudhir Kumar

shared a brief medical history of a 40-year-old patient (arrived in Hyderabad from the United States) who complained of pain in both forearm muscles for the past three months. The patient also had mild weakness in the affected muscles. "He was diagnosed to have diabetes and elevated cholesterol, for which he had been started on medications by his doctors in the US. He consulted his physician for forearm pain, and was prescribed tylenol (paracetamol), which did not help much," Dr Sudhir Kumar said. During his recent visit to India, the patient met Dr Sudhir Kumar who conducted a series of diagnostic tests that revealed tenderness of the affected muscles along with mild weakness."

Unni Mukundan's gorefest is one of the silliest Malayalam films, failing to bury its flaws beneath the bloodshed



perfume maker, it's also obvious that his olfactory abilities are heightened.

(Spoilers ahead) Despite Victor being at the murder scene and catching the killers' scent, Tariq — the mastermind behind his brother's murder — never warns the assassins, members of another crime family, to avoid crossing paths with Victor. Instead, the latter brazenly walk past him as if unconcerned about being identified. If they're so fearless, why go to the trouble of orchestrating a secret murder at all? Marco offers no answers. Moreover, in what world do organised criminals need to be taught that a perfumer's greatest weapon is their sense of smell, which would likely be even more acute in someone who is visually impaired? In Marco, these so-called organised criminals have the looks, the physical strength and a lack of remorse, but they operate without a shred of intelligence. Waseem's killers — Russell (Abhimanyu S Thilakan), Devaraj (Anson Paul) and their gang — soon realise that Victor is closing in on them. They respond by kidnapping Victor and Russell ruthlessly kills him by throwing him into acid, even recording the act. This brings us to another glaring flaw that underscores how Marco was conceived without much thought: Russell is the son of Tony Isaac (Jagadish), who appears like a Don Vito Corleone in 144p and runs a gold smuggling empire akin to that of Victor's brother, mafia boss Adattu George (Siddique). Both families operate like the Five Families of New York and knowing this connection, why would they kill Waseem in Victor's presence and let him walk away? And after eventually killing him, how could they fail to anticipate that George and his stepbrother Marco (Unni Mukundan), the most ruthless of them all, would come after them for revenge? Thereon, the film falls into the all-too-familiar trap of dragging out its runtime without providing any logical reason for why the story doesn't conclude. Featuring a large group of senseless criminals who, under the guise of showcasing 'mass', spare potentially threatening rivals all the time, Marco serves as a prime example of how much filmmakers have taken the 'pan-India' trend for granted and how hard they will try to do anything — absolutely anything — except sit down and use their brains to craft a good, sensible script. Despite Marco openly vowing to kill everyone involved in Victor's murder, Russell, Devaraj and Tony inexplicably spare him, missing the chance to eliminate a significant threat. Instead, they ally with Marco and George in the search for Victor's killers, believing they can divert Marco's attention. Even Marco, upon learning that Russell killed Victor, doesn't act immediately. Instead, he drags out the conflict, indulging in 'mass hero' theatrics. One particularly absurd moment features Marco standing over Russell with a chainsaw and yet not killing him, as though waiting for a conveniently timed call from Tony offering a deal he can't refuse. Yes, everyone, including organised criminals, can make mistakes and misjudgements. However, here, each gangster seems more stupid than the other, to the point that Marco feels like a poorly made spoof film.

Marco's lack of intelligence is also glaringly evident in his irrational decision to keep his entire family confined in the Adattu house, despite the looming threat to their lives. While Kalai Kingson's action choreography is impressive at many junctures, Haneeff Adeni's excessive preoccupation with escalating the bloodshed detracts significantly from the composition of stunts. (The absurdity doesn't stop there. After George's gold consignment is betrayed to the authorities, he confidently declares he'll single-handedly uncover the traitor, only to be stabbed and gravely injured by Devaraj, who ratted George out, in the very next scene. Then, Devaraj flaunts his own 'mass appeal' as a cold-blooded killer; but, in the very next scene, he realises George has survived, raising questions about his competence as a gangster as well. Marco is riddled with such illogical moments, which the filmmakers likely thought would be thrilling on paper but instead come across as laughably nonsensical on screen. In another scene, Marco reassures his fiancée Maria (Yukti Thareja), saying, "Nothing will happen to you as long as I'm here," shortly after losing his favourite brother Victor. And predictably, soon after, Maria and the rest of Marco's family are massacred before his eyes, leaving him looking foolish. While these could have been seen as words of affirmation alone — since there's only so much any person can do, let alone Marco — from the beginning, Haneeff repeatedly presents a group of kids who glorify Marco to such an extent that viewers are led to believe he would go to any lengths to protect his family, as if he is Dominic Toretto (Vin Diesel) on steroids. However, the film soon shows that all Marco can do is seek revenge when his family members are brutally murdered; and when it comes to actually protecting them, he is useless.

Game Changer trailer: Ram Charan set to revolutionise the game in this vintage Shankar star vehicle



Game Changer trailer: With just days left for the release of Game Changer, the most-anticipated Telugu film of recent times, the makers released the action-packed trailer of the Shankar film, headlined by Ram Charan and Kiara Advani. The movie, which is set to hit the screens for Sankranti, features Ram Charan in dual roles of a father and son, who are up against corruption among sections of the political class, frontlined by SJ Suryah's character. In the trailer, we see the various avatars of Ram Charan, who plays a college student, a police officer, an IAS official, an election officer, a farmer, a political representative of the agricultural community, and basically, an allrounder who would undoubtedly double up as the titular game changer. The trailer promises that Game Changer would be a film right up the alley of Shankar, who made iconic movies like Oke Okkadu (Mudhalvan), and Bharateeyudu (Indian). With Thaman's thumping background score, it is clear that Game Changer is going to be a Ram Charan star vehicle, and it will be the quintessential mass masala film where good triumphs over evil. But what really works in favour of the Shankar brand of films is the grandeur, the vision, and the scale, and from what we've seen from the songs and the trailer, the filmmaker has ticked all the requisite boxes.

The trailer was launched at a special event, which was graced by SS Rajamouli, who had a big-ticket event of his own happening earlier during the day in the form of the launch of his film with Mahesh Babu. Apart from Ram Charan, Suryah and Kiara Advani, Game Changer also features Jayaram, Samuthirakani, Anjali, Sunil, Vennela Kishore, and

How 'sant aadmi' Shahid Kapoor who doesn't drink, eat meat was turned into a drug addict for Udta Punjab by Abhishek Chaubey



Udta Punjab, starring Shahid Kapoor, Kareena Kapoor Khan, Alia Bhatt, and Diljit Dosanjh in the lead roles, was released back in 2016. Helmed by Abhishek Chaubey, the film was a box office success and still continues to be the talk of the town for its groundbreaking performances. One of the most memorable characters was Tommy Singh, a drug-addict rapper, played by Shahid. However, the actor — a vegetarian and a teetotaler in real life — had a tough task at hand. In an interview with Mukesh Chhabra for The Mashable India, director Abhishek Chaubey shared that because Shahid Kapoor doesn't eat meat, smoke or drink alcohol, it was a challenge to boost his energy for the role of cocaine addict. He said, "Shahid had to put in a lot of energy, because he doesn't drink, doesn't do drugs, he is a

vegetarian, ekdum sant aadmi hai. I made him drink a lot of black coffee during the entire shoot." He further added that Shahid was on a strict diet as he had to look like an addict. "Moreover, he hardly used to eat anything because I needed him to look like a drug addict. If you are playing a druggie like Tommy, you don't have any interest in food, you would keep losing weight," he shared.

Talking about his character Tommy Singh in an interview earlier, Shahid had said, "Tommy is obnoxious, rude, badly behaved. You will hear a lot of expletives from him, and he is everything that will turn you off. But my brief from my director (Abhishek Chaubey) was that Tommy will do everything wrong in the first five minutes, but end of the fifth minute, everyone should love him. I had no idea how to manage that (laughs). But the response that I've got from viewers after they watched the promo has led me to be optimistic. Basically, he's a guy who will entertain you, but you can't take him seriously. You enjoy watching him and his antics; he is a bit of an exhibitionist. This is the craziest character I've played, and the only crazier character I have seen on screen is the Joker from The Dark Knight. The only difference is that the Joker seems to have no humanity, while Tommy is really just a kid who is lost in his addiction." Talking about Udta Punjab, it was made on a budget of Rs 34 crore, but went on to mint about Rs 100 crore worldwide. It was one of the highest grossing films of the year 2016. The intriguing drama was based on Punjab's drug crisis, told through the lives of a rock star, a migrant worker, a cop, and a doctor.

Bandish Bandits' Shreya Chaudhry on music training and 18-hour shoot behind 'Ghar Aa Mahi': 'I almost felt like a rockstar...'



Shreya Chaudhry, who plays the role of Tamanna Sharma in Amazon Prime Video's highly acclaimed Bandish Bandits, is on cloud nine. The show, a millennial love story set against the backdrop of a clash between pop and Hindustani classical music, has been lauded by the audience and critics alike. As the show's second season concludes, Shreya reflects on her experience working on the project, her training in music, and her upcoming ventures. For Shreya, working on Bandish Bandits was a dream come true. She tells SCREEN, "I almost felt like a rockstar while shooting for the show." One of the most memorable experiences for her was shooting for the song "Ghar Aa Mahi," an integral part of the show. The cast took 18 hours to shoot the sequence, which was quite complicated. "I feel very grateful to Anand (Tiwari), our director, because if you see that sequence, it is quite complicated because we are not just lip-syncing in that, we are also communicating a lot of other things between different characters."

Shreya Chaudhry credits Anand Tiwari for his attention to detail, which helped her play her role well. "He really gave us time, and it was also something that wasn't easy to get in the first or the second take. But at no point did he ever pressurize us to hurry it up. He gave us the time. He took care of the tiniest of things to make sure everything looked right and authentic," she adds. The entire cast was present during the shoot of "Ghar Aa Mahi," and everyone ensured that the scene turned out perfectly. "There

is no one to hold responsible for the extra shoot. It was done only for the betterment of the show. All of us were like we were not going to go home until we got this right. We didn't even realize that we had spent 18 hours doing this. No one from the crew was even complaining," Shreya recalls. To prepare for her role, Shreya underwent training in singing and learned how to play the keyboard. Nikhita Gandhi is the voice of her character Tamanna in the show, but Shreya wanted to ensure that her lip-syncing, posture, body language, and expressions were perfect. Some of her trainers were from AR Rahman's KM College of Music & Technology. "I can't say I am a singer today. I really am not. The amount of hard work these singers and musicians put in, the years of knowledge they have, is unparalleled. We were aware that we were playing musicians. As Tamanna's character has this transformation of going to a music school, Anand was clear that he wanted to make it look as real as possible," Shreya explains. As for the show's future, Shreya Chaudhry is hopeful about a third season. "Obviously, we all want it to happen. It might happen. As of right now, I am not at liberty to say anything or comment on it, but I can hope for it to happen. Yes, in a way, audiences are loving season two, so we can only hope and pray that there is season 3. I am also hoping it happens," she says.

After the success of Bandish Bandits, Shreya Chaudhry is all set to embark on her next project, Mehta Boys, directed by veteran actor Boman Irani. The film marks Irani's directorial debut. "Mehta Boys is another passion project," Shreya says, her eyes lighting up with excitement. "It is written by Boman sir, co-written by Oscar winner Alexander (Dinelaris). It started as a passion project for Boman sir, but slowly it became a passion project for all of us." "It is primarily a take on the father-child relationship, and it was so relatable to all of us," the actor says. "Boman sir has so beautifully empowered his character and mine in the film, with his writing. I feel truly blessed to be a part of this project," she adds. Shreya Chaudhry reveals that working with Boman Irani was a dream come true. "I kind of feel I manifested working with Boman sir," she says with a smile. "I remember, about a year and a half ago, I was very keen on joining Boman sir's screenplay writing course. I thought it could really help me. I wanted to apply for it, but at that time, something or the other kept coming up, and I was not able to join the course." However, fate had other plans, and Shreya soon found herself being offered a role in Mehta Boys. "And within a week or two, I got a call from Casting Bay saying that there is a film which Boman sir is acting in and directing. That's the moment I knew I wanted to be a part of this film," the actor concludes.

Sonic The Hedgehog 3 movie review: Jim Carrey returns in an unsurprising sequel

This is the third film based on the video game series in four years. That, has stopped being a surprise. Jim Carrey, who has proclaimed himself otherwise retired, has acted in all three; and is this time in a tiresome double role. That, will never stop being a surprise.

Between these two hard truths lands Sonic the Hedgehog 3, where streaks of lightning assault your optic nerves with other steaks of lightning, the Earth gets saved through a lot of other things (including a part of the Moon) do get blasted, and, along the way, we learn about "making the right choices", "opting for love over revenge", and "being a part of families and teams". To weave all this into a comprehensible whole is a challenge even for films that are trying much harder than this one is. Sonic 3 is content coasting along throwing everything here, there and everywhere, hop-



ping something will stick — and be forgotten soon enough if it doesn't.

As mad scientists, crazy professors, gun-happy forces abound, it is difficult to keep track of who

is after whom and why, what follows what, and when. But then again, Sonic 3 doesn't really care. With the film strictly for fans of the video game series, or of anthropomorphic creatures who walk

and talk like wise-cracking Hollywood heroes, others going into Sonic 3 be warned: 'Happy Birth Day', playing on both 'birth-day' as well as the day Sonic landed on Earth, is the extent of its wit.

Selectors told Rohit Sharma they were looking beyond him after BGT



GNS News Agency, Jan 8

India's captain Rohit Sharma walks off the field after losing his wicket 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) India captain Rohit Sharma walks off the field after losing his wicket during the fourth Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. At the toss and later as the Indian playing XI lined up for the national anthem at the SCG, Rohit Sharma was conspicuous by his absence. Later, he was seen sitting in the area outside the dressing room, scratching his chin, one leg over the other, perhaps recalling the last walk at the MCG last week, which looks all set to be his final appearance for India in whites. The Indian Express understands that Rohit Sharma isn't part of the selectors plan beyond the Australia tour when it comes to red-ball cricket and it has already been communicated to him prior to the Sydney Test. Post the Australia tour, it is also understood that the selectors will also sit with Virat Kohli to discuss the way forward as the team is all set to enter its biggest-ever transition. Ravindra Jadeja, the other senior player in the squad, will continue to remain in the scheme of things with the all-rounder's presence being valued in the transition.

With regards to Rohit Sharma not playing at Sydney, it seems to have been a decision taken by the player and

head coach Gautam Gambhir after the meeting with the chairman of selectors, Ajit Agarkar. With the series on the line, Rohit's struggles with the bat – he has scores of 3, 6, 10, 3 & 9 – showed no signs of ending and his low confidence reflected on the field on his captaincy, the decision to rest/drop isn't a point of debate. At the toss, Bumrah confirmed what The Indian Express reported on Thursday, regarding Rohit Sharma sitting out in Sydney. "Obviously, our captain (Rohit) has shown his leadership as well. He's opted to rest in this game. So that shows that there's a lot of unity in our team. There's no selfishness. Whatever is in the team's best interest, we're looking to do that," the stand-in captain said at the toss.

The big question is whether a captain who was dropped for a Test, even if India makes it to the WTC final, could still make a comeback to the side. As things stand, it is highly unlikely, with the selectors understood to be unanimous in their decision to look beyond Rohit. With regards to the Champions Trophy that is coming up in the 50-over format, they are set to have a discussion in the coming days when the team returns to India.

Speaking to the host broadcaster, batting great Sunil Gavaskar said Rohit may have played his last Test. "I think it probably means that (if) India don't qualify for the WTC final, the Melbourne Test will be Rohit Sharma's last game. The (next) WTC cycle will start with the England series, and the selectors would likely want someone available for the 2027 final. Whether India gets there or not is another matter, but that's what the selection committee is likely to do. We have probably seen Rohit Sharma for the last time in Test cricket," Gavaskar said. Former India head coach Ravi Shastri said Rohit may take a decision at the end of the Sydney Test. "If there was a home season coming up he might've thought of carrying on, but I think he might just pull the plug at the end of this Test," he said on commentary. "He's not getting younger ... it's not that India don't have youngsters. There are very, very good players in the wings and it's time to build. Tough decisions, but there is a time for everything."

What makes Scott Boland, as Rishabh Pant says, an 'amazing' bowler



GNS News Agency, Jan 8

Scott Boland India vs Australia 5th Test Australia's Scott Boland appeals unsuccessfully for the wicket of India's Shubman Gill during play on the first day of the fifth cricket test between India and Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground, in Sydney, Australia, There should be a contest held to guess how many bad balls Scott Boland has bowled in the Tests he has played this series? The easy guess is: Zero. Such has been his lethal accuracy, lengths, line, and seam-movement that India might well have wished that Josh Hazlewood never got injured. The SCG pitch had a luxuriant grass cover, offered movement, but the above contest can hold good for all the games he has played this series. Ball after ball, spell after spell, day after day, without a smirk, one mean word or stare, he has been cutting down the Indians.

To think he once used to be a plump 18-year old who weighed 118 kgs and nicknamed Barrel, and whose club coach had to give him an ultimatum to lose weight if he wanted to play for the first eleven! The words as the coach Nick Jewell recalled years later were: "You want to play for the first team more but you won't under me, until you show me how much you really want it." Ever since that day, and especially after he discovered his aboriginal roots in his mid-20s, he has been showing the world how much he really wants it. Boland doesn't show too much emotion on the field. There were a couple of moments that stand out. One came on Friday when he knocked down Yashasvi Jaiswal off the first ball he bowled to him. Over the last two weeks especially, particularly after the Brisbane Test, Jaiswal has been working this drill at the nets. He would walk out from his stance, at least a couple of steps down the track, and try to get as close as possible to the ball. Every day he has been at it, trying to nail down that approach, and has been doing so in the Melbourne game also, where he scored two 80-plus scores in the two innings. But Boland had an ace up his sleeve this time: the pitch. He threw into that the cocktail of length, line, and the movement. He whipped down the ball in his imitable fashion short of length but just outside the leg stump. Jaiswal, who was walking down, had to open up his body to adjust to that line. Then came the pitch. And Boland's fingers that had cut on the seam. The ball jagged right across Jaiswal, who was totally squared-up as he poked and the ball took a slice of edge along with it.

Meltdown moment then triggered the first of the two moments. As he ran towards his team-mates in the slips to

celebrate, Boland clapped his hands as he cast a look at the departing batsman. That's the closest he was probably ever going to have a 'teasing celebration'. "I haven't seen him too emotional. Never seen him angry. Always a soft voice. He is not the one to sledge or even chirp on a field. He just bowls and walks away," his mentor Paul Stewart had told this newspaper. Then came Kohli. Boland should have taken him out first ball with a lovely delivery that kicked up outside off from back of length and straightened just outside off. He would bowl the same ball to KL Rahul in the past, but the line would be on the off stump. With Kohli he pushes it just a bit outside; he has that kind of control. But Kohli's edge was almost wondrously taken by the combo of Steve Smith, who did all the hard work of lunging, scooping, before and Labuschagne, who caught the pop-up. But television replays showed the ball had brushed the grass. Boland would strike again with a similar delivery, a touch outside off this time and Kohli would succumb.

That wicket also showed how Boland has two deliveries that he keeps alternating. The nip-backer and the straightener. But smartly, now and then, as he once did at Adelaide to surprise Shubman Gill, would slip in a fuller one. Or the occasional bouncer, but it seemed triggered after captain Pat Cummins's chat with him. Left to himself, that back of length nip-backer and the straightener from the same area seems to be his chief weapons. "He has been amazing," Rishabh Pant would rave at the end of the day. "The way he bowls line and length, especially in Test cricket, is quite difficult ... it feels like he has been playing for a long time." What he meant by the last line was that Boland doesn't feel like a bowler who is only able to sneak into the team if one of the regular troika is injured. Pant should know. Not only did he cop bruises on his body from Boland's kickers but also fell to him. Such was the relentless hammering, alternating from over to the round the stumps, that Pant finally lost patience and pulled. The ball climbed on him, upset his timing, and lobbed to mid-on. It was when Pant was batting, not here but at Adelaide, that Boland had shown his most expressive reaction on this tour. Pant had charged out to lash him over covers, and even Boland, that most non-expressive man, couldn't but show his surprise. The eyes bulged, eyebrows raised, and a quizzical, but bemused, expression had settled on his face.

Once he took care of Pant at Sydney, he tightened the noose immediately on the new batsman Nitish Reddy with a ball not dissimilar to the one that he bowled to Kohli. Reddy thought about playing, then withdrew his bat, but it was too late for the jail-break – nick and gone. The hat-trick ball was near perfect though he didn't get the wicket of Washington Sundar. From round the stumps, it tailed in from outside off but not as much as Washington thought. The left-hander had a poke and a miss, and the SCG crowd sighed. He would soon end his bowling for the day with figures that read 20-8-31-4. How he has harassed India's batsmen this tour!

'Wicket was doing too much': Rishabh Pant reveals reason behind uncharacteristic knock in Sydney

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Rishabh Pant on Friday revealed the reason behind his uncharacteristic innings in Sydney where the wicket-keeper batter showed remarkable restraint, scoring 40 runs off 98 deliveries. "I think in this innings, I was not in a frame of mind where I wanted to take charge of the game because the wicket was doing too much and the kind of situation we were in," Pant said in the post-day press meet. "I would say there might be a 50-50 chance which I could have taken early on in this innings but sometimes you have to play more secure cricket especially the way, wicket was behaving. We knew that if we lost one more wicket here, we might lose 2-3 in quick succession. So that was the idea behind the way I was playing," he added.

He also reflected on his dismissals in crucial moments of the 4th Test in Melbourne which led to the Australians coming back into the match and eventually winning it. His aggressive approach in those games saw the player come under severe criticism from the likes of Sunil Gavaskar. "Yes, there is a time to attack, but when you have to feel that from inside. I can't just premeditate that I'm going to play this way. Whatever the game asked me to do on a given day, that's what I tried to do and that is the mindset,"

Why India could rue Shubman Gill's brain-fade moment and other soft dismissals

On a spicy pitch, that's likely to remain so for the next couple of days at the least, India will still stand a chance if Jasprit Bumrah and Co. can create a Perth-like storm at the SCG. On a grassy pitch, India might rue these gifts from their top order as moments that turned the game. Rishabh Pant, who was hit on the body at least eight times en route a gritty 40, said India's 185 wasn't a par score but "220-250 would be a par score" but felt it still was a "very competitive" total. India's hopes would be raised by the last-ball dismissal of Usman Khawaja, especially the manner in which Bumrah seamed the ball right across the left-hander to produce the edge, but a bit more care from the top order would have helped.

What was the thought running in his head when Shubman Gill ran down the pitch off the last ball before lunch? What was the thought when he stuttered to a halt and stabbed at the ball? There were a few verbals from behind the stumps about possibly time wasting. A similar chat, but with more dramatic visuals would play out near the end between Bumrah, who seemed worked-up far more than possibly ever, and the lippy Sam Konstas. Gill turned and said something back, but then had a brain-fade. The opener KL Rahul, back at his original place after Rohit Sharma had opted out of the Test as reported by this newspaper, was left shaking his head at the softest dismissal. He fell, flicking a ball on the legs to square-leg. Yashasvi Jaiswal had been opened up like a can by Scott Boland, who ended up with 4-31.

Virat Kohli had survived a rather fine first ball from Scott Boland that shot up on him outside off, and though a diving Steve Smith at second slip scooped up the ball from low to the ground for the third slipper Marnus to gobble up, the replays showed that the ball had brushed some grass. He did fight for another 68 balls, and considering the movement, it was perhaps his best knock of the tour. He made



Pant said on Friday. "It is a natural habit to back whatever the way you have played the game. But eventually you got to keep on evolving and, that is, I feel there is not one way to play cricket. But whatever comes more naturally is always better but you got to find that balance between playing aggressive cricket and having that balance when you play all those shots. That's what I'm trying to do," he added. India ultimately posted 185 runs in the 1st innings with Pant being the top-scorer while Australia ended the day at 9/1 with Usman Khawaja sent back to the pavilion by Jasprit Bumrah at the end of Day 1 of the 5th and final Border Gavaskar Trophy test.

Australia go through a mini-roulette of plans at him. Behind the big call in Sydney, Team India selectors told Rohit Sharma they were looking beyond him after BGT at one point, Pat Cummins had a deep square-leg, but Kohli showed no signs of taking the bait that the fielder was withdrawn. He chased a ball well outside the off stump off the fourth delivery he faced, but tightened up on that front. For a while, Boland and Cummins tried the nip-backers but his forward defence was tight. The conditions being what it were, there were deliveries that fizzed past the edge or rammed into his thigh, but he hung around. While at the non-striker's end, he took mini strolls with the bat rested on his right shoulder before he returned to his spot, kept the bat in front, rested it on his thigh, as he fiddled with his gloves.

Unripe moment But just when it seemed the knock would blossom into something meaningful, he fell. That Scott Boland delivery had landed outside off stump and straightened, and Kohli dabbed for the debutant Beau Webster, who was given his Baggy Green cap by that stylish batsman and a great catcher Mark Waugh, lunged to his left to close his big hands around the ball. Kohli had been shuffling a touch across to counter the movement—not pressing furiously back or forward, and he was already on the off stump line almost when the straightening ball from back of length betrayed his hands. More than ever, literally that is, Pant put his body in the line of fire. "I think this is the first time I've gotten hit so much but you know in cricket you can't plan anything," said Pant. Biceps, helmet, shoulder, back, groin, and the thigh were all left bruised and he writhed in pain whenever the physio came out to treat him. There was a big bruise-mark on his left arm, a memory of a wound from the last game, but several others popped up on Friday. Just two were from bouncers, rest came as the ball shot up and moved about from back of length.

'Last game he didn't give OUT on Snicko. Now...it's...' – Captain Bumrah dismayed over Washington Sundar decision; batsman shakes head 16 times

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One frame on the Snicko showed a spike in the frame right after the ball had passed Sundar's glove, but none when it was closest to the glove. (APOne frame on the Snicko showed a spike in the frame right after the ball had passed Sundar's glove, but none when it was closest to the glove. (AP/Screengrab) One frame on the Snicko showed a spike in the frame right after the ball had passed Sundar's glove, but none when it was closest to the glove. (APOne frame on the Snicko showed a spike in the frame right after the ball had passed Sundar's glove, but none when it was closest to the glove. (AP/Screengrab)



Melbourne. While many Australians on Twitter said Indians 'were having a sook...' – a whinge, Snicko has consistently lost fans, if there were many in the first place with its inconsistency in interpretation. Pant had survived one a few minutes earlier. At various points, KL Rahul at Perth, Jaiswal & Akash Deep at MCG, and now Washington Sundar at SCG, have fallen to decisions that look unclear with the technology, with misery on both sides. Another Aussie fan rant was that Indians were responsible for their own agony by rejecting Hotspot. However Hotspot has gone AWOL and it was speculated broadcasters didn't go with Hotspot which malfunctioned in (high) heat and was expensive. But many reckoned there wasn't enough Snicko to overturn the onfield decision. "I'm sorry but that's a crap decision!! Sure there was a spike but from the side angle there was a clear space between ball and glove. There is a lot of ambiguity with these kind of decisions. Benefit must go to the batter," tweeted former international Robin Uthappa. "No way is that out, that's an awful decision," England commentator Michael Vaughan said. Channel 7's commentator, former umpire Simon Taufel offered a nuanced take: "What Joel Wilson's looking for here is that spike upto one frame past the glove, and he's got the spike. There's nothing else out there and the ball is underneath the glove. The third umpire is well and truly within his rights, according to protocols, to determine that's conclusive evidence for the ball on the glove."

'We've got pretty set plans': Scott Boland reveals Aussie bowlers' strategy to dismiss Virat Kohli



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Scott Boland Virat Kohli dismissal IND vs AUS India's Virat Kohli, right, reacts after he was dismissed by Australia's Scott Boland during play on the first day of the fifth cricket test between India and Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground, in Sydney, Australia, Australia quick Scott

Boland who snapped up Virat Kohli for the 4th time in Tests on Friday, revealed that the Aussie bowlers have got a set plan to get the Indian great.

"We've got pretty set plans on how we want to bowl to him. He sort of feels like he leaves a lot and then he wants to play the ball once he gets in. So once he gets in, we just want to

switch our lines a little bit to fifth stump and it's working at the moment," Boland said on Fox Cricket. Kohli, who had survived a catch out attempt in the 8th over, went on to make 17 before he was undone by an outside the off-stump delivery from Boland in the 32nd over.

Earlier, Kohli had edged a length delivery from Boland to second slip, where

Steve Smith was positioned. Smith dived low to his right, seemingly catching the ball near the ground before flicking it upward toward gully, where Marnus Labuschagne completed the catch. The on-field umpires referred the decision to TV umpire Joel Wilson, who, after reviewing replays showing the ball touching the ground before Smith scooped it, ruled Kohli not out.

"100 per cent; no denying it whatsoever, 100 per cent. But the umpire's made the decision and we'll move on," Smith had told "Fox Sports" during the lunch break when asked if he had his hand under the ball. In the match, the day ended with Australia at 9/1, trailing India by 176 runs in the 5th and final Test of the Border Gavaskar Trophy. The hosts lead the series 2-1 with wins in Adelaide and Melbourne while the visitors won the 1st Test at Perth.