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Three foreign nationals held for drug peddling in Hyd

Hyderabad: A Nigerian drug peddler was arrested by the Hyderabad Narcotics Enforcement Wing (HNEW) and 1300 gm MDMA worth Rs 1.60 crores was seized from him. Acting on a tip off, the HNEW team along with Langer Houz police caught Oliver alias Johnson, a native of Nigeria and resident of Mumbai, at Langer Houz here in the city.

YVS Sudheendra, DCP Task Force, said Oliver came to India in 2009 on a business visa and after his visa and passport expired, he overstayed in the country and got into drug trafficking. "Oliver used to purchase MDMA from a Nigeria national named Oyibo in Delhi for Rs 300 a gram and sold it in Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru.

Indian Railways hiring: Notifications issued for over 32,000 vacancies

Hyderabad: The Railway Recruitment Boards (RRBs), Ministry of Railways, Government of India, have notified a staggering 32,438 various posts. Of the total posts, 1,642 vacancies are up grabs in the South Central Railways (Secunderabad).

Under the SCR, assistant (S & T), workshop, carriage and wagon, loco shed (diesel and electrical), assistant operations (electrical), assistant P.Way, TL and AC (workshop), TL and AC, assistant track machine, assistant TRD, pointsman B and track maintainer-IV posts are up for recruitment.

Delhi election voting turnout stands at 57.70% till 5 pm, lowest in Karol Bagh



GNS News Agency, Feb 5

The national capital has recorded a voter turnout of

57.70 percent so far, where polling is underway for its 70 assembly constituencies. The polling began at 7 am and will continue till 6 pm. According to Election Commission (EC) data, 57.70 percent of the electorate exercised their franchise till 5 pm, with the lowest turnout being reported in the Karol Bagh constituency. Delhi's Northeast district recorded the highest voter turnout at 63.83 percent while the South East district recorded the lowest at 53.77 percent. Among the 70 assembly constituencies, Mustafabad saw the highest turnout at 66.68 percent so far while Karol Bagh recorded the lowest at 47.40 percent. Discover the latest Business News, Budget 2025 News, Sensex, and Nifty updates. Obtain Personal Finance insights, tax queries, and expert opinions on Moneycontrol or download the Moneycontrol App to stay updated!

Maha Kumbh: PM Modi takes holy dip at Sangam



GNS News Agency, Feb 5

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi took a holy dip at Sangam on Wednesday after he arrived in Prayagraj as part of his visit to the Maha Kumbh. After arriving at Prayagraj, PM Modi, who was accompanied by Uttar Pradesh (UP) Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, made his way to Arail VIP Ghat, where they took a boat ride to reach the Sangam, the confluence of the holy Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati rivers. Before boarding the boat, the Prime Minister and UP CM Yogi waved to the gathered crowd at Arail VIP Ghat, acknowledging the enthusiastic supporters who gathered to witness the occasion. The boat ride, which began at 10:50

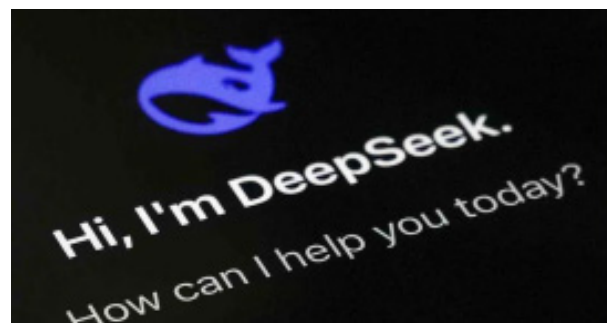
a.m., was part of the Prime Minister's brief but significant visit to the Maha Kumbh, a spiritual gathering of millions of devotees. Later, the Prime Minister took a holy dip at the Sangam during the Ashtami Tithi of the Magh month, marking a special occasion in the sacred calendar. Following the bath, he offered prayers to the Ganga on the banks of Sangam. The Prime Minister's visit underscores the significance of the Kumbh Mela, an event that draws millions of pilgrims from across the nation. PM Modi will return to Arail Ghat by boat at around 11:50 a.m. before departing for Prayagraj Airport at 12:30 p.m. This visit by the Prime Minister highlights the spiritual importance of the Maha Kumbh reaffirming the government's commitment to the cultural heritage of India. Earlier, during his visit to Prayagraj on December 13, the Prime Minister had inaugurated 167 development projects worth Rs 5,500 crore, improving connectivity, amenities and services for the general public. The people of the area have expressed great happiness at the Prime Minister arriving in their part of the state and taking a holy dip in the Sangam. Devotees at the Maha Kumbh believe that due to PM Modi's efforts, Sanatan Dharam has gained new recognition. They argued that previously, people were less aware, but now their faith and understanding have grown. They underlined that the Prime Minister has special reverence for Sanatan Dharam, and when the country's top leader visits Prayagraj Maha Kumbh for the second time, it will be a source of pride not just for the residents of Prayagraj but for the entire Sanatan Dharam community.

Indian Finance Ministry officials told not to use DeepSeek, ChatGPT over data safety risks

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

New Delhi: The Finance Ministry has directed its officers not to download or use AI tools and apps such as ChatGPT and DeepSeek in office computers and devices, saying they pose confidentiality risks to data and documents. In a communication last month to all its departments, the Ministry said AI tools/AI apps in office devices may be strictly avoided. "It has been determined that AI tools and AI apps (such as ChatGPT, DeepSeek etc) in the office computers and devices pose risks for confidentiality of Govt, data and documents," Department of Expenditure under the ministry said in a note on January 29.

The move comes at a time when countries like Australia and Italy have shielded their official systems from Chinese DeepSeek over privacy and data safety concerns. Currently, Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, which has developed artificial intelligence chatbot ChatGPT is on a whirlwind tour to India. He is meeting top government officials, industry captains and participated in a fireside chat on Wednesday morning. DeepSeek's latest AI offering has



drawn global attention for its low-cost model — at just \$6 million against global average of billions of dollars. Further, DeepSeek's R1 used a fraction of compute power as compared to established AI models like ChatGPT. DeepSeek overtook ChatGPT as the top-ranked free app on Apple's Appstore, as the US tech industry — that has long-justified injecting billions of dollars into AI investments — watched in sheer disbelief last week.

KTR slams Congress over caste census, demands apology from Rahul Gandhi for backstabbing BCs in Telangana



GNS News Agency, Feb 5

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao has charged the Congress with backstabbing Backward Classes (BCs) in Telangana by conducting a flawed caste census and demanded that Congress Lok Sabha leader Rahul Gandhi apologise for misleading Parliament about its completion. He slammed the Congress for manipulating BC population data and failing to fulfill its promise of 42 per cent reservation in local body elections.

In a strongly worded letter to Congress Lok Sabha leader Rahul Gandhi, Rama Rao criticised that the Congress government deliberately reduced BC numbers to deny them their rightful share in reservations. He questioned how the BC population, which was 1.85 crore (51 per cent) in the BRS government's Comprehensive Household Survey-2014, had now dropped to 1.64 crore (46 per cent) in the Congress-led caste census within a decade. "If Muslim BCs are included, BCs constitute 61 per cent of Telangana's

population. How did their numbers fall while upper caste populations increased?" he asked. He blamed the Congress for using the caste survey as a political tool, branding its findings a deception aimed at electoral gains. He also criticised the Congress for abandoning the Kamareddy BC Declaration, where it had promised 42 per cent BC reservations in local body elections. The BRS working president lambasted Rahul Gandhi's statement in Parliament, where he claimed the caste census in Telangana was complete, despite the exclusion of lakhs of people. He questioned the Congress leader's false claims of delivering the promises made in Telangana during the election campaign, in a bid to use it for campaigning in other election-bound States. "This is a mockery of democracy. Parliament is being misled with false data," he said.

Adding that BC organisations have already torn up the report in protest, he warned Rahul Gandhi against any attempts to push the blame on to the Centre, rather than addressing the discrepancies in the survey. He warned that BCs will not forgive Congress for manipulating their population figures and denying them their due share. He charged that the Congress turned a crucial BC reservation policy into a farce, leading to serious injustice. He feared that the Congress government's mistake could pose a threat to employment and political opportunities to the BCs. "The Congress has fooled people with fake guarantees earlier and now with a fake caste census. Telangana's BCs will never trust Congress again — not in local body polls, nor in any future election," he asserted. He demanded that Rahul Gandhi issue an unconditional apology to BCs in Telangana for this betrayal.

US military plane carrying deported illegal Indian immigrants lands in Amritsar

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

A U.S. military aircraft carrying 104 illegal Indian immigrants landed at the Shri Guru Ramdas Ji International Airport in Amritsar on Wednesday (Feb. 5, 2025) afternoon, sources said. While 30 of the deportees are from Punjab, 33 each are from Haryana and Gujarat, three each from Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, and two from Chandigarh, the sources said. An official confirmation on the number of deportees is awaited. Earlier, reports claimed that U.S. military plane C-17 was carrying 205 illegal immigrants. This is the first batch of illegal Indian immigrants to have been deported by the U.S. Government. After Donald Trump assumed office as the U.S. President last month, the country's law enforcement agencies have launched a crackdown against illegal immigrants. Many people from Punjab, who entered the U.S. through "donkey routes" or other illegal

means by spending lakhs of rupees, are now facing deportation.

"Individuals, who contributed to U.S. economy/Punjab Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav said on Tuesday (Feb. 4) that the State Government would receive the immigrants and set up counters at the airport.

Punjab NRI Affairs Minister Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal on Tuesday (Feb. 4) expressed disappointment over the U.S. Government's decision and said these individuals, who contributed to that country's economy, should have been granted permanent residency instead of being deported. He said many Indians entered the U.S. on work permits which later expired, making them illegal immigrants. The Minister said he plans to meet External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar next week to discuss the concerns and interests of Punjabis living in the U.S.

Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif says he wants to resolve all issues, including Kashmir, with India through talks

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday (February 5, 2025) said Pakistan wants to resolve all issues, including Kashmir, with India through talks as he reiterated his "unwavering" support for the Kashmiri people. Mr. Sharif made the remarks while addressing a special session of the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) Legislative Assembly in Muzaffarabad on the occasion of the "Kashmir Solidarity Day", an annual Pakistani event to show support for the Kashmiris. "We want all issues, including Kashmir, to be resolved through talks," Mr. Sharif said.

"India should come out of the thinking of August 5, 2019, and fulfil promises made to the U.N. and launch a dialogue," he said, referring to the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution that revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcated the state into two Union Territories. Prime Minister Sharif said that the only way forward for Pakistan and India was a dialogue, as already written in the Lahore Declaration of 1999, which was agreed upon when then-Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Pakistan. India has repeatedly said it desires normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan in an environment free of terror, hostility and violence. India has repeatedly told Pakistan that the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh "was, is and shall forever" remain an integral part of the country. The ties between the two countries nosedived after India abrogated Article 370. Mr. Sharif also accused India of amassing weapons, saying that accumulation of arms would not bring peace or change the fate of people of this region. He urged India to be wise, saying the way to progress was peace. "Pakistan will continue to offer its unwavering moral,



diplomatic and political support to the Kashmiri people till the realization of their right to self-determination," he said.

"The only solution to the Kashmir issue is the right of self-determination under the UNSC resolution..." he said. President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Sharif also asked the international community to put pressure on India to allow the Kashmiri people to "freely determine their future for lasting peace in the region". Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, the Service Chiefs, and the Pakistan Armed Forces also reaffirmed their support for the people of Kashmir. PoK "Prime Minister" Anwarul Haq said that Pakistan was the final destination of Kashmiris, and said that peace in the region would not be possible until the issue of Kashmir was resolved. The state-run Radio Pakistan reported that posters and billboards have been displayed around important avenues, airports, and railway stations on the occasion.

BRS slams Congress over "flawed" caste survey, seeks re-survey within 15 days



GNS News Agency, Feb 5

Hyderabad: The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) on Wednesday slammed the Congress government's Social, Economic, Employment, Education, Political, and Caste Survey-2024, calling it bogus, flawed, and a deliberate attempt to suppress Backward Classes numbers. The party announced statewide protests, demanding a re-survey within 15 days. Speaking to mediapersons at Telangana Bhavan here, Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council S Madhusudana Chari charged the Congress with manipulating caste figures instead of increasing BC reservations. Citing Election Commission data from the 2023 Assembly polls, he noted that Telangana had 3.35 crore voters. "Assuming at least 25 per cent of the population below 18, Telangana's total population should be over 4 crore. But the caste census has undercounted it at 3.75 crore, reducing the BC share," he said. He questioned why Congress never conducted a caste census despite ruling both the State and the country for decades.

Former Minister Gangula Kamalakara said around 40 lakh BCs were deliberately left out, reducing their percentage from 56 per cent to 46 per cent. He cited the Patna

High Court's dismissal of Bihar's caste census, which was conducted through the Planning Department instead of the BC Commission. "The Telangana government made the same mistake. This report will not stand in court," he cautioned. He pointed to the National Family Health Survey 2024, which estimated Telangana's population at 3.84 crore, and a Union government sample survey, which pegged BCs at 56 per cent. He demanded a fresh enumeration based on the voter list.

Reddy community demands MLC Teenmaar Mallanna's resignation

KARIMNAGAR: The Telangana Reddy Joint Action Council has demanded that MLC Chinthapandu Naveen alias Teenmar Mallanna resign from his post for his derogatory comments against the Reddy community. Condemning Mallanna's remarks, the JAC members warned that he would not be allowed to move around Telangana if such comments were repeated. The Reddy JAC leaders led by district president Vancha Sudarshan Reddy on Wednesday lodged a complaint with the Additional DCP here seeking action against Teenmar Mallanna for making derogatory comments against the Reddy community. They pointed out that he abused the community using filthy language, for which video evidence was available. Mallanna, who was elected as MLC, took oath in the Council to give equal priority to all castes and take steps for the development with the support of all the sections. People of both Telugu-speaking States were well aware of the MLC.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Strengthening Indo-Nepal defence ties with Surya Kiran

With a focus on fortifying military connections between the two adjacent nations, Exercise Surya Kiran 2024-25 was a striking example of the continuous improvement of defence cooperation between India and Nepal. This joint military exercise, in Saljhandi, Nepal, from December 29, 2024, to January 13, 2025, showcased the long-standing military, cultural and geopolitical ties between the two nations.

Enhancing interoperability between Indian and Nepalese armies is the main objective of the exercise, which concentrates on counterterrorism in mountainous areas, jungle warfare, and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) by the UN Charter. The broader geopolitical and security dynamics that influence Indo-Nepal relations are reflected in the exercise's significance, which goes beyond its operational goals.

Following the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship, which established the framework for defence cooperation, India and Nepal began collaborating militarily in the early 1950s. The creation of the Gurkha regiments, known for their valour and fighting prowess, is an example of how this treaty permitted Nepalese soldiers to serve in the Indian Army.

The defence alliance has grown to include cooperative counter-insurgency operations, intelligence sharing and joint training exercises. Surya Kiran is an exercise that started in the early 2000s and is still a vital forum for improving military cooperation. Strengthening their defence connections has become a shared goal as both countries deal with security issues in the region, especially in light of China's growing influence and the Himalayan region's strategic location.

92% work done, Mumbai-Pune 'missing link' set for August finish

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

Mumbai-Pune "missing link" project has got a new deadline — August 2025 — with the officials stating that 92 per cent of the work is completed. The 13-kilometer "missing link", which will cut across the existing Mumbai-Pune Expressway, will trim the distance between the two cities by 5.7 kilometers and reduce the travel time by around 30 minutes.

The project, estimated at Rs 6,600 crore, has seen extension of deadline several times — from March 2024 to January 2025, which was further revised to March 2025. The "missing link" project has been delayed multiple times due to the complex challenges of the terrain and ambitious engineering feats. A senior official from the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) explained that, while progress has been steady, the team is proceeding with caution.

"Although the tunnels and viaduct 1 are ready, the second viaduct is still under construction. This part is especially tricky because it spans over a valley," the official explained. The second viaduct, which forms a key section of the project, is a cable-stayed bridge that reaches a staggering height of 100 meters above Khandala Valley. This towering structure, along with other engineering challenges, has made the project both time-consuming and intricate. Despite these delays, the work has not disrupted traffic on the existing Mumbai-Pune Expressway, which remains one of the busiest roads in the country. The MSRDC official said they have taken extra care to ensure minimal disturbance to drivers during construction.

"We are focusing on the work being done safely and without affecting the regular flow of traffic," the official added stating that infact now they are using the viaduct 1 and tunnel of the project to reach on the viaduct 2 work site. Starting at Khopoli, the project includes an 840-meter viaduct, a 1.75-kilometer tunnel, and a 640-meter cable-stayed bridge that soars 100 meters above the Tiger Route in the Lonavala-Khandala section. Following this, the route continues through another 8.9-kilometer tunnel — some parts of which are as deep as 170 feet beneath the ground with the Lonavala lake resting above it. This new alignment will reduce travel time significantly. Currently, the distance between Khopoli and the Sinhgad Institute via the expressway is 19 kilometers, much of it through a ghat section. With fewer hills to navigate, drivers will also be able to travel at speed up to 120 km per hour. The project's design also focuses on safety with officials stating that one of its primary goals is to turn the Mumbai-Pune Expressway into a "zero-fatality corridor. This initiative aims to reduce accidents, particularly in the notoriously hazardous ghat section. Another pressing concern the project addresses is the perennial problem of traffic jams caused by falling boulders and debris from the surrounding hills, especially during the monsoon season. With a more secure route and advanced engineering solutions, MSRDC hopes to end these seasonal disruptions and ensure smoother, safer commutes for travelers.

Here's why Sanya Malhotra seeks 'help' during her yoga session

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

Mumbai: Bollywood actor Sanya Malhotra said 'send help' after she turned on party mode during her yoga session. Sanya took to her Instagram stories, where she shared a video of herself dancing on the number 'Khwaab Dekhe (Sexy Lady)' from the 2008 film 'Race'. The actor is seen wearing a fiery red crop top paired with a black mini-skirt as she showcased her moves.

"Yoga session turned into an impromptu dance party. Came for the zen, stayed for the dance break. Send help," she wrote as the caption. Talking about 'Khwaab Dekhe (Sexy Lady)', the song is picturised on actor Katrina Kaif and actor Saif Ali Khan. 'Race', a neo-noir action crime film, is directed by Abbas-Mustan. Reportedly inspired by the 1998 Hollywood movie 'Goodbye Lover', it is the first instalment in the 'Race' franchise and stars Saif Ali Khan, Anil Kapoor, Akshaye Khanna, Bipasha Basu, Katrina Kaif, and Sameera Reddy. The actor is gearing up for the release of her family entertainer 'Mrs.', which is said to premiere on the OTT platform ZEE5 on February 7. 'Mrs.' is an official remake of the 2021 blockbuster Malayalam drama 'The Great Indian Kitchen' by Jeo Baby. Sanya will be seen portraying the character of a new bride Richa, who strives to keep her dreams of becoming a dancer alive while navigating the weight of traditional household duties.

Delhi High Court summons Shashi Tharoor in civil defamation suit by BJP leader Rajeev Chandrasekhar



GNS News Agency, Feb 5

Shashi Tharoor R Chandrasekhar Chandrasekhar alleged that Tharoor's remarks contributed to his defeat in the Lok Sabha elections from the Thiruvananthapuram constituency in Kerala. The Delhi High Court on Monday issued a summons to Congress MP Shashi Tharoor in a civil defamation suit by BJP leader and former MP Rajeev Chandrasekhar.

Chandrasekhar, represented by advocate Vaibhav Gaggar, has accused Tharoor of defaming and damaging his reputation. This accusation follows Tharoor's alleged statement during a TV interview ahead of Lok Sabha elections 2024 that Chandrasekhar had bribed people for votes. Chandrasekhar is seeking damages for the loss of

his reputation in society and a permanent injunction against Tharoor. He alleged that Tharoor's remarks contributed to his defeat in the Lok Sabha elections from the Thiruvananthapuram constituency in Kerala. Tharoor won the seat for the fourth consecutive time, with a margin of over 16,000 votes against Chandrasekhar. Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav issued a summons and directed that the defamation claim be registered as a suit and listed the matter for consideration before the joint registrar on April 28. In April 2024, Chandrasekhar sent a legal notice to Tharoor, asking the MP to withdraw his earlier allegations and issue an unconditional apology. However, according to Chandrasekhar, Tharoor failed to withdraw his statements and the interview videos continued circulating. In August 2024, the Delhi High Court transferred the criminal defamation suit filed by Chandrasekhar against Tharoor from the Patiala district court to the district sessions judge of Rouse Avenue court while directing the parties to "appear in person" later that month. The Rouse Avenue court holds jurisdiction over conducting trials involving cases pertaining to sitting MPs/MLAs. The suit was initially filed before the Patiala court as both the complainant and the accused reside in Delhi under the North Avenue police station. In September 2024, the Rouse Avenue court took cognisance of the defamation complaint and initiated proceedings. The court has yet to decide if it will issue a summons to Tharoor in the criminal complaint case.

Haryana minister Anil Vij sharpens attack on CM Nayab Singh Saini, releases photos of his 'detractors'

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

Sharpening his attack on Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, senior Minister Anil Vij Monday released photos of workers who were allegedly with his opponent Chitra Sarwara during the 2024 Assembly polls. In a tough contest, Vij had defeated an Independent candidate and former Congress leader Sarwara with a margin of 7,277 votes. On Sunday morning, Vij shared a video clip on his X account which has photos of a local BJP leader Aashish Tayal with Saini. According to Vij, Tayal claims to be a close friend of Saini and their numerous photos are available on Facebook. "Those workers who were seen with Aashish Tayal during the Vidhan Sabha polls were also with BJP rival Chitra. What is called this relation? Tayal is still a close friend of Saini, then the question arises who orchestrated opposition to the BJP candidate," said Vij in the post.



When contacted, Tayal said he worked for the BJP during the Haryana Assembly elections. "The BJP workers who are seen with me have a lot of photos with Vij also. Some of them are still with the BJP while some of them have deserted the party and went with Sarwara during the polls. The leader (Vij) should see why they deserted the party because he has been a minister for the past 10 years." Tayal said he has been with the Bharatiya Janata Party for the past nearly 15 years, and was a district BJP treasurer until recently. "Three to four days ago, I saw a post on social media that I have been discharged from the post. I don't know the reasons," Tayal added. Last Friday, Vij alleged that during the elections, a senior party leader tried to ensure his defeat. The minister said within a week of winning the election, his seventh, he had "publicly raised the issue of those who played a role in trying to defeat me, whether they were officials, employees, or minor political figures." "At first, I suspected that someone with strong political backing had tried to defeat me and even went as far

as attempting to have me eliminated". "But now, after no action has been taken against them, I am convinced of it. Since I am the senior-most leader and I am saying that efforts were made to defeat me, action should have been taken immediately. If not strict action, at least they should have been transferred or expelled from the party. But even after 100 days, nothing has been done, and now, whether they act or not, it no longer matters to me," he said. The minister also said Saini "never comes down from his flying chariot." "Since the day he became CM, he has remained in the air. If he had come down, he would have heard the sufferings of the public. This is not just my voice; it is the voice of all MLAs, all MPs, and all ministers," Vij added. Vij also sought the resignation of Haryana BJP president Mohan Lal Badoli, saying he has been charged with gangrape. "A man who is facing allegations of Section 376, how can he chair a meeting of women? We can't say that women have been banned in the BJP because we are increasing the participation of women (in the party organisation) up to 30 per cent," Vij said Sunday. In December 2024, Badoli and singer Rocky Mittal were booked in a gangrape case in Himachal Pradesh, however, they have termed the allegations baseless.

Delhi High Court refuses urgent hearing of retired judge's PIL against poll freebies

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

The Delhi High Court on Monday refused urgent hearing of a PIL petition that Justice (retired) S N Dhingra filed in his capacity as president of Samay Yaan (Sashakt Samaj), a non-profit society, against promises made by the BJP, AAP and Congress ahead of the Assembly polls. When the counsel of the petitioner mentioned the matter before a division bench of Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela, the court said the matter would be listed in due course. "Tomorrow is the last day for electioneering or maybe today... Whatever impact the freebies were to have has already happened," the bench orally remarked while refusing urgent hearing. Delhi will vote on Wednesday.



Dhingra moved the court against the three national parties over their promises to distribute financial aid among voters if voted to power. The PIL also seeks that such schemes be declared unconstitutional and classified as election manipulation. The collection of voters' data "and possible misuse without their explicit consent is a violation of their fundamental right to privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution of India", Justice Dhingra has said in his petition.

Justice (ret'd) Dhingra is seeking high court directions for the three political parties to "cease and desist from collecting personal and electoral data of voters under false pretence" and that they be directed not to share and use data

collected during elections with any third party. The PIL is also seeking directions for the Election Commission of India to frame rules for political parties regarding promises to distribute cash among voters, to conduct an inquiry into "corrupt practices and illegal data collection", and to strengthen monitoring mechanisms to prevent violation of electoral laws. Justice (ret'd) Dhingra first made headlines when he awarded the death penalty to Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru. He also investigated Robert Vadra's land deals. He was elevated as a judge of the Delhi High Court in 2006 and retired from the court in 2011. He faced judicial scrutiny in 2017 for possible misuse of his mandate as a court-appointed observer in a family business dispute, and in 2018 he was appointed as chairman of the SIT looking into the closed cases of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots.

Chandigarh not a World Heritage City: Centre informs Parliament

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

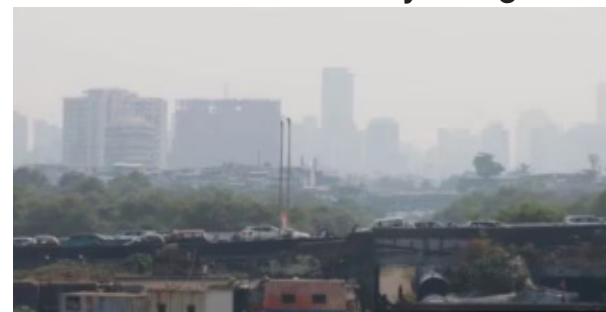
The Centre said Monday that Chandigarh has not been designated as a World Heritage City after Congress Member of Parliament Manish Tewari raised a query in Parliament over the city's status. Tewari, who represents Chandigarh in Lok Sabha, also sought the details of designated heritage cities in the country, and the details along with the number of heritage cities across the world, country-wise.

Tewari asked the Minister of Culture, "Whether the Union Territory of Chandigarh is designated as a heritage city and the details of specific/established criteria for designating a city as a heritage city by the Government of India, UNESCO or any other international organisations." To this, Minister of Culture and Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat replied, "The Union Territory of Chandigarh City has not been designated as a World Heritage City." "However, the Chandigarh Capitol Complex has been inscribed as a Transnational World Heritage Property in 2016 under the title 'The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier, an Outstand-

ing Contribution to the Modern Movement'. This Transnational World Heritage Property includes seven countries comprising Argentina, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Germany, Japan and India," said Shekhawat. "In the UNESCO Operational Guidelines, 2024, any World Heritage property, including a World Heritage City, must fulfil one or more criteria outlined," he added. There are two heritage cities of India — Gujarat's Ahmedabad and Jaipur in Rajasthan. Every project — from the construction of subways to the installation of lights at any old site — in the city has to get the nod of the Chandigarh Heritage Conservation Committee.

Hina-rohtaki Hina Rohtaki is a Special Correspondent with The Indian Express, Chandigarh. She covers Chandigarh administration and other cross beats. In this field for over a decade now, she has also received the prestigious Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Award by the President of India in January 2020. She tweets @HinaRohtaki... Read More

Mumbai experiences below-normal temperatures as February begins



GNS News Agency, Feb 5

After sweltering under warm January days, Mumbai walked into February amid below-normal temperatures, with the minimum temperature further dropping to 16.6 degrees Celsius—nearly one degree below normal—on Monday morning. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the city's cool spell is here to stay until Thursday, following which temperatures are slated to spike to 35 degrees Celsius during the weekend. Data from the IMD showed that on Sunday, its Santacruz observatory logged 31.4 degrees Celsius, which is 0.2 degrees below normal, while the Colaba coastal observatory recorded 30 degrees Celsius on the mercury scales. Colaba recorded 20.7 degrees Celsius on Monday morning.

For the record, Mumbai's coldest February day was registered in 2008 when the Santacruz station recorded 8.5 degrees Celsius, while its warmest day of the month was recorded in 1966 at 39.6 degrees Celsius. While speaking to The Indian Express, Sunil Kamble, director of IMD Mumbai, attributed the ongoing below-normal temperatures during the daytime to the influx of northerly winds. "While wind direction changes multiple times during the day, we are currently receiving northerly winds most of the time. Furthermore, we are receiving dry easterly winds for short durations during the day. Owing to the predominant presence of northerly winds, the temperatures have dipped," he said. In its forecast bulletin, the IMD has indicated that the minimum temperatures are expected to hover below 20 degrees Celsius until at least Thursday (February 6). During the same period, the maximum temperatures are also forecast to oscillate between 31 and 33 degrees Celsius. However, starting Friday, both daytime and nighttime temperatures are expected to soar, with maximum temperatures anticipated to hit 35 degrees.

Bengaluru home guard arrested for misbehaving with women after posing as crime branch official

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

The Bengaluru police have arrested a 40-year-old home guard for allegedly posing as a crime branch officer and misbehaving with three women college students at MSR Nagar in the northern part of the city. According to the police, Suresh Kumar, a resident of Bengaluru, entered the students' flat on the night of January 31 claiming that local residents had complained about public nuisance. Suspecting foul play, the students sought help from their friends, who detained him and took him to the Sadashivanagar police station. The police confirmed that Kumar was assigned to supervise MSR Nagar. They said he had entered the same house a few months ago and extorted money from a friend of one of the complainants. Kumar was arrested on February 1 on charges of misbehaviour and extortion and produced before a court.

RPF constable suspended after 55-year-old woman raped on train at Bandra Terminus

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

Woman raped in Mumbai Bandra train An official said the woman had come from another state with a male relative earlier last week. The Railway Protection Force (RPF) has suspended a constable who was in charge of security at a platform on Mumbai's Bandra Terminus where a 55-year-old woman was allegedly raped by a porter.

An inquiry has been ordered into the incident that occurred on the night of February 1. The Government Railway Police arrested the porter later that night over the incident. The accused took advantage of the fact that the woman was sleeping alone on an empty train at the Bandra Terminus and forced himself on her, according to officials. Her relative later approached the railway police, which managed to track down the accused and arrest him. An official said the woman had come from another state with a male relative earlier last week. After sightseeing in the city, the duo were to leave on Saturday night and decided to sleep on the platform as they did not have a place to stay that night. The relative went for some work and the woman slept on the platform for a bit before entering an empty train compartment.

Engagement of minor girl prevented in Asifabad

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

Kumram Bheem Asifabad: Officials of the Child Protection department in association with police and the women development and child welfare department stopped the engagement of a minor girl by counselling her parents at Vankulam village in Rebbena mandal on Monday.

District Child Protection Officer Burla Mahesh, in a statement, said they could avert the engagement of a minor girl with a boy from Dabba village in Chintalmanepalli mandal by providing counselling to parents of the bride and groom, following a tip-off. He stated that they explained legal and health consequences of the child marriage to the parents who agreed to cancel the engagement.

The officials narrated health problems caused by the child marriage. They told the parents that the groom would get 2 years of jail and a fine of Rs 1 lakh if he marries a minor girl as per the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. They advised the parents to solemnize the wedding if the girl was ready after her attaining the age of 18. Child Line coordinator B Praveen Kumar, counselor Ravali, constable Mallishwari, Anganwadi teacher Latha took part in the operation.

92 % work done, Mumbai-Pune 'missing link' set for August finish



GNS News Agency, Feb 5

Mumbai-Pune "missing link" project has got a new deadline—August 2025—with the officials stating that 92 per cent of the work is completed. The 13-kilometer "missing link", which will cut across the existing Mumbai-Pune Expressway, will trim the distance between the two cities by 5.7 kilometers and reduce the travel time by around 30 minutes. The project, estimated at Rs 6,600 crore, has seen extension of deadline several times—from March 2024 to January 2025, which was further revised to March 2025. The "missing link" project has been delayed multiple times due to the complex challenges of the terrain and ambitious engineering feats. A senior official from the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) explained that, while progress has been steady, the team is proceeding with caution. "Although the tunnels and viaduct 1 are ready, the second viaduct is still under construction. This part is especially tricky because it spans over a valley," the official explained. The second viaduct, which forms a key section of the project, is a cable-stayed bridge that reaches a staggering height of 100 meters above Khandala Valley. This towering structure, along with other engineering challenges, has made the project both time-

consuming and intricate.

Despite these delays, the work has not disrupted traffic on the existing Mumbai-Pune Expressway, which remains one of the busiest roads in the country. The MSRDC official said they have taken extra care to ensure minimal disturbance to drivers during construction. missing link Despite these delays, the work has not disrupted traffic on the existing Mumbai-Pune Expressway, which remains one of the busiest roads in the country.

"We are focusing on the work being done safely and without affecting the regular flow of traffic," the official added stating that infact now they are using the viaduct 1 and tunnel of the project to reach on the viaduct 2 work site. Starting at Khopoli, the project includes an 840-meter viaduct, a 1.75-kilometer tunnel, and a 640-meter cable-stayed bridge that soars 100 meters above the Tiger Valley in the Lonavala-Khandala section. Following this, the route continues through another 8.9-kilometer tunnel—some parts of which are as deep as 170 feet beneath the ground with the Lonavala lake resting above it. This new alignment will reduce travel time significantly. Currently, the distance between Khopoli and the Sinhgad Institute via the expressway is 19 kilometers, much of it through a ghat section. With fewer hills to navigate, drivers will also be able to travel at speed up to 120 km per hour. The project's design also focuses on safety with officials stating that one of its primary goals is to turn the Mumbai-Pune Expressway into a "zero-fatality corridor." This initiative aims to reduce accidents, particularly in the notoriously hazardous ghat section. Another pressing concern the project addresses is the perennial problem of traffic jams caused by falling boulders and debris from the surrounding hills, especially during the monsoon season. With a more secure route and advanced engineering solutions, MSRDC hopes to end these seasonal disruptions and ensure smoother, safer commutes for travelers.

When a cab driver's relentless stalking culminated in acid attack on BPO employee



GNS News Agency, Feb 5

In 2005, a 22-year-old woman from Pune became a victim of stalking when a cab driver threw acid on her after she repeatedly rejected his advances. In 2007, the convict jumped parole while serving his seven-year prison sentence. It took the police nine years to apprehend him for the second time. In between, the Bombay High Court increased his sentence to life imprisonment. Meanwhile, the woman returned to her job in business process outsourcing (BPO) just a few months after the attack. It has been 20 years since the crime that shocked the residents of Pune. Cab driver attempts to get close to woman despite refusals. According to police and court records, the woman initially worked as a customer care associate at a prominent company in Pune. The convict, Kailas Sitaram Adagale, aged 25 then, worked as a driver for a company cab provided to her. As per the police, Adagale, a resident of Thergaon, attempted to become close with her, but she rebuffed his advances. She left the company on December 17, 2004, and started a new job at a well-known BPO firm in Kalyani Nagar in January 2005. In addition, she was pursuing a BCom degree at a college in Pune.

Even after she changed her workplace, Adagale continued to call her frequently, as per the police. He also attempted to meet her on her way to college and her new job. Despite ignoring him, she received a phone call from Adagale around 5.30 pm on January 31, 2005, while she was on her way to Kalyani Nagar in another cab.

He wanted to meet her, but she refused and hung up. Nevertheless, he confronted her on the BPO firm's campus, threatening to create a scene if she did not speak with him. As a new employee, she wanted to avoid any troubles in the company, so she reluctantly agreed to talk with him in his cab, according to the police. After Adagale told her she wanted to marry her, she questioned how he dared to say that. An angry Adagale opened a bottle containing acid and splashed it on her face. Hearing her screams, people gathered, two of them caught Adagale, and handed him over to the police, who recorded his arrest. The police filed a First Information Report (FIR) against him under Section 307 (attempt to murder) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The woman, who was admitted to a hospital, did not suffer acid burns on her face and eyes, but on her hands, legs and other body parts. She underwent multiple surgeries before rejoining the job. Case reaches Bombay High Court, convict jumps parole. A trial court in Pune convicted Adagale and awarded him seven years of rigorous imprisonment. He moved the Bombay High Court to challenge the conviction while the Maharashtra government filed an appeal in the high court to enhance his sentence. In August 2007, he was released from jail on parole for 14 days, but he did not return and escaped. A fresh offence for jumping parole was lodged against him at the Hinjewadi police station.

The police launched a search for him but were unable to trace his location even as hearings in the acid attack case continued in the high court. On February 18, 2016, the high court awarded him life imprisonment and fined him Rs 2 lakh as compensation to the woman. The Bombay High Court observed that a mere seven years of imprisonment for this "inhuman and cruel" act of acid attack was a "miscarriage of justice". It stated that one of the objectives of punishing the convict is to create a "deterrent effect" so that others do not dare to indulge in such acts or offences. As Adagale continued to be on the run, the police intensified the search for him. Finally, acting on a tip-off to Constable Feroz Bagwan, a team led by the then Crime Branch assistant inspector Sunil Gawali nabbed Adagale from J M Road in Pune on November 24, 2016. The police probe revealed that after jumping parole, Adagale kept changing his location. He was in Nagpur for some days and then moved to states outside Maharashtra. He then returned to Pune and started working as a cab driver again while residing in the Dhanori area, the police said.

BDD chawls redevelopment: First set of houses in Worli to be handed over by March

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

The Bombay Development Department (BDD) chawls, a symbol of Mumbai's industrial past, are set for a dramatic transformation. Known for their cramped living spaces and narrow alleys, the chawls have housed thousands of working-class families for decades. An ambitious redevelopment project aims to redefine the city's skyline and provide a new lease on life for residents, with the first batch of newly constructed apartments expected to be handed over in Worli by March 2025. The redevelopment project, which spans across Worli, Naigaon, and NM Joshi Marg, is spearheaded by the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA) and backed by the state government.

The BDD chawls, constructed between 1920 and 1925 by the British government, were initially designed to house industrial workers and migrants flocking to Mumbai in search of employment. Over the years, the chawls became home to mill workers and low-income families, creating communities that thrived despite limited resources. Today, Mumbai hosts 207 BDD chawls spread across four key locations: Worli (121 chawls), Naigaon (42 chawls), NM Joshi Marg (32 chawls), and Sewri (12 chawls)—all awaiting redevelopment. Redevelopment has been a long-standing demand of the residents, as the ageing chawl structures have become increasingly unsafe. In 2017, the Devendra Fadnis-led government launched a Rs 16,000 crore redevelopment plan. The project promises to provide tenants who currently live in 160 sq ft rooms with new 500 sq ft homes, with the first bhoomipujan ceremony held in April 2017.

The redevelopment model seeks to utilise 68 per cent of the land for the rehabilitation of original tenants, while the remaining land will be allocated to private builders to construct apartments for sale in the open market, helping to fund the project. MHADA commenced work in Worli, Naigaon, and NM Joshi Marg in August 2021 after overcoming initial resistance from tenants. The Sewri redevelopment will begin once the land is formally transferred from the central government and the Bombay Port Trust.

In order to qualify for rehabilitation, tenants must have legally occupied BDD chawls as of January 1, 2021. A competent authority, led by the deputy collector, will verify eligibility and determine qualifications for other structures, such as hutments and commercial units on BDD premises. Eligible tenants will receive ownership of a 500 sq ft, two-bedroom apartment in the newly constructed buildings, while slum dwellers in the area will be rehoused under the Slum Act. These residents will be allocated 300-sq-ft units for residential purposes, as well as equivalent commercial space for business owners.



The first batch of rehabilitated homes, located in the newly constructed wings D and E of Building No 1 in Worli, will be handed over to tenants in early 2025. These 556 homes, each offering 500 sq ft of carpet area, are a far cry from the 160 sq ft tenements many families have shared for generations. The Worli redevelopment project is being executed in two phases. Phase 1 includes the rehabilitation of 5,198 residential units and the development of a massive 180,000 sq m commercial complex. Additionally, MHADA plans to offer 1,860 middle-income group (MIG) and 1,036 higher-income group (HIG) apartments through a housing lottery system. The entire redevelopment project in Worli is valued at Rs 22,901.25 crore, with Phase 2 bringing an additional 3,974 rehabilitation units, alongside 2,184 sale tenements (1,494 for MIG and 1,036 for HIG). The project aims to create a self-sustained community, complete with schools, hospitals, and recreational spaces, ensuring that residents enjoy a higher quality of life. The scale of the redevelopment is massive, with nearly Rs 20,000 crore dedicated to rehabilitating existing tenants alone.

Sanjeev Jaiswal, vice-president and CEO, MHADA, also stressed the broader urban renewal vision of the project. While Worli is leading the way, other BDD chawls in Mumbai are also seeing substantial progress. In Naigaon, phase 1 work for 1,401 rehabilitation units is underway, with completion expected by March 2026. In NM Joshi Marg, 10 chawls have already been demolished and the construction of seven new towers is in progress. In Sewri, the redevelopment will begin once the land transfer process from the central government is complete. "The redevelopment of BDD chawls is not just about new buildings. It is about uplifting the quality of life for over 15,500 families. With modern homes offering greater space and amenities, this initiative is a game-changer for the city's housing landscape," Jaiswal said.

Former RA&W officer Vikash Yadav again exempted from appearance in Delhi court over 'threat to life'

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

Vikash Yadav, Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, Ex-RAW official charged in US, Gurpatwant Singh Pannun assassination, Khalistani terrorist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, Gurpatwant Singh Pannun latest news, Gurpatwant Singh Pannun assassination plot, US charges ex RAW official Yadav was charged by the US Department of Justice (DoJ) with "murder-for-hire" and money laundering in connection with the alleged plot to kill pro-Khalistan separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun. A Delhi court Monday exempted the personal appearance of former Research and Analysis Wing (RA&W) officer Vikash Yadav before it after he had cited a "threat to his life". He was charged by the US Department of Justice (DoJ) with "murder-for-hire" and money laundering in connection with the alleged plot to kill pro-Khalistan separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun.

This was the second time Yadav requested an exemption from attending in person, and it was approved. The first request was made in November on the same grounds. Yadav was represented in the Court of Additional Sessions Judge Sumit Dass of Patiala House Court by advocates R K Handoo and Aditya Chaudhary. "We filed an application for the second time seeking exemption from physical appearance. We cited a threat to Yadav's life. The court allowed this application," Chaudhary told The Indian Express. On December 18, 2023, less than three weeks after US DoJ documents mentioned him as "CC-1" (co-conspirator), the Delhi Police Special Cell arrested Yadav and his associate Abdullah Khan. This was after an FIR



The Delhi Police arrested Vikash Yadav in an extortion and kidnapping case in December 2023, and he got bail in April 2024

was filed against him by a Rohini resident, accusing him of extortion and kidnapping and linking him to jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi.

They were booked under Indian Penal Code sections 307 (attempt to murder), 120-B (criminal conspiracy), 364A (abduction), 506 (threatening), 341 (wrongful confinement), 328 (poisoning) and sections 25 and 27 (punishment for certain offences related to arms and ammunition) of the Arms Act. Yadav was granted interim bail on March 22, 2024, and regular bail on April 22 in the case. The court will now hear the case on March 24 and Judge Dass sought the presence of the investigating officer, who could attend Monday's hearing as he was on poll duty for the Delhi Assembly elections 2025.

'What post offered to you after retirement that you are ready to mortgage country?': Arvind Kejriwal continues to target CEC Rajiv Kumar

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal Monday attacked Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar once again as he urged him to leave his "greed" for the post. On the last day of campaigning ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls on February 5, Kejriwal also slammed the Election Commission, accusing it of favouring the BJP. "Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar is retiring at the end of this month. What position has he been offered that he is ready to mortgage the country? What is the post in return for which you can destroy the democracy of the country? Governor, President?" Arvind Kejriwal asked. "You have worked 45 years... Don't mortgage the country for your career... Don't end the country's democracy in greed of getting some post."

This was not the first time Kejriwal questioned CEC Rajiv Kumar. On January 30, he said that the CEC was seeking a job after retirement and made the Election Commission a mess. Citing alleged attacks on his convoy and AAP workers during the campaigning, Kejriwal said, "Freedom fighters sacrificed their lives to get freedom and bring democracy in the country so that people can vote and elect the leaders in free and fair elections... But the way the Election Commission has surrendered its arms to the BJP, it seems as if the Election Commission does not exist."

Further, accusing the BJP of thuggery, Arvind Kejriwal said law enforcement agencies like the Delhi Police are helpless. "They cannot take action despite things happening in front their eyes because they orders from above. The country is asking who is this gunda that everyone is so



scared of and taking directions from," said Kejriwal. Kejriwal claimed some reporters were attacked by goons on Sunday. "The police were right there, and they did nothing. Instead, they detained the reporters and kept them in jail for a night. Such violent incidents against party workers, woman volunteers and reporters are not happening in any remote village but just a kilometre away from the Supreme Court and Election Commission (office)," he said. Suggesting that the AAP would be voted back to power in Delhi, Arvind Kejriwal said, "For people, safety is important. There is one party with honest people who think about saving Rs 25,000 for the people in Delhi every month. While there is another filled with goons and total gundagardi, which, if it comes to power, will destroy the middle class and poor." "The AAP and its workers will not succumb to violence and rowdiness. The people of Delhi are very aware; they will not tolerate this. They have decided to put an end to this lawlessness on February 5," Arvind Kejriwal said.

Sadhus from Akharas take Amrit Snana in Maha Kumbh



GNS News Agency, Feb 5

Amidst continuous chants of "har har Gange" and "har har Mahadev" and the blowing of trumpets and shanks, led by Mahamandaleshwars of their respective Akharas in decorated chariots, thousands of sadhus walked barefoot alongside them—some covered in ashes, some holding trishul, swords and damru in hand, while some were riding towards the Sangam in horses. Sadhus from seven major Akharas from Panchayati Akhara Mahanirvani, Atal, Niranjani, Anand, Juna, Awahan, and Panchagin took "Amrit Snana" at the Sangam in Prayagraj by 9:30 am on Monday.

This is the last "Amrit Snana" of sadhus for the Maha Kumbh 2025, marking Basant Panchami, with the first one being on January 14 to mark Makar Sankranti, and the second one on January 29 to mark Mauni Amavasya, which is the biggest bath. The latter had witnessed a stampede, killing at least 30 and injuring over 60 people. As the procession of Akharas moved from their camps in Sector 20 after crossing the Pontoon bridge, which was reserved only for them, the barricades and traffic movement separated them from the rest of the public. About 20 quintals of flower petals were showered over them from a helicopter in rounds. With the Akharas leaving their camps from 4 am onwards on Monday, the first snana started at around 5.40 am. Officials informed that the snana of all 13 Akharas would

be completed by 3 pm. As per official records, over 62 lakh people had already taken baths by 8 am on the day of Basant Panchami. The government expects about 5 crore to take the bath today. The Maha Kumbh itself will continue till February 26, the day of the Maha Shivratri. "Today marks the final 'Amrit Snan' on the occasion of Basant Panchami. After the Amrit Snana, we will head to Varanasi. We have been allotted 40 minutes for bathing. I request all devotees to refrain from visiting Sangam ghat unless absolutely necessary," said Mahant Ravindra Puri, President of Akhil Bhartiya Akhara Parishad before moving for the snana.

Telangana's Nizamabad Central Prison gets weaving unit, will employ 26 inmates

Hyderabad: Director General of Prisons Dr Sowmya Mishra inaugurated a weaving unit at Central Prison Nizamabad on Monday in presence of Nizamabad CP Sindhu Sharma.

The weaving unit, comprising 13 weaving machines, will employ 26 jail inmates who will make towels, napkins, bedsheets and clothes, among others. "The products will be distributed to prisoners and convicts, and will also be sold to public through the Prison Department's stalls," Mishra said. The machinery was shifted from Central Prison Cheralpally to Central Prison Nizamabad recently and assembled there.

Already, there is a steel industry unit, printing press unit, tailoring unit and phenyl unit at the Nizamabad jail where prisoners work and earn substantial wages. New prisoners are trained in the vocations as part of the rehabilitation programmes.

Will not back down, notwithstanding false cases against me: BRS MLC K Kavitha



GNS News Agency, Feb 5

Nizamabad: BRS MLC K Kavitha lashed out at the Congress and the BJP for failing to serve the people, and instead, prioritised vendettas targeting her party to weaken its chief K Chandrashekhara Rao. She stated that unable to face Chandrashekhara Rao politically, illegal cases were being filed against her and party president KT Rama Rao. "But ours is not the blood of fear, it is the blood of resilience. No matter how many cases or arrests come our way, we will stand firm," she declared, addressing a massive gathering at Nizamabad on Sunday. On her first visit to the erstwhile Nizamabad district after being released in the Delhi excise policy case, she received a grand welcome from the BRS leaders and Telangana Jagruthi representatives.

Speaking on the occasion, Kavitha criticised the Congress government for failing to fulfill its election promises and arresting those who are questioning its policies. She demanded that the Congress spell out the fate of electoral promises including hiked social security pensions, unfulfilled assurances of two-wheelers for women graduates, and stalled initiatives like Kalyana Lakshmi. "What happened to Rs 2,500 monthly support for women? Where is the promised gold under Kalyana Lakshmi? Congress leaders must be questioned in every village across the State, for their inaction," she urged the people of Telangana. The BRS MLC stated that the Congress has betrayed students, farmers, women and every section of Telangana. "Promises of 2 lakh jobs per year have turned into mere words. The few jobs provided are based on notifications issued during the BRS regime," she said. She stated that Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy replaced the people-friendly policing with the Congress-friendly policing, to push his agenda. She slammed the Chief Minister for attacking Telangana culture by redesigning the statue of Telangana Thalli. She added that the Congress leaders have forgotten that power is meant to solve people's problems. Targeting BJP, Kavitha said cases are being filed against her and others for questioning the Central government as well. "BJP misuses investigative agencies to silence dissent," she charged. She called for a united fight against Congress and BJP's anarchy. She declared that the BRS would emerge victorious in the upcoming local bodies elections.

Chitra Santhe to be held in Bengaluru, to go hybrid for the first time

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

Bengaluru: These paintings, 189 are the works of senior citizens, 152 are the works of disabled artists, 292 are the works of hobbyists, 769 are the works of professionals, and 18 are from art institutions. Karnataka leads in participation, followed by Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and Kerala. The 22nd edition of Chitra Santhe, organised by the Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath, will be held on January 5, and the national art festival will adopt a hybrid model for the first time, with the online fair continuing for a month. B L Shankar, director of the Parishath, informed the media on Saturday that approximately 1,500 artists from 22 states would showcase a rich tapestry of creativity at this year's festival. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah will inaugurate the one-day event on the Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath campus on Kumara Krupa Road, with additional stalls for senior citizens set up at the Seva Dal Ground.



and display up to 10 artworks for free. This online gallery will be available globally from January 5 to February 4, providing art lovers an extended opportunity to connect with creators. This year, the girl child is the theme of the Chitra Santhe, highlighting child abuse and the challenges faced by girls. Shankar also acknowledged logistical issues, including space unavailability, which have led to restrictions in approvals for artist participation. To ease parking concerns, BMTC will run feeder buses from the Majestic, Mantri Mall, and Vidhana Soudha Metro stations to Shivananda Circle. Visitors are encouraged to park vehicles at metro stations and use the bus service to reach the venue.

8-year-old Gujarat boy loses eye after battery in DIY robotics kit explodes, family mulls legal action against school

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

robotics kit: According to the boy's family, the kit had been handed out by the school and contained multiple robotic and science experiments. An eight-year-old boy in Gujarat's Mahisagar district suffered grievous eye injuries after a battery in a DIY (do-it-yourself) robotics kit given by his school exploded when he was experimenting with it at home. The incident came to light on Saturday when doctors said that the boy's right eye had been permanently damaged. The victim has been identified as Virendra, a Class 2 student in a private school in the Virpur taluka. According to the boy's family, the kit had been handed out by the school and contained multiple robotic and science experiments. The child's father Indrajit Thakor said, "He came home and began playing with it. It contained a lithium battery that suddenly exploded, causing severe injury and also burns in some parts of his body. On the suggestion of the doctors at Lunawada, we shifted him to Ahmedabad, where doctors said that his eye had been permanently damaged." Thakor said the incident had devastated the family, who aspired to enlist their son in the Armed Forces. Besides injuring his right eye, the child also sustained burn wounds on his stomach and leg. The family said it will contemplate legal action against the school and the company manufacturing the kit.



Thakor said, "We informed the school immediately after the incident, and the trustees and the principal of the school also rushed to Ahmedabad to be there during his treatment. But we will decide on legal action against the school if the kits were not distributed as per permission." Meanwhile, the district education officer of Mahisagar has sought a report on the matter.

Delhi High Court pulls up DDA, upholds order for demolition of Mukherjee Nagar apartments

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

The Delhi High Court recently upheld Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) orders declaring Signature View Apartments in Mukherjee Nagar as dangerous structures while directing the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) to pay facilitation amount/rent to owners/occupants of the flats from the date they vacated them. The court of Justice Mini Pushkarna, in its December 23 order, further directed that DDA should continue to pay the facilitation amount/rent till possession of reconstructed flats is handed over to the owners of Signature View Apartments. The rents to be paid by DDA to the owners/occupants should be at the rate of Rs 50,000 per month to high-income group (HIG) flat-owners/occupants and Rs 38,000 per month to MIG flat-owner/occupant.



for the development of Delhi. The facts on record underscore the laxity by the DDA in discharging its public functions enshrined under the statute, wherein ordinary citizens have been put in a perilous situation on account of substandard and inferior construction of residential towers by DDA," the court recorded in its order. A bunch of petitions were filed by the residents/owners of the towers, including 336 flats, where some were seeking demolition and reconstruction of the flats and blocks (towers) on account of the dilapidated condition of the flats. Some had also challenged conditions in the rehabilitation offer letter, seeking that the condition where alternate accommodation should only be given to the residents only after all residents hand over the possession of the flats, be declared illegal and arbitrary. Of the 336 flats, 224 are HIG, and the remaining 112 are in the MIG category. The flats were allotted through the 2010, 2014 and 2017 DDA housing draw.

How Indian Army treated Pakistani prisoners of war after their surrender in 1971



GNS News Agency, Feb 5

The 93,000 Pakistani prisoners taken at the end of the 1971 war always find prominent mention in every remembrance event held to mark the anniversary of the war. However, not much is available in the public domain on how the humongous administrative and logistic exercise of boarding, feeding and guarding these thousands of prisoners was undertaken by the Indian Army.

The camps: The POW camps were located across India, including in Ranchi, Agra, Gwalior, Roorkee and Jabalpur. Senior Pakistan Army officers, including Lt Gen A A K Niazi, the GOC Eastern Command in East Pakistan, were held in Jabalpur. Apart from the officers and soldiers held in these camps, their parents, wives and children were also in captivity. Therefore, separate arrangements had to be made for these civilians regarding their welfare and medical needs. In fact, many children were born to Pakistani prisoners in the initial days of captivity in 1972. One camp that held civilian internees reported the birth of six children in 1972. Clothing and food: A scale of rations similar to that of military personnel was established for the Pakistani POWs. For the winter season, each POW received either three blankets or one quilt and one blanket. Each POW without a Pakistan Army pullover was given either a woollen pullover or shirt. In some camps, leather jackets without sleeves were issued. One pair of socks was distributed to all the POWs. Some women refused the army pullovers as unsuitable, requesting shawls that were not available. A daily distribution of fresh fruits was made among the children detained in the civilian camps, with each child aged 1 to 17 years receiving a banana daily. One thousand bottles of multivitamin syrup were handed over to a Pakistani doctor in charge in one camp, who organised the distribution. POWs who had Indian currency deposited in the camp could use it for purchases in the canteen. Freedom of religion: No complaints were made in any of the camps regarding freedom of worship to the inspecting authorities, including independent ones like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Prisoners who died while trying to escape or due to illness were buried in a Muslim cemetery a short distance away from the POW camps in clearly marked graves that ICRC teams could identify. In one camp where some POWs had been killed during an altercation with sentries, the windows of all the barracks were fitted with iron bars, and the POWs were locked in their barracks at night. However, during Ramzan, they were provided with all necessary facilities for praying and eating at night. In one of the camps, the camp authorities spent Rs 5,000 to help POWs celebrate Eid al-Adha and allotted Rs 1 per head for the Christian POWs for Christmas.

The group commander of several camps assisted the Shia POWs in celebrating Muharram. Quran and Bible translations in Urdu were widely available in the camps. For Christmas, a priest visited the Christians, who were given some delicacies and a special menu. The Shi'ites assembled in one block for the Muharram observances. A mullah, interviewed without witnesses, expressed satisfaction at the respect shown for religious activities. Newspapers and other facilities: Many POWs complained in the initial days that postal or money orders sent from India or abroad had not been remitted to them. It was explained that only civilians were authorised to receive money orders. Money or postal orders sent to POWs were therefore returned to the senders. In each block, POWs received one newspaper in Urdu and four in English daily. Once a week, they received two copies of the Illustrated Weekly of India. Each block

had a small library, with most books in Urdu. The POWs could listen to daily radio broadcasts, including a half-hour bulletin from 6.30 am to 7 pm on Pakistan News, a bulletin from 3 pm to 4 pm on Indian News, and an Indian entertainment programme at 8.30 pm. Officers among the POWs had personal transistors, junior commissioned officers had one transistor per barrack, while officers of other ranks had one per block. On average, two films were shown monthly to the POWs. Sports, games and musical instruments: As far as outside games were concerned, POWs practised common physical exercises in their courtyard. There was a volleyball ground in each enclosure, and inter-camp volleyball tournaments were organised. For indoor games, the POWs had a few decks of playing cards, one chess board and two carrom boards per block. One harmonium, four tablas, one Indian drum and ten flutes were usually available in the camps, provided as gifts by the ICRC. These instruments, purchased from the local market, were to stay in each block for three days before being passed on. Radio messages for families in Pakistan: A team from All India Radio visited the camps to record personal family messages to be broadcast to relatives in Pakistan. On average, three correspondence forms were distributed to the POWs for writing letters. Some POWs complained that letters sent to or from Pakistan took two to three months to reach their addressees. Punishment to POWs: A few POWs were given terms of confinement, usually at the request of a POW officer or the senior POW non-commissioned officer of the block. Some POWs faced fines amounting to 50 per cent of their advance pay as a consequence of breaking military discipline. In all camps, a punishment register was maintained, noting all details. All punishments were administered in compliance with Articles 89 and 90 of the Third Geneva Convention. Strict orders were given to the sentries to remain calm and not to shoot inside the camp in case of trouble or fights. It was noted that the Pakistani POW jawans frequently fought among themselves, which officers attributed to the mixing of units, frustration and congestion in the barracks.

POWs shot dead while escaping: There were escape attempts by the POWs and while some were successful, others resulted in deaths. One Capt Riaz-Ul-Haq of the 26 Frontier Force escaped from Camp 32. In Camp 95, there was an attempted escape by Mohd Ishaq of the 48 Baluch, who was placed in detention for 15 days. Afterward, the Camp Commander sent him to the Camp Hospital for a few days since he was in a state of depression. Two POW camps in India were the scene of incidents in October 1972. The first incident, at Dhanna on 3 October 1972, resulted in eight deaths and numerous casualties; the second, at Allahabad on 13 October, cost the lives of six prisoners. In one camp in Uttar Pradesh, 16 POWs including six officers were being transported in a closed van to the military hospital for routine dental and eye treatment. At the destination, two prisoners—Lt M Rizvi and Capt Abdul Wahid—started running in different directions. The escort and the driver chased them. Lt Rizvi was caught by the driver but freed himself and continued running. He was repeatedly challenged but kept running, resulting in the escort opening fire, which led to his death. Capt Abdul Wahid was also shot and wounded. In another incident, a group of POWs in Uttar Pradesh attempted to attack and overpower the sentries to snatch their firearms. They succeeded in taking possession of one rifle and shot at one of the sentries, wounding him. Another group of POWs rushed towards the sentries at the gate, while several others began climbing the watchtower. The sentries on duty opened fire in self-defence to control the situation, resulting in the deaths of six POWs.

Medical facilities for POWs: Pakistan Army medical personnel were employed to run medical facilities supervised by Indian Army doctors at several locations. In one such hospital, Pak Army Lt Col M Anwar, pathologist; Lt Col A R Minhas, dental surgeon; Lt Col M Akhtar, ENT specialist; Maj Magbool Hussain, GDMO; Maj M A Hamid Khan, EDMO; Maj Khadim Hussain, eye specialist; Maj H M Butt, anaesthetist; Capt M.A. Kiani, surgeon; Capt K D Mirza; Capt M A Qamar, medical specialist; Capt Ashur Khan; Lieut I H Bajwa; and Lt Col M S Bharti, dermatologist, were responsible for running medical facilities for the POWs.

Pune's culinary scene in 2024: A mixed bag of comfort and experiments

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

As the year draws to a close, reflecting on Pune's food scene reveals a narrative of consolidation and growth. While 2024 may not have been an extraordinary year for culinary breakthroughs, it has been a heartening one for businesses as well as customers. It was a year of steady progress and a few surprises—something I would have liked to see more of in 2025. New ideas like Ground Up, a fermentary-cum-restaurant, and the experiential dining approach of Aragama found their footing. At the same time, well-loved establishments like Savya Rasa and We Idliwale expanded their offerings, incorporating cocktail-centric menus that added a fresh dimension to their southern culinary strength. The restaurants in star hotels like Koji and Ukiyo remain the flagbearers of fine Asian cuisines.



One of the most notable highlights of 2024 was Pune's elevated beverage scene. Cocktail bars like Gather, Soy Coma Soy, Narrative, and Cobbler & Co. led the way with innovative, handcrafted creations that redefined drinking culture. On the beer front, Effingut strengthened its reputation with the launch of canned craft beers, while beer garden-style venues like Oi Brewhouse gained popularity. Even Pune's coffee culture saw significant growth, with both roadside stalls and artisanal cafes catering to diverse tastes and preferences. If there is one area where Pune truly excelled this year, it is baked goods and pizzas. Brands like Crustworthy Gourmet Breads, Artisanal Baking Co., and Mon Choux made waves with their top-notch breads and desserts, often delivered to homes. Handcrafted pizzas also gained a loyal following, with places like Toss Pizzeria, Allora, Murphies, Donna Cucina, and Toscano setting a high bar for quality and taste. It is also important to note how the once-booming business of cloud kitchens saw their decline. Puneans seem to prefer ordering from restaurants they know and trust—ones they can see and visit. Efforts in sustainable packaging and faster delivery were also noteworthy trends that gained traction this year. The arrival of prominent brands from across India brought fresh energy to Pune's food landscape. Establishments like Foo, Kyma, Bastian, and Toy Room quickly earned their place in the city's vibrant dining scene, adding variety and excitement for food enthusiasts. The tragic accident earlier this year left a mark on the city, but Pune's food businesses showed resilience. The emphasis on regulated alcohol service, adherence to timelines, and safe driving is a welcome and necessary change for Pune's nightlife. While many new

things happened, Pune's love for Indian and local food also stayed strong. The legacy places serving misal, mutton bhakri, or vegetarian thalis still define a large part of the city's food landscape. While this legacy is something every Punean is proud of, the culinary evangelist and foodie in me would like to see the local food envelope pushed further. There is immense room for improvement in the experience of serving our own local food, which could benefit from innovation and hold the potential to appeal to a wider customer base.

Osmania University awards doctorate to Nageshwar Rao

Hyderabad: Osmania University awarded the doctorate to commerce department research scholar Sheelam Nageshwar Rao for his research titled 'Social Security for Construction Workers - A Study of select Districts in Telangana'. Dr Rao successfully completed his PhD under the guidance of senior professor and former president of the All India Commerce Association, Prof KV Achalpathi.

Dr Rao completed his degree with first-class distinction, receiving a national merit scholarship. He secured a top rank in the state-level entrance exam for PG and was admitted to the Commerce department at OU.

No city for the disabled

Rasheed Kappan



GNS News Agency, Feb 5

A reputed eye hospital in Bengaluru has no ramps for patients to walk down after a surgery, a glaring gap repeated across the city. Wheelchairs cannot navigate most of the city's dilapidated footpaths. The hearing impaired has no way to learn anything about anything as signage, even if rarely present, is hardly informative. To top it all, the government slashes funds for the differently-abled by a whopping 80%, though Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced its partial restoration in supplementary estimates later. How did the city become so uncaring, wonders thousands of visually, physically and hearing-challenged Bengalureans as they struggle to get around. The allocation of a meagre ₹53 crore to address the disability needs of the entire State fell dramatically to ₹10 crore in 2024-25, crippling multiple programmes. The 2011 census identified 2.74 lakh citizens as people with disabilities in Bengaluru urban district and 13.24 lakh State-wide. But that was 13 years ago.

Mobility in the city's public spaces is a cruel joke, particularly for the visually challenged. But Kiran Prithvik, a computer trainer at the Samarthanam Trust for the Disabled, had dared to be independent. A daily bus traveller, Kiran flags multiple concerns: "There is no announcement system in trains and in some BMTC buses, I have noticed the drivers switching it off. The system is entirely absent in KSRTC buses, where we have to depend on the conductor or fellow passengers." One tech solution tried in Mysuru city could be replicated here, says Kiran. "This is an Onboard device introduced by Enable India, which helps the visually impaired board buses. When we press a button on the device, a speaker inside the bus activates alerting the driver that we are waiting to board. It could work well in Bengaluru, where we find it tough to get information on arriving buses and bus numbers," he explains. Navigating the city's notoriously messy footpaths is a Herculean task for even the able-bodied. The visually impaired try bypassing the sidewalks by venturing onto the roads. As Kiran points out, this is an invitation to disaster. "Roads in good condition are dug up to lay cables, but not restored properly. This is a huge problem for us. Vehicles are either parked on footpaths or motorcyclists invade the space, speeding right at us. We are often caught unawares." Seamless mobility for the disabled and senior citizens demands walkable surfaces that are at a comfortable height from the road. Token attempts to address their concerns have not really made much difference. Tactile tiles are now a standard feature in Metro platforms. But the visually challenged are rarely seen boarding the trains. As urban architect Sobia Rafiq from Sensing Local notes, they cannot rely on help from others since the trains are fast and the entry-exit process happens within a few seconds. In Doddanekundi, tactile tiles were laid at two bus stops but the contractors mixed up the colours defeating the purpose. The warning tactile tiles with circular patterns and directional tiles with lines were interchanged. Broadly, they are classified as stop tiles and moving tiles. "The contractors themselves don't understand what the tiles

signify. Even such simple things are not part of our infrastructural design," says Sobia.

Gaps at Metro station The gaps are visible even in Metro Stations. Centred around the K.R. Market Metro Station, a historical signage and wayfinding project by Sensing Local had brought to light many such mobility gaps. While tactile tiles were absent from the stairs / lift to the exit, the handrails were discontinuous. Since the tiles end far from the railing, the project found that it was hard to figure out where the handrail was. "Tactile tiles do not begin and end on the same side of the stairs. Therefore the tiles at the start and end of the stairs do not align. Tiles at the end or start of stairs are covered by foot rugs." Besides, there was no indicator as to where the edge of the platform was and where to stoop. The project recommended a small bump to indicate the platform edge. "Ticketing counters where tactile tiles end must always be open and have staff. Optionally, a button to request assistance can be installed" was another recommendation. Considering these gaps and breaks that hinder unaided wayfinding for the visually challenged, Sensing Local called for a full audit of tactile infrastructure at all the metro stations. However, a reality check does not show any attempt to address these gaps.

Footpath height, surface Seamless mobility for the disabled and senior citizens demands walkable surfaces that are at a comfortable height from the road. Pavements are often at a level higher than the 100-150mm kerb height that makes sloping easier. On many road stretches in the city, this goes beyond 300-400mm. The Indian Road Congress (IRC) guidelines mandate a footpath height of 150mm from the adjoining finished carriageway level. This is to ensure comfortable access to all pedestrians while preventing vehicles from mounting over the footpath. The IRC is also clear about the footpath surface, which is mandated to be even, firm, free from cracks and well-drained. "Surface should be of anti-skid material to ensure usability and safety in all-weather conditions." Footpath surface should have a gradient (slope) to prevent accumulation of water. Any break in the surface, such as drainage channels or expansion joints in the surface should not be greater than 10mm and should cross perpendicular to the direction of movement. This will prevent walking sticks and wheels getting caught in the gaps. "The National Building Code of India (NBC) mandates ramps that are at least 1.2 meters wide, excluding edge protection. Ramps, a must-have mobility feature, are conspicuously absent in most public buildings and mobility hubs of the city. The hyper-busy KSR Railway Station in Majestic lacks one, as Kiran points out. As if taking the cue from public infrastructure, most commercial buildings too have done away with ramps. At a private eye hospital in Indiranagar, elderly patients with serious sight issues are forced to take the steps. The National Building Code of India (NBC) mandates ramps that are at least 1.2 meters wide, excluding edge protection. The longitudinal slope of a ramp should not be more than 1 in 12, and the cross slope should not be more than 1 in 50. "The minimum gradient for a ramp is 1:12, which means for one metre of height, the ramp length should be 12m. In Australia, it is 1:16. The BBMP should issue Occupancy Certificates to buildings only if these NBC requirements are adhered to," says Rahul Srikrishna, Principal Architect at Spatial Culture. Ramps, colour-coded tactile tiles, Braille signage and audio announcements at bus stops... All of these can be put in place with a small investment, contends Mahantesh G.K., Founder Chairman of the Samarthanam Trust. "Even small countries like Sri Lanka are so disabled friendly. A bit of retrofitting these in our public spaces will make our city disabled-friendly," he says, echoing the demands of millions for a genuine change in policy and action.

Bengaluru's oldest churches tell stories of the city's layered history

Beyond Bengaluru's tech corridors and busy streets lie its oldest churches, where every brick holds a story from the colonial past, and every tradition bridges past and present. Bengaluru, strategically located between Mangaluru on the west coast and Chennai on the east, became an important outpost for the British. As a result, it only made sense for the soldiers who settled here to establish a few Anglican and Catholic churches. Meanwhile, the Wesleyan missionaries who were focused on "educating" the local population for their social upliftment, also found the time to set up a few churches alongside their mission. While the city races toward the future, these churches serve as gentle reminders of Bengaluru's layered history. Sunil Pichamuthu, a renowned historian specializing in South Indian Christian heritage, unravelled the layered history of the city's oldest churches. First church St. Mark's Cathedral, the oldest church in Bengaluru, was established in 1808. Initially 100 feet in length, 50 feet in width, and 20 feet in height, its modest dimensions mirrored the size of ships from that era. It underwent a major expansion in 1898, transforming into the grand structure it is today. An interesting trivia about this cathedral is that it began as a garrison church for the Madras Army officials serving under the East India Company. A cornerstone of the city's colonial history and Christian heritage, the cathedral remains a vital place of worship and community gatherings. It houses one of the best-maintained church bells in India, which serves a functional purpose and stands as a symbol of the cathedral's rich musical tradition. As Pichamuthu notes, nearly 4,000 people visit the church every Christmas evening, drawn by its spiritual and historical significance. A church for the migrants St. Mary's Basilica, located in Shivaji Nagar, began as a simple thatched hut built by Tamil Christian migrants in the 17th century. When these migrants reached Bengaluru to settle, they found that the land was fertile to sow rice. They built a thatched hut and named it as 'Chapel of Kanikkai Matha.' It was consecrated as a church in 1882 and later elevated to a minor basilica due to its historical significance. More than a place of worship, it has become an iconic landmark known for its Gothic architectural style, stunning stained-glass windows, intricate motifs, and ornate interiors. Today, it remains a significant place of worship and a major attraction in the city. Hudson Memorial Church, over 110 years old, is a tribute to Rev. John Hudson, a key figure among Bengaluru's Anglican community. Built to honour his life and work, the church has become a central hub for Anglican worship in the city. It hosts various community events throughout the year, strengthening its role as a spiritual and cultural gathering place. The church is also renowned for its fascinating stained-glass windows painted by artists from London, adding a touch of artistic elegance to the hallowed space. Today, it remains one of the most significant Kannada Protestant churches in the city, continuing to inspire devotion and unity. Holy Trinity Church, established in 1852, was born out of a protest against the East India Company's policy of 'One Station, One Church'. Over the years, many prominent figures from the British Empire, including Winston Churchill and Lord

Cornwallis, visited the church. Its interior still houses several original items brought from London, such as the bell, pulpit, and baptismal font, all of which continue to be in use today. Known as the most significant military church in South India, it stands as a significant Protestant landmark in Bengaluru, attracting both worshippers and history enthusiasts alike. St. Francis Xavier's Cathedral St. Francis Xavier's Cathedral, initially established in 1851, underwent significant renovations and reconstruction, with its current form completed in 1932. Built with granite, the cathedral blends European architectural styles; it is designed in the shape of a cross, featuring a large central dome and two smaller white-and-blue domes added during its platinum jubilee in 2009. The original church was founded by Father Chevalier, its first parish priest. In the early 1900s, Father J.B. Servanton took the initiative to rebuild the church after the old tower's cross fell in 1905, signalling the need for a new structure. Father Servanton held fundraising events like concerts and dramas, eventually completing the church after delays due to World War I. Dedicated to St. Francis Xavier, today, the cathedral serves as one of the city's main centres of prayer for the Roman Catholic community, hosting numerous weddings, baptisms, and religious events throughout the year. St. Andrew's Church, named after the patron saint of Scotland, has a history spanning over 150 years. Built between 1864 and 1866, this Presbyterian church reflects the traditions of its Scottish roots. Its striking Gothic architecture, highlighted by stained glass windows, adds to its charm. Located in Shivaji Nagar, one of the city's most vibrant centres for shopping and street food, the church has witnessed Bengaluru's transformation over the years, standing as a quiet symbol of faith amidst the bustling modern landscape. According to Pichamuthu, each and every bench and chair in the church has been there since the beginning. He also shared an interesting story about the church's maintenance. Once, a problem arose with one of the pillars, so the church authorities called in experts for inspection. They suggested digging two wells near the church to improve the groundwater level and ensure proper maintenance of the building. St. Patrick's Church St. Patrick's Church, established in 1841, is the second-oldest Catholic church in Bengaluru, built initially to serve the Irish community. Over time, it has grown into a significant landmark in the city. The church showcases elegant neo-Gothic architecture, with high arched entrances, granite steps, and twelve pillars representing the twelve apostles of Jesus. In 1845, the Bishop of Mysore designated it as his cathedral, further solidifying its importance. Located on Brigade Road, a major shopping and commercial hub in the city, St. Patrick's Church is known for its serene ambiance and active community involvement. The site, once used by Mysore soldiers, became the ideal location for this historic church. As Christmas approaches, these historic churches stand as silent witnesses to the ever-changing landscape of Bengaluru. Once built to serve the needs of colonial settlers and missionaries, they have transformed into centres of worship, community, and festivity for the larger Christian community of Bengaluru today.

Why will India's foreign policy be a tightrope walk?: Explained



After Prime Minister Narendra Modi was sworn in for a third time in June, the year was jam-packed with incoming and outgoing visits. Above all, 2024 was full of global insecurity and shocks in the neighbourhood, particularly Bangladesh. As 2025 looks to be even more uncertain, Indian foreign policy's biggest challenge is to remain poised for change.

What were the high points in India's external relations?

The most difficult negotiation completed this year was for disengagement at the Line of Actual Control with China. While restoring ties and rebuilding the trust shattered by the Chinese PLA's transgressions since 2020 is a more prolonged task, the first formal Modi-Xi Jinping meeting in five years at Kazan, on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Russia, was a turning point. The year began with a visit from French President Emmanuel Macron as a guest on Republic Day and a reaffirmation of the dependability of bilateral ties. Mr. Macron was not the government's original invitee, as Mr. Modi had hoped to host U.S. President Joseph Biden and also hold the Quad in Delhi that time. But when Mr. Macron stepped in, Mr. Modi set the seal on a number of India-France future forays in defence, energy and maritime cooperation. Early in 2024, the conclusion of the India-European Free Trade Association agreement, India's first with Europe, was heralded as a template for India to complete other such negotiations, although the year ended without similar progress on FTAs with Australia, the U.K., and the European Union. The neighbourhood was also the subject of some bright spots, including the attendance of leaders of most of the neighbouring countries for Mr. Modi's swearing-in. Pakistan wasn't invited, but External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar made the first such visit in nearly a decade to Islamabad for the SCO summit. Several visits by the Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck and Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay as well as Mr. Modi's visit to Thimphu to receive an award, and successful visits by the new Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake and Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu, setting aside the tensions earlier, were other high points of the year.

What kept South Block awake at night in 2024?

E.U. to adopt a more pragmatic approach in talks with India and others: E.U. top diplomat

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

The EU's top foreign policy and security official, Kaja Kallas, has indicated a shift in the bloc's dialogue postures, with a greater emphasis on pragmatism, transactionalism and mutual benefit in its approach. Ms Kallas indicated this would inform Brussels's discussions with New Delhi later this month when European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and the College of Commissioners will visit India. "The majority of countries are reluctant to make a choice between autocracies opposing the West and the West itself. It was the same during the Cold War," Ms Kallas said during her opening address at a conference of EU ambassadors in Brussels on Monday (February 3, 2025).

Countries were guided by their self-interest and "not by whether they are allies of the EU, the US, China or Russia", she said. "This is true across the world, look at Türkiye and the Gulf States in peace mediation roles with their own strategic agendas and transactional approaches," said Ms Kallas. "The question is whether the EU should become transactional too. In many ways it is time we should," she added. The remarks come two weeks after U.S. President Donald Trump's return to the White House and hours after he threatened to slap tariffs onto the bloc's exports to America.

Ms Kallas called for the E.U. to have more "mutually beneficial" projects with partners, citing the recent trade deals with Mexico and 'Mercosur' (a group comprising Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) as pragmatic and logical. "We should have more mutually beneficial projects like these," she said, adding, "This is the spirit which we will take to India this year." The visit of the Col-

The transformation of Bangladesh, from a friendly neighbour and most important connectivity partner under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, to becoming estranged over her ouster from power in August was the year's biggest shock for New Delhi. The MEA repeatedly raised concerns over the sharp rise in attacks on Hindu minorities that followed, and Ms. Hasina's stay in India has become the biggest thorn in the once close partnership.

Ties with Canada took a turn for the worse as Canadian authorities doubled down on allegations that Indian officials had ordered the Nijjar killing, even naming Home Minister Amit Shah in the alleged conspiracy. New Delhi dealt with Canada by slamming its doors shut on PM Justin Trudeau, with the hope a new government will be elected there in 2025. But it wasn't easy to do the same with the U.S., where the Department of Justice filed indictments against the Adani group and a new indictment against an Indian official for the alleged Pannun assassination plot. The U.S.'s role in the South Asian neighbourhood, especially with the changes in Bangladesh, and China's forays into Nepal and other neighbours are a continuing challenge. However, the election of U.S. President Donald Trump and the largely pro-India team he has picked could be a breather.

How did Indian foreign policy navigate global conflict?

With both the Russia-Ukraine conflict and Israel's war in Gaza, India consistently put itself on the "side of peace". Mr. Modi's visits to Russia and Ukraine within weeks of each other raised speculation that he would play mediator in future negotiations. There were no high-level visits from or to Israel, and Mr. Modi made a point of meeting Palestinian PM Mahmoud Abbas at the UN. While New Delhi repeatedly called for an end to the civilian casualties, it continued to hedge its position at the UN on resolutions seeking to bring Israel to account for the killing of more than 45,000 in Gaza. With multilateral initiatives like IIMEC (India-Middle East Europe-Economic Corridor) and I2U2 (India, Israel, UAE and U.S.) in trouble, India sought to engage West Asian countries bilaterally. In 2025, a more difficult tightrope walk for South Block is expected between Iran and the Israel-U.S. combine.

What's on the diplomatic calendar in 2025?

Mr. Jaishankar's year-end visit to Washington and meetings with the Trump transition team indicate that ties with the U.S. will be a priority in 2025. Mr. Trump is expected to visit India for the Quad Summit next year and Mr. Modi is likely to call on him in Washington before that. 2025 is expected to begin with a ministerial visit from Iran, followed by U.S. NSA Jake Sullivan for a last-moment iCET (Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology) meet. Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto will be the Republic Day guest. All eyes will be on Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Delhi, his first since the war began, expected to be finalised early in 2025.



lege is a chance to deepen a relationship that represents a quarter of global population and GDP," Ms Kallas said. During her speech Ms Kallas said every country had a different cultural and historical background and the EU would adopt a tailor-made approach to its partners. Previously, India has bristled at E.U. criticisms over New Delhi's purchases of Russian oil after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had criticized the E.U. for its double standards, citing its own Russian oil and gas purchase policies. Last month, Ms Von der Leyen's trade chief, Maroš Šefčovič, had told media outlet Politico that the forthcoming India visit was "a very strong political signal" and suggested there would be new areas of sectoral cooperation. India and the E.U. have had nine rounds of discussions on a 'free trade' agreement (FTA), after talks were relaunched in 2021. The India - EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC) was launched in 2022 to deepen trade and technology ties.

'China will be laughing': E.U. Foreign Minister on prospect of U.S.-E.U. trade war

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

Reacting to U.S. President Donald Trump's remarks on Sunday evening that tariffs against the E.U. were "definitely" on the cards, the E.U.'s top foreign affairs and security official, Kaja Kallas, said China would stand to benefit from any U.S.-E.U. trade war. Ms Kallas was speaking to a group of reporters on Monday morning, prior to addressing a conference of EU Ambassadors in Brussels. "If United States start the trade war [sic], then the one laughing on the side is China. We are very interlinked. We need America, and America needs us as well," she said, adding that tariffs increased costs and were detrimental for consumers as well as for the job market.

Mr Trump had announced tariffs on Canada, China and Mexico on Saturday. Asked by a reporter about which country would be next to face U.S. tariffs, and specifically about the U.K., Mr Trump shifted the focus of his response to the E.U., saying the bloc would "definitely" face tariffs. "It might happen with that (the U.K.), but it will definitely happen with the European Union," Mr Trump said, claiming that the E.U. ran a trade surplus of over \$300 billion with the U.S.

Mr Trump's numbers are at odds with E.U. official data. The bloc had a \$155.8 bn (\$159.9 bn) trade surplus in goods with the U.S in 2023 as per these data. It ran a trade deficit in services of \$104 bn.

Mr Trump, on Sunday, named automobiles and farm products as particular industries of concern, calling the E.U.'s trade position an "atrocious" and alleging that the bloc was "taking advantage" of the U.S.



Asked by a reporter about which country would be next to face U.S. tariffs, and specifically about the U.K., Mr Trump shifted the focus of his response to the E.U., saying the bloc would "definitely" face tariffs.

On the U.K. he said it was "out of line". "I think that one can be worked out," he added. In Brussels, Ms Kallas said the EU was carefully listening to Mr Trump's remarks and "preparing". "But what is clear, there are no winners in trade wars," she said.

Adani bribe-linked company in IPR tangle in US, could impact \$10 bn American investment plan



Adani Green Energy, which is at the centre of alleged bribery charges involving funds raised from American investors, is also facing accusations of intellectual property rights (IPR) violations related to the sale of solar cells, modules, and panels in the US, according to a notice issued by the US International Trade Commission (USITC) on October 1. The USITC investigates unfair trade practices. The Commission had received a complaint against two Adani firms: Adani Solar USA Inc., based in Irving, Texas, and India-based Adani Green Energy Ltd., among others, for allegedly violating Section 337 of the US Tariff Act of 1930. This section enables the US to investigate whether imported goods infringe US intellectual property rights and, if so, to prohibit their entry into the country.

The order comes at a time when India's exports of solar products to the US are on the rise. This trend coincided with tariffs imposed by the Trump administration in 2018 on Chinese-made solar cells and panels, which created export opportunities for competitors, including India. Official US trade data shows that prior to 2018, the US did not import solar panels from India. However, following the tariffs on Chinese solar products, American imports from India soared, reaching \$2.3 billion last year. According to Reuters, in the second quarter of 2024, India accounted for 11 per cent of US panel imports, more than double its share in the previous quarter. This is not the first time Indian solar panels have faced scrutiny in the US. Earlier this year, in August, Indian solar products were blocked. A trade attorney with Wiley Rein LLP told Reuters that the detention of Indian products was due to solar cells for Indian panels exported to the US being sourced from China. The US has expanded the scope of its scrutiny of solar items entering the country.

If Adani Green Energy is found to have violated Section 337, the USITC may issue an exclusion order to block the importation of infringing goods into the US. While a limited exclusion order would apply to products named in the case, a general exclusion order could block all infringing products. Notably, the Commission has the authority to refer the matter to the US Department of Justice (DOJ) for criminal investigation if fraud or other illegal activities are suspected. The USITC order stated that the complaint was filed by the China-based photovoltaics company Trina Solar Co., Ltd., and Trina Solar US Manufacturing Module 1,

LLC. "The matter is sub judice and is part of broader efforts in the US to scrutinise Adani businesses. However, as far as Section 337 of the US Tariff Act of 1930 is concerned, the US is trying to block solar product imports. Previously, Chinese exports were under scrutiny, and they were blocked. All of this is part of the US effort to promote domestic manufacturing," said a person familiar with the development. As part of a major push towards clean energy production in the US, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) was passed in August 2022. This Act directs nearly \$400 billion in federal funding towards clean energy, aiming to significantly lower carbon emissions by 2030 and boost American competitiveness in the sector.

The latest case could impact Adani Green Energy's aim to expand its US operations as part of the group's \$10 billion investment in American energy and infrastructure projects. The company is also central to efforts by India and the US to de-risk the renewable energy supply chain and reduce reliance on Chinese components and technology. In a social media post on 13 November, Gautam Adani, Chairman and Founder of the Adani Group had said: "As the partnership between India and the United States deepens, the Adani Group is committed to leveraging its global expertise and investing \$10 billion in US energy security and resilient infrastructure projects, aiming to create up to 15,000 jobs." "The complaint alleges violations of Section 337 of the Tariff Act of 1930 in the importation into the United States, the sale for importation, and the sale within the United States after importation of certain TopCon solar cells, modules, panels, components thereof, and products containing the same. The complaint names the following as respondents: Runergy USA Inc. of Pleasanton, CA; Runergy Alabama Inc. of Huntsville, AL; Jianguo Runergy New Energy Technology Co., Ltd. of China; Adani Solar USA Inc. of Irving, TX; and Adani Green Energy Ltd. of India," the order stated. On November 21, Adani Green Energy announced that it had decided to pause its proposed \$600 million dollar-denominated bond issuance in light of recent bribery charges filed by US federal prosecutors against key Adani Group executives, including Gautam Adani. This followed criminal and civil cases brought by the US Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) respectively against Gautam Adani, Sagar Adani, and Vneet S Jaan for their alleged roles in a \$250 million bribery scheme to secure solar energy contracts in India. US laws, particularly the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), prohibit certain individuals and entities from making payments to foreign government officials to obtain or retain business. Essentially, it is unlawful to offer, promise, or pay bribes to government officials in other countries. A query emailed to the Adani Group remained unanswered at the time of publication. In a statement, Adani Green Energy describes itself as India's largest and one of the world's leading renewable energy (RE) companies, with an operational portfolio exceeding 10,000 megawatts (MW). AGEL's operational portfolio comprises 7,393 MW of solar, 1,401 MW of wind, and 2,140 MW of wind-solar hybrid capacity.

Adani aware of probe a year ago... told markets news false: Indictment



Gautam Adani, Adani Green, Gautam Adani bribery news, Adani bribery case, Gautam Adani indictment, US indictment on Adani, Gautam Adani, Azure, Adani Greens, Indian Express. The US indictment and SEC charges claim that Gautam Adani and Sagar Adani were aware of the bribery probe by the US authorities at least since March 2023, but continued to withhold such information as they went about raising funds in the US. Adani has denied all allegations. On March 18 this year, three days after news agency Bloomberg reported that the US was "probing Indian billionaire Gautam Adani and his group over potential bribery", Adani Enterprises told Indian stock exchanges that the report was "false".

But almost exactly a year ago "on or around March 17, 2023", Gautam Adani's nephew Sagar Adani, Executive Director of Adani Green Energy, was approached in the US by FBI special agents who took custody of his electronic devices, according to the November 20 US indictment of Gautam Adani, Sagar Adani and six others. The FBI had also handed Sagar Adani a search warrant and served him with a grand jury subpoena. If not Gautam Adani, his nephew Sagar Adani definitely knew about the bribery probe, the indictment suggests. It said the "search warrant further described certain evidence subject to seizure, including evidence 'related to the payment of or an offer to pay, bribes, kickbacks or provide or offer to provide any other thing of value to Indian government officials in order to obtain or retain business advantages'".

Uber introduces safety and ease features for drivers, including SOS and women rider preference

New Delhi: Ride-hailing app Uber on Thursday announced a host of new features such as SOS integration, helmet selfie and women rider preference for female drivers — all aimed at making experience for million-plus drivers on its platform "safer, easier and fairer". Further, in support of the government's Code on Social Security (CoSS), which seeks to provide a safety net for gig workers, Uber announced the promotion of registrations on the e-Shram portal, which is a unified database for gig workers and unorganised workers.

To encourage participation and accelerate such registrations, Uber is offering cash incentives to the first 10,000 drivers who register on the portal. Key enhancements for drivers include SOS integration, helmet selfie, women rider preference for female drivers, and audio recording, as also upfront tipping, instant payments, and mentorship program.

As part of fairer processes, Uber has lined up re-



vamped earnings hub and Deactivation review centre, as well. Prabhjeet Singh, President, Uber India and South Asia, said the latest updates empower drivers, enhance their safety, and offer greater convenience with more transparency in their everyday operations.

Dermatologists suggest 3 skincare red flags to avoid this winter



As the year draws to a close, crisp autumn breeze and a nip in the air call for a change in skincare routines: emollients, occlusives, rich and hydrating body butters are the name of the game. While winters can be harsh on the skin, Dr Mikki Singh, founder & medical director of Bodycraft Clinics, Bengaluru and Gurgaon, shared why one should avoid these three things at all costs: Skipping moisturiser

The cold winter air can be extremely drying on the skin. Those with oily skin may be tempted to skip the moisturiser but this can only cause the skin to get oilier as it tries to overcompensate for this loss in moisture. "When moisturising, don't just focus on the face, but the neck, hands, elbows, knees and the rest of the body," she said. She also said that moisturising as soon as you step out of the shower can help lock in that moisture. Tightness and flakiness are signs of skin being dehydrated. Avoid harsh cleansers. Cleansers that contain alcohols, sulphates and fragrances can cause skin stripping. It can remove your skin's essential oils and lead to dryness and irritation. "Our skin's pH level leans acidic and harsh cleansers tend to be more alkaline. This can compromise the skin's natural barrier and lead to irritation and breakouts. If you're wearing makeup, use an oil cleanser as your first step, followed by a gentle water based cleanser," she said. Kiran Bhatt, cos-

metologist and vice president of Junoesque, said that physical exfoliation is not good in such weather as it leads to added dryness and flakiness on the skin. "Instead of the physical exfoliation, it is better to opt for gentle chemical exfoliants such as lactic acid or glycolic acid. They help to remove the dead skin cells without causing much physical damage. Preferably exfoliate the skin once or twice a week," she said. Avoid skipping sunscreen

In winters, you may feel the sun is not too harsh, but always remember that ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) rays are present all year round. "UVA rays can penetrate through clouds and windows; these rays add to skin ageing and tanning. When picking out a winter sunscreen, cream or lotion, opt for formulations that can provide extra hydration in the dry winter months," said Dr Singh. For those with sensitive skin, she suggested looking for mineral based sunscreens with zinc oxide and titanium dioxide. These are more gentle on sensitive skin. Sunscreen helps support your skin's barrier function by preventing oxidative stress caused by UV exposure. Skincare cleansers that contain alcohols, sulphates and fragrances can be stripping on the skin. (Source: Freepik) Bhatt mentioned that dairy products contain hormones, which trigger breakouts on the skin, with the added effect of dry and cold weather. Sugar is another culprit behind wrinkled and sagging skin. It destroys the skin's natural proteins—collagen and elastin—causing skin glycation. Choose non-dairy alternatives as they are much gentler than cow or buffalo milk such as oat milk, almond milk and so on, Dr Singh said. Dr Singh also shared some key tips and tricks to keep in mind:— Moisturising your hands after washing them— Drinking lots of water for hydration from within.— Opting for injectable moisturisers like SkinVive for long lasting hydration.— Remember certain topical ingredients like benzoyl peroxide and retinoids can be extra drying during winters.— Prolonged exposure to hot showers can strip natural oils and lead to dryness.

Labradors are no longer America's favourite pet. The french bull dog now tops the charts

The Labrador Retriever, which enjoyed a cozy and comfortable life in the American household for over three decades, has now been replaced by the playful, bat-eared French Bulldog as America's most favourite, the American Kennel Club announced Wednesday. The club, a registry of purebred breeds of dogs in the United States, announced its winner and listed why the French breed has been winning hearts lately. It has gained subsequent popularity for all the good reasons. Frenchies are known for their playful and affectionate nature, they love to cuddle their owners and form a loving bond with them.

Why are they being chosen?

Talking about their living habits, they are known to be highly adaptable in any environment. Due to their small stature and low exercise needs, they make for an excellent pet choice, especially for city dwellers. "They make wonderful companions for a variety of people, but it's extremely important to do your research to not only find the right breed for your lifestyle but to ensure that you're getting a well-bred dog from a responsible breeder," Ms DiNardo added, SkyNews reported. French bulldogs rose from the 14th spot to the top spot in breed popularity between 2012 and 2022, with registrations skyrocketing over 1,000 percent.

Are there any other breeds competing for the top spot?

Other breeds that have gained traction include the American hairless terrier, the Gordon setter, the Italian Grey-



hound as well as the Anatolian shepherd. Are Frenchies the perfect pet? Although there are many reasons for one to get a French Bulldog, there are a few points to consider before buying. The British Veterinary Association strictly discourages people from buying brachycephalic breeds, described as having short snouts and flat faces. French Bulldogs come under this breed and are prone to various health issues such as breathing difficulties, eye disorders such as cherry eye, skin diseases, dental problems, and complications during childbirth. While French Bulldog owners continue to captivate hearts with their loyal fervor and affection for their masters, as buyers one must weigh the pros and cons and prioritize proper breeding practices to help minimize health issues and provide a healthy life to these adorable furry friends.

Bhagyashree talks about health benefits of having water chestnuts; what happens when you eat them every day?



Bhagyashree, a celebrated actor in the Hindi film industry, has become equally well-known for her dedication to health and fitness. A self-proclaimed fitness addict and nutritionist, her social media is a treasure trove of tips and insights on wellness. Recently, Bhagyashree shared the many benefits of water chestnuts in an Instagram reel. In the caption, she wrote, "Water chestnuts are highly nutritious, even though they contain carbs. They have a low glycemic index, which means the carbs break down slowly, releasing glucose into the bloodstream gradually, as the body needs energy. This helps prevent sudden spikes in blood sugar. They're also rich in fiber, potassium, manganese, copper, B6, riboflavin, and antioxidants." We reached out to experts to better understand the health benefits of making water chestnuts a part of your daily diet.

Vijayshree N, head and chief dietician of MGM Healthcare, said that even though it is called a "nut," it actu-

ally falls under the category of vegetables—specifically, a water vegetable. "In terms of nutritional value, 100 grams of water chestnut provides around 27 grams of carbohydrates. There isn't much protein in it, but it does have a good amount of vitamin C and calcium and is very rich in potassium, containing around 500 mg per 100 grams. It is high in fiber content and has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties," she said. C V Aishwarya, a clinical nutritionist and lecturer at Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research, Chennai, said that they are low in calories yet rich in essential nutrients, including vitamin B6, potassium, and manganese, which support metabolic and immune function. "The high fiber content aids in weight management by promoting satiety, and they support heart health through their potassium levels, which can help regulate blood pressure," she said. Consuming water chestnuts daily poses no significant risks for most people. However, Vijayshree warned diabetics to exercise caution due to the carbohydrate content. For individuals with heart conditions, water chestnuts offer notable benefits. "Potassium supports heart rhythm, while their copper and calcium content boosts metabolism and immunity," she said. Aishwarya recommended a daily serving size of half to one cup. "They're versatile and can be enjoyed raw, boiled, steamed, or stir-fried. They also make great additions to soups, stews, and salads, whether pickled, mashed, pureed, or roasted," she said. Vijayshree suggested a daily intake of around 100 grams and pointed out a rare but possible issue: "While it's generally safe for consumption, some people may experience allergic reactions due to its rarity and the fact that it grows in water, although allergic responses are uncommon," she said.

Study shows how weed use may raise cancer risk

New Delhi: Cannabis consumption can cause damage to our body's cells and increase the risk of highly cancerous tumours, according to a new study on Thursday. In the study, published in the scientific journal *Addiction Biology*, cannabis is described as a 'genotoxic' substance because it damages a cell's genetic information.

This can lead to DNA mutations, accelerated ageing, and cancer. Alarmingly, this genotoxicity can be passed on to the next generation via a damaged egg and sperm — making the risk of cannabis use trans-generational, said the researchers from the University of Western Australia.

In the study, the team also linked established knowledge that cannabis use damages cellular energy production by inhibiting mitochondria with recent cancer research showing that mitochondrial dysfunction drives chromosomal damage which can surge rates of cancer, accelerated ageing, and birth defects. "The link we've described between

cannabis use and genotoxicity has far-reaching consequences. This new research shows how genetic damage from cannabis use can be passed down the generations," said Dr. Stuart Reece from the varsity Cannabis has been known to be linked with both micronuclear development and mitochondrial inhibition for many decades. Both human and rodent studies show that adult cannabis exposure is linked with the incidence of autism and cerebral processing difficulties in children prenatally exposed.

However, the study argued that cannabinoid genotoxicity has long been "overlooked." The researchers noted that "it may, in fact, be all around us through the rapid induction of ageing of eggs, sperm, zygotes, foetus and adult organisms with many lines of evidence demonstrating transgenerational impacts." Together, the data is clear and robust evidence for the transgenerational transmission of major genotoxic outcomes.

Who is Kanye West's wife Bianca Censori, the Grammys 2025 sensation who turned heads with her 'nude' red carpet appearance?

Australian model Bianca Censori has been in the news ever since her 'marriage' to Kanye West — now known as Ye — shortly after the American rapper and record producer ended his eight-year marriage with media personality and socialite Kim Kardashian. Though the legality of West and Censori's union has always been under the scanner, as they initially did not obtain an official marriage certificate, reports that surfaced later suggested they eventually did. Nonetheless, the two have remained in the spotlight since the beginning of their relationship, often stirring controversies.

The couple once again made headlines, this at the 67th Grammy Awards on Monday, where Censori's bold red carpet appearance led to their removal from the venue. Upon arriving at Crypto.com Arena, clad in all-black outfits, West and Censori posed for photographs for media persons on the red carpet. As the photo session progressed, Censori took off her fur coat, revealing a sheer dress that left her nearly naked in front of onlookers. Initially, she removed the coat with her back turned, but soon the model faced the cameras, almost fully exposing herself in the transparent ensemble. She then continued posing for photos, both with and without West. According to Page Six, police soon escorted the couple out. However, later reports suggested that Kanye and Bianca left of their own volition and police never got involved. "Custom Couture Grammy dress for the most beautiful woman ever," Kanye later captioned an image of Bianca's dress on Instagram, writing, "My best friend My wife." Grammy Awards 2025 Full Winners List | Beyoncé takes Album of the Year, Best Country Album; Kendrick Lamar's 'Not Like Us' clinches five trophies

Since then, the internet has been abuzz with the question of who Bianca Censori is. While little is known about her pre-Kanye West life, she reportedly worked in architecture and interior design in Melbourne, Australia. Her LinkedIn profile states that she is currently the head of architecture at YEEZY, the media and fashion brand founded by West. Before this, she worked as a design consultant at Kelektiv for a year and a half and, after that, as a student architect at DP Toscano Architects in Australia for three years from 2017 to 2020. The social media profile claims that she holds both a bachelor's and a master's degree in architecture from



the University of Melbourne.

Today.com reported that Censori is 30 years old, as per a since-deleted Instagram post from West celebrating her birthday in 2024. In a now-removed November 2021 interview with Hypebeast, she discussed her upbringing in Australia. "I was born and raised in Melbourne, Australia. As a child, I was consistently drawn to creative endeavours, mostly artistic. I always wanted to be a sculptor and to me, architecture is the union of art and pragmatics. It is the grandest artistic gesture that we can place on the earth. I was drawn to it, purely, as a shift in artistic scale," she reportedly said. Elle reported, "As a child, I spent a lot of time with my aunt who would consistently expose me to an array of art, film, and architecture. She really drove my love for design and instilled in me an eye for aesthetics that I was able to nurture into adulthood," Censori added. Though reports initially suggested that West and Censori's 'marriage' lacked legal standing due to the absence of an official certificate, Daily Mail later discovered that the couple obtained a "confidential" marriage license in California on December 20, 2022 — one month after West and Kardashian's divorce was finalised. Due to its confidential status, the license was not made public, but the ceremony reportedly took place in Palo Alto and was officiated by James Mayfield. Following news of her marriage to West, Censori is said to have deactivated her Instagram account.

Trade accuses Akshay Kumar's film of 'maximum block bookings ever done'

Sky Force is being touted as Akshay Kumar's first film in three years that is heading towards being profitable, and Veer Pahariya's 'successful' debut. However, the film that reportedly earned around Rs 80 crore in week 1 and over Rs 100 crore till now, as per makers, appears to be a 'manufactured success' with a large part of box office figures coming via block seats or self buying.

The film, directed by Abhishek Anil Kapur, and Sandeep Kewlani, earned Rs 99.7 crore in its first week, according to the producers of the film. The official Instagram page of Dinesh Vijan's Maddock Films claimed the film earned Rs 111.7 crore India net in nine days. However, trade analysts refuse to accept it. Industry tracker Komal Nahta has dismissed the claims. Explaining the day wise collection of the film for the first week, Komal Nahta wrote, "The total for 1st week was Rs. 40.50 crore. Of course, the records will show total collections of Rs. 80 crore but that's because heavy block booking of the unsold tickets was done on each single day of the first week to give the impression that the film was performing extraordinarily at the ticket counters. This was, perhaps, the maximum block bookings anyone had ever done in the history of Bollywood. Proof of this lay in the fact that a housefull or near-housefull scenario on BookMyShow.com coincided with near-empty cinema halls because there was no public to fill the seats which were block-booked."

He also claimed that initially the block bookings were done across the country and in multiplexes and cinemas belonging to the national chains. "It was later restricted mainly to PVR Inox Chain of cinemas because PVR Inox Pictures is the all-India distributor of the film," he wrote on filminformation.com. The terms "corporate booking" and "self-buying" has been in the news for long after many Bollywood films were accused of boosting their box office numbers by self-buying their film tickets or actors making the brands associated with them buy tickets of their latest



films in bulk and distribute it to their staff or consumers, and deduct the money from their fees. Previously, SCREEN spoke to many industry insiders who shared details about "organic numbers", "corporate booking", "self-booking", and "inorganic numbers" to explain the trend. A source told SCREEN, "When producers and actors realise that they won't get a huge boost from corporate booking and when they can't just randomly self-buy and have no one turn up for the shows, they check with educational institutions. You buy tickets yourself, but give it to schools and colleges, to make it look authentic.

It's the makers' money, but when it results in people or kids showing up, the picture it paints is that it is organic. But it isn't." On Sunday, Sky Force earned Rs 5.25 crore, according to Sacnilk. The film, which also marks the debut of Veer Pahariya, is reportedly made on a budget of Rs 160 crore.

Ashneer Grover says Salman Khan took 'faltu ka panga' on Bigg Boss 18: 'Abey naam nahi jaanta toh..'



Former Shark Tank India judge and entrepreneur Ashneer Grover graced Salman Khan-hosted reality show Bigg Boss Season 18 during a Weekend Ka Vaar episode in November 2024. During their interaction on the show, Salman called out Ashneer for statements he had made about him in the past. Recently, the entrepreneur spoke about his appearance on Bigg Boss 18 and hit back at Salman, accusing him of unnecessarily picking a fight and creating drama.

At an event in NIT Kurukshetra, Ashneer said, "Faltu

ka panga leke apna competition khada kiya usne. Main toh shanti se gaya tha jab mereko bulaya. Ab drama create karna ke liye aap kisiko bol do, arey main toh aapse mila hi nahi. I don't even know your name. Abey naam nahi jaanta toh bulaya kyun tha? (He created unnecessary competition by picking a fight. I had gone peacefully when I was called. And now, to create drama, he's telling everyone, 'Oh, I never even met you. I don't even know your name.' If you didn't know my name, then why did you call me?)"

Denying Salman Khan's claim that he never met Ashneer Grover before, the entrepreneur said, "Aur ek baat main bata deta hun. Tum agar meri company ke brand ambassador the toh aisa nahi ho sakta ki tum merese bina mile brand ambassador ban gaye. Mai bhi kamino ki tarah hi company chalata tha. Everything had to go through me. (And let me tell you one more thing. If you are the brand ambassador of my company, it wouldn't have been possible for you to become the brand ambassador without meeting me. I ran my company like a ruthless person. Everything had to go through me.)"

For the unversed, during a podcast, Ashneer claimed that he met Salman during a sponsored ad shoot. As per Ashneer, Salman's manager told him then that the superstar wouldn't take a photo with him. On Bigg Boss 18, Salman Khan confronted Ashneer Grover about the same and said in Hindi, "Meeting was not held with you but with your team. Maybe you were also present there. We have not had any discussions. I saw what you said. You presented that we fooled you. This is wrong. Those numbers were wrong." Salman replied, "The way you are talking, you did not have the same attitude in that video. I do not feel bad about anything but it is not right to give a wrong impression about anyone. I just got to know that you are coming here. I did not know your name also. Since I had seen your video, I recognized your face. I think you should be careful about how you present yourself."

The Ba***ds of Bollywood: Aryan Khan agrees 'baap ka raj hai' as Shah Rukh Khan reveals title of his debut show

Aryan Khan is all set to make his directorial debut with a Netflix series titled The Ba***ds of Bollywood. The title announcement at Next on Netflix India 2025 came from none other than Shah Rukh Khan himself, who also featured in a humorous promo unveiling the title. However, the biggest surprise for fans was Aryan making an appearance in the video.

The clip begins with SRK in front of the camera, attempting to deliver the line, "Picture toh saalo se baaki hai." However, the director repeatedly asks him for multiple takes in different styles. After several retakes, an exasperated Shah Rukh finally snaps and asks, "Baap ka raj hai kya?" The camera then pans to Aryan, who smiles and replies, "Haan." This playful exchange continues as SRK jokingly rebukes Aryan, saying, "Chup! Ab main take karunga, aur tum sab dekhoge, nahi...sikhoge (Now I'll give the take, you all will watch and learn)." King Khan then proceeds to introduce Aryan Khan's show, calling it the "baddest, bravest, wackiest, maddest, and filmiest show on earth." The title The Ba***ds of Bollywood* then appears on screen.



The clip also includes a cheeky nod to Jawan, with Aryan referencing SRK's famous dialogue, "Bete pe haath uthane se pehle." During the event, Shah Rukh Khan revealed that while he announced the title, Aryan Khan would later explain its deeper meaning to the audience. Fans are now eagerly awaiting more details about Aryan's much-anticipated debut as a director.

Keerthy Suresh and Radhika Apte clash in YRF's revenge thriller



The makers of Akka, the highly anticipated web series starring Keerthy Suresh and Radhika Apte, unveiled its teaser on Monday. The teaser was unveiled at Netflix's grand event, Next on Netflix, where the streaming platform announced all its upcoming projects for 2025. Akka is a revenge thriller that promises intense drama as the two powerhouse actors face off in a gritty battle.

Set in the 1980s in the fictional city of Pernuru, South

India, the show revolves around gangster queens. Their matriarchal rule is challenged by an outsider, played by Radhika. The teaser opens with a powerful visual of the gangster queens' domain, with Keerthy leading her all-female gang. It hints at Radhika's character, who is seen devising strategies to take down Akka's reign. The visuals also suggest that the gang is involved in the gold trade, with Radhika's character threatening to disrupt their operations. The teaser shows Akka's gang members, clad in traditional outfits, taking up arms and fighting fiercely against those who dare to challenge their power. Akka is written and directed by Dharmaraj Shetty and produced by Yash Raj Films' Aditya Chopra, along with Yogendra Mogre and Akshaye Widhani under the banner of YRF Entertainment. The show also stars Tanvi Azmi in a key role.

Akka marks Radhika Apte's first project post her daughter's birth in December last year. Keerthy Suresh, who made her big Bollywood debut with Baby John alongside Varun Dhawan, was present at the event in Mumbai and expressed her excitement about the show. "Akka is an entirely different world that you wouldn't have seen before. It is about a lot of powerful women coming together. Akka is a show of fierce, and powerful women at its centre."

Shark Tank India Season 4: Anupam Mittal calls out vacation wear company for 'objectifying women', Vineeta Singh says brand name is 'cheap sounding'



The startup, founded by Abu Zoheib Jilani and Shrijal Dave, catered to a clientele wanting to take pride in their body types, and find vacation wear that fit them right. In fact, the brand promised to have coding in place to ensure women can understand their body type by answering a simple set of questions, and choose the right kind of fit from a curated list of products.

There is a reason why swimming with the sharks is seen as a dangerous thing. So what happens when the founders of Woman Like U, a vacation wear brand, primarily focused on swimwear, decided to pitch in season 4 of the Indian version of the Shark Tank? Well, they did swim with the 'sharks', albeit with nice designer wear. Bengaluru-based start up Women Like U was pitched as a clothing brand made to address the issue of differing body types for Indian women.

The startup, founded by Abu Zoheib Jilani and Shrijal Dave, catered to a clientele wanting to take pride in their body types, and find vacation wear that fit them right. In fact, the brand promised to have coding in place to ensure women can understand their body type by answering a simple set of questions, and choose the right kind of fit from a curated list of products. While the 'sharks' — Aman Gupta, Anupam Mittal, Vineeta Singh, Peyush Bansal, and Varun Dua — were quite impressed with the pitch and the products on display, it was far from a stroll in the park for team Woman Like U, who asked for Rs 1 crore for 2% equity with a valuation of Rs 50 crore.

Vineeta Singh revealed that she was a customer of that brand, and was quite impressed with the design and material. Interestingly, Anupam Mittal put forth a pertinent point about how the brand, which prides itself on the diversity and inclusivity of the various body types of Indian women, which cannot be regularised under the Western sizes, was doing something similar with respect to Indian sizes. He argued, "Using the same lexicon like pear-shaped, oval, heart-shaped, etc... aren't you still objectifying women? If you really want to be anti-discriminatory, you have to use different language." This was vehemently agreed upon by Vineeta, who had another problem with the words used by

the company. And the words she had the problem with was... 'Woman Like U'. Vineeta outrightly dismissed the brand name as 'cheap-sounding' and felt it wasn't really appealing to the clientele who would look at this brand as an aspirational luxury option. "I hate the brand name and logo and the spelling..." Although, sharks like Varun Dua and Peyush Bansal were impressed with the profit figures of the brand, they excused themselves from the deal because of various issues ranging from positioning, absence of vision in category expansion to lack of clarity.

Interestingly, both Anupam Mittal and Aman Gupta negated Vineeta Singh's opinions about the branding and the logo, and said that these were subjective opinions, and they quite bought the simplistic nature of the branding. Nevertheless, Vineeta made an offer of Rs 1 crore for 3% equity plus 2% royalty until Rs 1.5 crore is recouped, and Aman pitched in with a similar offer but till Rs 1 crore was recouped. Oh, and Vineeta's one stipulation was... "Change the brand name and the logo." "That was an offer that team Woman Like U could refuse, and that's what they did. They chose Aman as their investor, and went with their hearts full, wallets comparatively full, and pride intact. In closing, Vineeta pointed out that the brand name has no emotion, and feels like a name churned out by an algorithm. "For a lifestyle brand, the name is everything. SUGAR, bOAt... the names mean everything. The founders are so rigid." But before leaving, the pragmatic founders said, "We received overwhelmingly positive response. The name is close to our heart, and of course, we took a lot of data before arriving on this name. We do understand that there are people who might feel similar to Vineeta, but the branding has received mostly positive responses." What's in a name? Shakespeare once asked. And on this episode, Vineeta did the same.

Breaking down Neymar's break down: A hundred possible reasons why the Brazilian isn't considered the greatest



GNS News Agency, Feb 5

A decade and a half after he left Santos to Barcelona—in a deal so shady and complex that the Catalan club's president resigned—Neymar returned to his childhood club as the richest footballer of his country. His net worth, officially, is 350 million dollars. But he could not achieve what he dreamt when he set foot in Europe—to become the best player in the world. There were months he was the finest in the world, when he was predestined to succeed the throne vacated by Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, and a decade when he flirted with greatness, but without consummating the relationship. There was an irresistible tragic, human flaw in his story. He is not quite an unfulfilled talent. He has wrought a career ordinary footballers could only dream of—glittering silverwares with Barcelona, countless trophies with PSG, highest goal-scorer for his country, numerous assists, beachside mansions and a private jet, awe and acclaim, and possibly a few more years in competitive football. He has all the riches football could bestow to its finest practitioners, from humble beginnings. Then, he was no ordinary footballer. He was the most gifted of his generation, a blend of football as an artistic, individual expression as well as a product of regimented structure operating within a collective framework. The feet could bend the ball as he wanted it, his methods fusing magic and madness in equal measure. After his first training session, Xavi gushed that he had not watched anyone half as skilful as him in his entire career. He was hailed Messi's heir by the man himself, and soon formed one third of the most absurdly devastating trident in football history with Messi and Luis Suarez. It was not to be. Vaulting human ambition skates on thin ice. The ways of the human mind are so unpredictable that it is so vulnerable to conceit and jealousy. It's how the great rock bands have split, when each thought each could be unto oneself. Neymar cannot be faulted, because he was just as human as any footballer could be. Those in the know how of how his exit precipitated, hark back to a glorious night at the Parc de Princes, his future home. To the night when Neymar inspired a stirring comeback to overcome a three-goal deficit in the dying stages of the game. It was his best night in the Barcelona shirt. He curled in a sublime free-

kick into the top-corner, won and scored a penalty and composed the delivery from which Sergi Roberto toed the winning goal. Yet, it was Messi's photograph that the websites, newspapers and social media handles splashed. Not because Messi was the game's guiding light, but because it was Messi and because the photograph was symbolic of Messi-mania. Messi is standing on an advertising board fans are thronging beneath his feet. Messi stands with his hands raised and eyes shut skywards. Within a week, a billion people had seen the picture. It shot the photographer Santiago Garces to overnight fame.

Something snapped in Neymar. He became an increasingly self-obsessed player as the season wore on. Next season, he shocked the Barcelona faithful by signing for PSG. The lure was irrefutable. The dollars glittered. But it was not about the dollars, but the promise of liberation. From Messi, still his friend, from the rigid structures of Barcelona, from being the satellite to the sun. PSG assured he would be central to the scheme to conquer Europe. The nouveau rich could build a team around him, load players with his specification, so that he could be the lead act. He no longer needed to wait for Messi's farewell, which in fairness seemed ridiculously impossible, to be accepted as the best player on the planet. The stage was to be his. Yet it was not. Footballers, even the most gifted ones, are not always the best judges of finding out the working of a club. PSG's Qatari owners wanted to build their own Galácticos, to wield their muscle before the World Cup in 2022. Kylian Mbappe and Messi would join him and soon he was no longer as central to PSG as he had thought. The trio was dysfunctional, jarring like disparate, rebelling parts, operating to different laws, whims and wavelenghts. PSG faltered in Europe, the only competition that mattered to the serial league winners. Injuries crept in, form fluctuated and Neymar was reduced to a showboating parody, football's one-man Harlem Globetrotter. He still scored spectacular goals, made jaw-dropping moves, but he had become less of a footballer and more of a stage artiste. At the heart of his disintegration is Neymar himself. Not because he was less gifted than Messi or Ronaldo. But he didn't quite possess the will, devotion or discipline like them. He didn't lose himself like the Brazilian Ronaldo into an indolent lifestyle, but seemed to have lost the drive to make the next leap into footballing immortality. Somewhere, he lost his drive and ambition. Nothing else would explain his move to the Saudi League. He was only 30 and still in sight of greatness. Maybe, he cared only for the money. Maybe he just stopped caring for the game. Maybe, the reunion with the childhood club would rekindle the lost fire. Maybe, he never fully fathomed his gifts. Maybe, there could be one more season of spring left in those twinkling feet. But Neymar would remain the prince that never became the king, when he had the potential to be an emperor. Or a footballer prone to human frailties, as any human could be.

FIDE vs Freestyle Chess dispute continues as 'intensive negotiations' lead nowhere

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

The global governing body of chess, FIDE, has announced that talks with the organisers of Freestyle Chess Grand Slam Tour have not yielded much as the impasse continues in chess. "Despite intensive negotiations, the FIDE Council states that there is currently no agreement regarding the Freestyle Tour. This is due to the other party's refusal to acknowledge FIDE's status as the sole regulator of World Chess Championships and its authority to award a World Championship title," FIDE posted on their X handle on Monday afternoon. It went on to add that it would be releasing a "full statement" on the matter later on Monday.

FIDE and organizers of the upcoming Freestyle Chess Grand Slam Tour have been at loggerheads for over two months now. This feud has seen both sides write open letters and level serious allegations against each other. The biggest issue between the two parties had been over the use of the phrase 'world championship'. As the global governing body of chess, FIDE has stated unequivocally that only they have the right to decide which event can be called a world championship. The organisers of the freestyle tour, on the other hand, disputed this. There was also a financial disagreement over the tour. The organisers of the freestyle tour had offered to pay the governing body \$100,000 (for what it termed "purely as a gesture of goodwill and to avoid harassment"). But it had allegedly rebuffed the offer and had demanded \$500,000. Despite the acrimony between the two parties, it was only last week that a ceasefire was ap-



pearing likely with German entrepreneur Jan Henric Buetner, the brains and financial muscle behind the ambitious freestyle tour, and FIDE president Arkady Dvorkovich having at least three one-on-one phone calls to iron out the differences.

"I already had two phone calls with Arkady yesterday and the day before, and we're going to have another one today. I can tell you that we are pretty close to reaching an amicable agreement that will lead to a good situation where we kind of bury the hatchet and say, 'okay, let's move on with an agreement that works for both sides,'" Buetner had told Indian .A FIDE official, speaking to The Indian Express off the record, had also confirmed that both parties had held "intensive conversations" to try and sort out their differences.

Mitchell Marsh jokes how his Jasprit Bumrah nightmare continued in backyard with 4 y.o. nephew's 'Boom action'

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

Mitchell Marsh was not a medal recipient at the 2025 Australian Cricket Awards but the 33-year-old Aussie walked away after delivering some cracking one-liners on Monday night and shed some light on his Jasprit Bumrah-ed summer. Marsh, last year's Allan Border medallist, had a horrendous Border-Gavaskar Trophy campaign at home against India before being dropped for the final Test of the series earlier this month in Sydney. Marsh's humour, however, remains intact. When asked about his 2024 season at the awards, a cheeky Marsh replied: "It's been incredible, really ... capped off by the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, and the way the boys played especially with 10 players, without me. They did really well." After a summer of facing Bumrah's searing spells, Marsh admitted he missed out on a relatively subtler tour to Sri Lanka. "Yeah look, if there's one wicket I needed, it was probably that Galle wicket."

But the show-stopper was when Marsh shed light on his on-field horrors spilling over to the backyard with his young nephew stunning the sturdy "Bison" with a Bumrah action. "Actually my little nephew Ted, he's four years old, we played backyard cricket the other day. He came in with (Jasprit) Bumrah's action, and the nightmare continued!" Marsh quipped. Having won the Allan Border medal for the



best Australian cricketer last year, Marsh said he had felt and the appreciation up until last month before things went downhill. "Yeah, prior to December I felt a lot of love. Post-December, bit of a different story."

Marsh added. Marsh mustered 73 runs in seven innings with six successive single-digit scores and three wickets in the series against India. His last appearance was a Big Bash League fixture for the Perth Scorchers, where he bagged a duck on January 7.

Locals flock to Haldwani for swimming and football – heated pools, floodlit soccer, music, dance ... 'festive atmosphere'



GNS News Agency, Feb 5

The last time the stadium was packed to capacity was when the Great Khali, the WWE superstar, performed a few years ago, says a beaming Rashika Siddiqui, deputy director sports. Siddiqui, a senior official, is shuttling between the two busy venues in Golapar, the swimming complex and the cricket stadium that is hosting packed-to-the-rafters football matches. On Sunday night, home team Uttarakhand were trailing Bengal 0-2 in the dying minutes of the women's game, but within the stadium so loud were the spectators that one had to shout to be heard. The football pitch is pristine green. Winter ryegrass brought in from Europe was planted three months ago when the cricket pitch made way for a full-sized football ground, Siddiqui said. The temporary switch from leather ball to football for the 38th National Games is a hit at Golapar's Indira Gandhi Sports complex. Inaugurated in 2016, the arena, across the railway tracks and the Gola river on the outskirts of Haldwani, got a major makeover for the games.

The C-shaped spectator stand allows for an uncluttered view of the Gola range. It's free-entry, shared auto-rickshaw drivers are making a killing and those who can't find a seat are happy to walk across the bridge over the parched river to watch the biggest sports show in these parts. After sunset, the smart orange fabric panel facade and the newly-installed floodlights make the stadium glow like a diamond. "The floodlights have been installed for the national games. Now, we can have night games too. The sports infrastructure in Haldwani has got a boost because of the Games. The swimming pool can function year-round as a new heating system is operational for the National Games. Earlier, the pool was closed for six months. The diving pool and the practice pool were added for the games and we got touchpads too for the swimming pool," Siddiqui said. Mahender Singh Bora, an assistant coach for swimming, believes the heated pool will spur Uttarakhand swimmers to clock faster times. "Because the pool used to be shut during the winter months, at certain national competitions our swimmers have had to participate with minimal practice sessions. The heating system will change that," Bora said. More sports are being added with a

hockey astro-turf and a 10 metre shooting range to be thrown open in April. Nothing was left to chance. For the games, a dedicated feeder line was added for uninterrupted electricity supply and an additional tube well dug for water supply to the newer pools, Siddiqui says, trying to make herself heard over the resounding chants.

The group of boys in matching blue jerseys bring the roof down, blaring music through a portable speaker and grooving to the beats of a popular Kumaoni number. They are from the football academy in Haldwani to support the Uttarakhand women's team. A group of boys from the football academy in Haldwani during the women's match between Uttarakhand and West Bengal. "This festive atmosphere is wonderful... songs, dance, the cool weather and football. Almost like a carnival. Watching football played under floodlights is a spectacle," Abhay Bhandari, a goalkeeper said. Academy kids from local football clubs with I-League aspirations are also here. There are six bus loads of teenage footballers, Viru Kalakoti, the coach of Bithoriya United, says. BUFC, established in 2010, runs three academies in the city and has over 500 players on its rolls. "Though only a handful of academies in Haldwani are registered, the total number is increasing every year. BUFC plays in the state league, we were second last year. I have brought my trainees to watch the National Games so they get inspired. From Golapar we don't get kids who want to join the club, the village and surrounding areas have cricket academies," Kalakoti said.

Samrul Islam, a medical shop owner, from Golapar, and his eight-year-old son Mohammad Hamad, had walked from their home to the sports complex. They watched football and swimming. Hamad is hoping to be an all-rounder. He joined the sports department's cricket training centre a year back and dreams of playing in a blue jersey one day. Father is thinking ahead. He wants to exchange phone numbers. "One day his name will be in the newspapers," Islam hopes. Two new pools have come up at the aquatics centre, for driving and for practice. (Express Photo) Two new pools have come up at the aquatics centre, for driving and for practice. (Express Photo) The aquatics venue is jam-packed too. The crowds flock to see the swimming finals in the evening, school kids brought by school buses pack the stands in the morning. Teachers accompanying the children have a tough time keeping them seated. "It's a half-day for schools. For the first time the state is hosting such a big sports event. We will make up for the missed classes," a teacher said. In the stands two teenagers argue about the age of Dhinidhi Desinghu, the 14-year-old making waves in the pool with multiple gold medals, before they do a search on their smartphone. "Can't believe she went to Paris and is now in Golapar," they tell their mother. A few minutes later, awe-struck and happy, they head home with tales to tell their neighbours and a promise to return the next day.

Carlos Alcaraz: 'I understand that people argue about who is the best between us (Sinner & me), but ...'

Jannik Sinner (L), two years older than Carlos Alcaraz in age and on the Tour, has struck consistency winning his last 10 matches against Top Toppers without dropping a set. (Reuters) Jannik Sinner (L), two years older than Carlos Alcaraz in age and on the Tour, has struck consistency winning his last 10 matches against Top Toppers without dropping a set. The pot has begun stirring, and stans craving controversy are ready to kick start another tennis rivalry, which in sport, often turn toxic online. Except, Carlos Alcaraz isn't buying into the tripe-hype of the "battle" with Jannik Sinner. The two men who have won the last 5 Slams between them, could be shaping up into the Federer-Nadal mould of mutual respect, though deranged followers might want to see the rivalry sharpened. When Italian tennis journalist Giovanni Pelazzo asked Carlos Alcaraz about Sinner withdrawing from Rotterdam ATP 500, the Spaniard, 21, offered a balanced viewpoint, even as he casually uttered that Sinner has proven to be the best tennis player, at the moment. "Sinner's withdrawal? I understand, I know how difficult it is to stay healthy after a Slam where you go all the way. I guess he didn't feel ready to play another tournament so soon, which was smart," Alcaraz told Pelazzo, as per his twitter account. Sinner, two years older in age and on the Tour, has struck consistency winning his last 10 matches against Top Toppers without dropping a set. The Italian has 19 ATP titles compared to Alcaraz's 16, and the Spaniard has had a bunch of off the kilter losses. Alcaraz went down to Gael Monfils at Cincinnati, to Botic van de Zandschulp at US Open and Nicolas Jarry at the Buenos Aires final last year. However, Alcaraz went 3-0 vs Sinner last year, which had prompted Patrick Mouratoglou to say that Jannik Sinner is not the best player in the world right now. Alcaraz, who went down to a hobbling Djokovic at Melbourne, speaking at Rotterdam to Pelazzo, said, "Jannik has proven to be the best at the



moment, it's crazy what he's doing. I understand that people argue about who is the best between us two, but for me and for the tennis players who play against him, Jannik is definitely the strongest." While Sinner aces hard courts, Alcaraz remains a threat on clay and grass, but acknowledges that he goes deep in tournaments. Pelazzo also quoted Alcaraz as telling him, "I don't agree with what Mouratoglou said. Jannik will have lost 4/5 matches in a year, he has no ups and downs. In every tournament he participates in he either reaches the final or lifts the trophy." Their off-court camaraderie is pretty evident, though set-up posers thrown to draw out a cackling statement or two to create drama, is never far off. However, the two have been known to giggle walking away from rains, throw smiles in response to each other's outrageous shots, pose arm in arm for pictures like at 6King tournament, and remove confetti sitting like a spike on the other's head. But with sports fan bases – this is more loaded with Sinner being an Italian – unable to stay drama-free, both young greats will keep receiving provocative questions. They might just have to seek greatness of not-getting-riled variety from non-messy Messrs Federer and Nadal, while they hoarde Slams.

India vs Pakistan Champions Trophy tickets sold out in an hour amid high demand

GNS News Agency, Feb 5

Dubai: Tickets for the highly-anticipated clash between archrivals India and Pakistan in the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 in Dubai were snapped up within minutes of going on sale on Monday. The rush was so intense that over 1.50,000 eager fans queued online, causing waiting times to exceed an hour. The much-awaited India vs Pakistan match will take place at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium on February 23. It is a group-stage match of the 2025 Champions Trophy, which will be held on a hybrid model in Pakistan and UAE.

Residents and cricket enthusiasts alike were taken aback by the overwhelming demand for tickets for the marquee clash. Sudhashree, a Dubai resident, expressed her astonishment, saying, "I anticipated a long queue, but the speed at which tickets vanished was shocking. By the time I secured my place, only two categories remained, both beyond my budget." Fans patiently queued for nearly an hour, only to find that tickets for the India-Pakistan

showdown got sold out across nearly all categories, including the Dh2,000 Platinum and Dh5,000 Grand Lounge sections. With the Dubai International Cricket Stadium accommodating 25,000 spectators, the race for tickets highlighted the match's immense popularity and significance. Historically, an India vs Pakistan encounter not only electrifies the cricket world but also catalyzes economic activity. Anticipating a surge in visitor numbers, industry experts predicted heightened activity across hospitality, travel, and tourism sectors, with expectations of increased hotel bookings and rising airfares as fans from both nations converge on Dubai for the event. T

he two-week competition will see the top eight teams play 15 matches over 19 days in Pakistan and the UAE. Group A features Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and New Zealand, while Group B includes Afghanistan, England, Australia, and South Africa. Hosts Pakistan will enter the competition as defending champions after winning the title in 2017 in England.