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## Parents murder daughter, stage suicide in Telangana's Karimnagar

Karimnagar: In a shocking incident of honour killing, a 16-year-old girl was allegedly murdered by her parents in Shivarampally of Saidapur mandal. They reportedly tried to project the death as suicide.

Reddy Archana was forcibly administered pesticides by her parents Reddy Raju and Lavanya. In addition, Raju allegedly throttled her.

## Top Naxal leader with Rs 1-crore bounty, 5 others killed in Odisha

New Delhi, Dec 25

In a major operation in Kandhamal, Odisha, top Maoist leader Ganesh Uike, who carried a bounty of Rs 1.1 crore, and five others were neutralised on Thursday.

Lauding the efforts of security forces, Home Minister Amit Shah said in a post on X: "With this major breakthrough, Odisha stands at the threshold of becoming completely free from Naxalism. We are resolved to eliminating Naxalism before the 31st of March 2026."

Uike was one of the six remaining members of the central committee of the CPI (Maoist) and in charge of Maoist operations in Odisha. He, along with five other Maoists, was killed in an overnight gunfight with a joint team of security forces which started on December 24.

The police said Uike, 69, was the most senior Maoist active in Odisha and his elimination was a significant blow to the Naxal command structure in the region.



Ganesh Uike played a key role in planning and coordinating armed activities across multiple zones. A central committee member, he was also known by aliases Rupa, Rajesh Tiwari, Chamru and Pakka Hanumantu," said Sanjeeb Panda, Additional General of Police (Anti-Maoist Ops), Odisha.

Acting on a tip from the Special Intelligence Wing (SIW), a joint operation was launched by 20 Special Operations Group (SOG) units of the state police, two

CRPF teams and one BSF team in Kandhamal's Chakapad police station area and the Rambha forest range.

When the gunfight ended on Thursday, the police said the bodies of four Maoists – two men and two women – were found in the area. Two Maoists were also killed by a mobile SOG team from Kotgad on Wednesday.

This year, nine members of the CPI (Maoist) central committee, including four in Chhattisgarh, two each in Jharkhand and

Andhra Pradesh and one in Odisha have been killed in encounters with security forces.

The central committee members who have been killed are Ramachandra Reddy, aliases Jairam and Chalapati; Gautam alias Sudhakar; Modem Balakrishna; Raju Dada, alias Katta Ramachandra Reddy; Kosa Dada, alias Kadari Satyanarayana Reddy; Sahadev Soren, alias Pravesh; Vivek, alias Prayag Manji; Madvi Hidma; and Metturi Joga Rao, alias Tech Shankar.

## PM Modi joins Christmas prayers at Delhi church, extends message of peace and harmony

New Delhi, Dec 25

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thurs-

The Cathedral Church of the Redemption in Delhi. The service reflected the

festival, sharing traditions and moments of warmth that reflect the country's di-

does not specify the exact date of Jesus' birth, early Christians chose Decem-



day joined Christmas celebrations at the Cathedral Church of the Redemption in New Delhi, participating in prayers alongside a large congregation of Christians from Delhi and several parts of North India.

Earlier in the day, on the occasion of Christmas, Prime Minister Modi extended his greetings to people across the country, conveying wishes of peace, compassion and hope. In a post on X, the Prime Minister wrote, "Wishing everyone a joyous Christmas filled with peace, compassion and hope. May the teachings of Jesus Christ strengthen harmony in our society."

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Christmas is being celebrated across the world on Thursday, marking the birth of Lord Jesus Christ. In India as well, people from different religions and cultural backgrounds come together to celebrate the

timeless message of love, peace and compassion. May the spirit of Christmas inspire harmony and goodwill in our society."

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Christmas reflects a blend of Christian beliefs and ancient winter traditions. Although the Bible

versity and unity. The festival is widely seen as a time of happiness, reflection and togetherness, going beyond the traditions of decorating Christmas trees or exchanging gifts, and emphasising values of love, compassion and harmony that resonate across communities.

Observed every year on December 25, Christmas marks the birth anniversary of Jesus Christ and is associated with themes of hope, peace, forgiveness and love. While it is primarily a Christian religious festival, its universal message has made it a global celebration embraced by people from diverse backgrounds.

Christmas reflects a blend of Christian beliefs and ancient winter traditions. Although the Bible

## Christmas holiday sees record footfall at Hyderabad zoo

Hyderabad: Addition of new animals to its collection is reaping good results for the Nehru Zoological Park in the city, with 23,440 people visiting the zoo on Thursday.

With Thursday being a holiday on account of Christmas, a large number of visitors thronged the zoo to see their favourite animals.

## CM Revanth Reddy faces

## criticism over Krishna water remarks



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Hyderabad: Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's poor knowledge of the irrigation sector, especially on River Krishna water sharing, got exposed yet again. His contradictory assertions over Telangana's share in the River Krishna waters are drawing severe criticism from different sections.

Interestingly, the Chief Minister contradicted his own statements and assertions over the State's share in the river waters.

In June this year, the Chief Minister had demanded his counterpart from Andhra Pradesh N Chandrababu Naidu to issue NOC for using 1000 tmcft in River Godavari and 500 tmcft in River Krishna.

These demands triggered strong criticism from former Irrigation Minister T Harish Rao, who slammed the Congress government for its negligence in protecting Telangana's share.

"Telangana already has hydrological clearances

from the Central Water Commission for using 946 tmcft in River Godavari for projects in the State," Harish Rao pointed out, exposing the Chief Minister's poor command over the irrigation sector.

Similarly, on September 13, the Chief Minister made another assertion of 904 tmcft share in River Krishna for Telangana. Contradicting his own assertion on September 24, the Chief Minister again claimed Telangana's share of 763 tmcft in Krishna water.

Continuing his inconsistent stand over the river water share, the Chief Minister this month made a new demand before the Brijesh Kumar Tribunal to allot 951 tmcft in the River Krishna basin.

The BRS working president KT Rama Rao has been highlighting these inconsistencies, particularly the Chief Minister's contradictory stand on River Krishna water shares.

"Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has zero knowledge of river waters impacting Telangana's share and interests. He continues to remain dangerously ignorant in irrigation issues," Rama Rao said while addressing party workers in Nalgonda on Tuesday.

Like the strong counters from the BRS, people from different sections are also criticizing the Chief Minister for his "command" over the irrigation sector and river water shares.

Sharing news report clippings of contradictory statements made by Revanth Reddy on X, Nayini Anurag Reddy, an entrepreneur, asked: "Every time the Chief Minister speaks, there's a new number. If they themselves don't know what they are asking for, who do you expect to take us seriously?"

"And in all this confusion, it's not them who lose. It's the people of Telangana," he stressed.

## BMS Ideology Becomes a Model for the Global Labour Movement: Dattatreya Hosabale

Hyderabad, Correspondent, December 25, INDIAN CHRONICLE : "RSS Sarkaryavah Dattatreya Hosabale stated that it is a matter of pride that the global labour community is increasingly adopting the ideology and working principles of the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh



(BMS). "He was speaking after inaugurating the Telangana State Office of the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, named Dattopant Thengadi Bhavan, at the RTC Kalyana Mandapam in Hyderabad on Thursday. Addressing the labour conference held on the occasion, Hosabale congratulated BMS activists for establishing the office building through sustained efforts. He remarked that an office is akin to a temple of work." Hosabale said that BMS has been consistently working for national interest, industrial welfare, and labour welfare. He described the ideology of BMS as unique and emphasized that workers from all sectors are part of the organisation, united by their commitment to national development. "Recalling BMS founder Dattopant Thengadi's visit to China, Hosabale said

Thengadi had advocated that trade unions should function beyond politics and uphold the spirit of nationalism, fostering a family-like relationship between management and workers. He noted that Chinese labour unions were also influenced by Thengadi's ideas. He further stated that Swadeshi, economic self-reliance, and environmental consciousness are integral components of the BMS ideology, which require continuous study and training. For such activities, having a dedicated office is essential, he added. "Referring to the BMS slogan of sacrifice, penance, and dedication, Hosabale pointed out that the day coincided with the birth anniversaries of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and freedom fighter Madan Mohan Malaviya. He said both leaders stood for economic self-reliance and Swadeshi principles, lived simple lives, and devoted themselves to the upliftment of the underprivileged." Hosabale praised Dattopant Thengadi for dedicating his life to labour welfare and for his relentless efforts to unite the labour movement. He clarified that BMS was not formed merely to fulfil demands, but to work towards national economic growth and social welfare. He stressed that constructing buildings alone is not enough; activists must also dedicate their time and effort selflessly. What matters, he said, is not the number of floors in a building, but the breadth of commitment in the hearts of its members. "The meeting was presided over by BMS Telangana State President Kalai Srinivas. Union Ministers G. Kishan Reddy and Bandi Sanjay, former Governor Bandaru Dattatreya, RSS leaders, BMS National President Hiranmay Pandya, General Secretary Ravindra Hinthay, Vice Presidents Sunkari Mallesham, B. Surendran, State General Secretary P. Ram Reddy, former National General Secretary K. Lakshma Reddy, and national leaders Surendra Pandey, Dinesh Mishra, Saji Narayanan, Ravi Shankar Alluri, and Chennakesava were among those present.

## Medical Trip Ends in Tragedy: Four Women from Kagaznagar Killed in Fatal car Accident in Maharashtra.



Taj Khan, Kagaznagar, December 25 (Indian Chronicle): "Four women from Kagaznagar town in Kumram Bheem-Asifabad district were killed in a tragic road accident in Maharashtra in the early hours of Wednesday. According to family members, the victims were returning after travelling to Nagpur for medical treatment when the car they were travelling in plunged off a bridge near Devada shortly after midnight. Three women and a minor girl died on the spot due to the impact." The



deceased were identified as Wife and Daughter of Zakir—an auto-rickshaw driver residing in Nizamuddin Colony, Kagaznagar—and two women relatives from Ward No. 14, Zakir said. Two other occupants sustained critical injuries and were shifted to a private hospital in Chandrapur, where they are currently undergoing treatment.

# Indian Chronicle

## English Daily

### 'Bahubali' moment for ISRO

It's a 'Bahubali' moment for the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). The successful launch of its heaviest-ever satellite into low earth orbit is yet another significant milestone in the journey of the space research organisation, which has overcome many hurdles over decades to emerge as a global leader in the satellite launch market. By placing in orbit the 6,100 kg American communications satellite, BlueBird Block-2, the ISRO has not only demonstrated its technological prowess but also its ability to deliver at much lower costs than the launch options available abroad. The LVM3 (Launch Vehicle Mark-III), which flawlessly delivered the next generation American communication satellite into orbit, has quietly evolved into a workhorse capable of human spaceflight, deep-space missions, and now high-end commercial deployments. The latest launch carries far greater significance. BlueBird satellites are part of a new generation of space-based connectivity systems designed to provide direct-to-device communications, bypassing terrestrial infrastructure altogether. LVM-3 had previously powered flagship missions such as Chandrayaan-2 and Chandrayaan-3. A modified version of the rocket will be used in the Gaganyaan missions. The latest mission significantly boosts India's space ambitions and makes it possible to capture a larger chunk of the commercial space sector. It is estimated that India's share of the global space business will reach 8-10% by 2033. This is no mean achievement, given the humble beginnings of India's space endeavours. From using a creaking, old bullock-cart to transport a new satellite to the launch station decades ago to earning a place at the high table of the space-faring nations, ISRO has come a long way.

### Chandrapally & Chinnagudipet Sarpanch Meets Konappa in Courtesy Call

"Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, December 25 (Indian Chronicle)" "Following their oath-taking ceremony, Kondapalli Kasturi, Sarpanch of Chandrapally Gram



Panchayat in Dahegaon Mandal, along with Upa-Sarpanch Atram Swaroop and ward members, paid a courtesy visit to senior leader Koneru Konappa at his residence in Kaghaznagar. Village leader Dhoni Srisailam, along with Upa-Sarpanch Bisu Mondi and seven ward members from Chinnagudipet village, paid a courtesy visit to former MLA Koneru Konappa. The delegation, which also included village elders and youth representatives, met Koneru Konappa at his residence. On the occasion, Koneru Konappa congratulated the representatives and formally draped them with BRS party scarves, extending his best wishes. Several local leaders and party supporters were present during the meeting.

### DGP Warns Police Against Interfering in Civil Disputes

"Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, December 25 (Indian Chronicle)" "Director General of Police (DGP) Shivadhar Reddy has issued a strong warning to the Telangana State Police, cautioning officers against interfering in civil disputes. In an internal circular addressed to all police personnel, the DGP made it clear that involvement in civil matters—such as family disputes, property partitions, and land-related issues—will invite immediate and stringent action. Reiterating the principle that "crossing the line will not be tolerated," the DGP emphasized that police stations must not be turned into informal settlement or panchayat centers for resolving civil disputes. He warned that any officer, from a Home Guard to an IPS officer, found mediating or settling civil issues within police stations will be held accountable. Civil disputes fall strictly under the jurisdiction of civil courts. Every police officer is aware of this fact. Despite this, converting police stations into settlement centres is unacceptable. Complaints of a civil nature must be redirected to appropriate civil courts or legal forums," the DGP stated. He further clarified that no exemptions will be granted, and strict action will be taken against stations and officers involved in such practices. This includes SPs, CPs, Home Guards, and all ranks, without exception. Stressing the importance of integrity, DGP Shivadhar Reddy said that police uniform and corruption cannot coexist. If police personnel—who are entrusted with booking cases against illegal activities and presenting offenders before courts—indulge in corruption themselves, public trust in the system will erode. "Our conduct must uphold the dignity of the uniform, enhance the credibility of the government, and ensure peace and justice in society," the DGP asserted.



### Grand Christmas Celebrations in Ramanthapur Church Colony



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 25 (Indian Chronicle):" "Christmas celebrations were held in a grand manner at the Lourdes Matha Church in Ramanthapur Church Colony. Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy and Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy participated in the celebrations as chief guests. Along with the members of the Church Colony, Parameshwar Reddy and Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy cut the Christmas cake. Speaking on the occasion, they first extended Christmas greetings to everyone and said that Jesus Christ taught the

message of forgiveness towards enemies, emphasizing love, peace, and harmony among people. Those present at the program included Anand, Johnny, Sudhakar, Satish, David, Ratna Reddy, Lakshma Reddy, Praveen Kumar, Vallapu Srikanth Yadav, Upender Reddy, Sandeep, Bhaskar, Vinay, Kiran, Raju, Rammana, Arogamma, Sumalata, Baburao, Srinivas, Innaashamma, Mary, Lourdes Reddy, Rosie Mary, Jayasheelam, and Joseph. A large number of Christian brothers and sisters, division leaders, and local residents participated in the celebrations, making the event vibrant and memorable.

### Centenary Birth Anniversary of Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee Celebrated in Ramanthapur



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 25 (Indian Chronicle):" "The centenary birth anniversary celebrations of former Prime Minister of India, Padma Vibhushan and Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee, were held grandly in Ramanthapur Division. The 101st birth anniversary program was organized under the leadership of Ramanthapur Division President Vangala Santosh Gupta. Several senior BJP leaders participated in the event, including Muttineni Jagadish, Revu Narasimha Kuruma, Thalla Balakrishna Goud, Vallapu Jagan Yadav, Vempati Srinivas, Kompalli Upender, Shaga Ravi,

Darshanala Sudhakar, Palugula Anjaiah Patel, V. Suresh, Upender Yadav, Dayakar Reddy, Tammali Ravi, Mallesh Yadav, Boddupalli Anand, Beerappa, Vempati Ram Raj, Suresh, Murali, and women leader Suvarna Shinde. Party workers and supporters also attended the program in large numbers. The speakers recalled the remarkable contributions of Atal Bihari Vajpayee to the nation and paid rich tributes to his visionary leadership and dedication to public service.

### Gudi Madhusudan Reddy Extends Essential Supplies and Financial Aid to Fire-Affected Rambabu Family On the Directions of Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy



Reddy, Mukkala Ramakrishna Mudiraj, Kompalli Rajkumar, Sanigaram Tirumalesh, Sadananda Chary, Yadagiri, Pochayya, Renuka, Suresh, and Prasad Chary were present during the relief program.

"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 25 (Telugu Tejam):" "A fire accident caused by an electrical short circuit from a water heater severely damaged the residence of BRS activist Rambabu, a resident of Kummar Kunta in Chikkanagar Division. The incident resulted in the complete destruction of valuable household items, including a refrigerator, washing machine, laptop, and other essentials, pushing the family into serious financial distress. Upon learning about the incident, Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy, responding with concern, directed senior BRS leader Gudi Madhusudan Reddy to extend immediate support to the affected family. Acting on these instructions, Gudi Madhusudan Reddy, along with party leaders, visited Rambabu's residence on Thursday and provided essential household supplies along with immediate financial assistance. The MLA also personally spoke to Rambabu over the phone, expressed his solidarity, and assured him that he would soon visit the family to assess the situation firsthand. He further promised to coordinate with municipal officials to ensure additional financial support is arranged for the family. Senior BRS leaders Erelli Ravinder

### Meru Community Should Progress Politically and Economically: Congress Senior Leader K. Venkatesh

"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 25 (Indian Chronicle):" "Congress senior leader and Meru Sangham state leader K. Venkatesh called upon members of the Meru community to strive for political and economic empowerment. He was speaking as the chief guest at the New Year calendar release programme organised under the leadership of Kothapalli Ramesh, President of Meru Sangham Uppal Zone-7, and Vennu Ramesh, President of Meru Sangham Chikkanagar Division. The event was held on Sunday at Sri Vinayaka Tailors shop, Chikkanagar. Venkatesh formally released the New Year calendar and distributed copies to the members of the



association. Addressing the gathering, he urged the government to extend support to the Meru community. He demanded that the government provide free Jukki sewing machines to Meru community members who depend on tailoring for their livelihood. He also appealed for the allocation of Indiramma houses and the sanction of pensions to eligible Meru community families. The programme was attended by local Congress leaders and community representatives, including Nelavelli Mahender Mudiraj, V. Upender (Vice President, Meru Sangham Uppal Zone-7), Nandagiri Raju (General Secretary, Chikkanagar Division), R. Venu, D. Venkatesh, V. Ravi, Odela Laxman, M. Krishna, P. Narayana, R. Ashok, C. Sanjay, Kishore, R. Mallesh, and others.

### Grand Christmas Celebrations at GYPY Church, G.G. Colony, Habsiguda

"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 25 (Indian Chronicle):" "Christmas celebrations were held in a grand manner at the GYPY Church located in G.G. Colony, Habsiguda. Former President of the Medchal-Malkajgiri District Youth Congress, Kandi Shravan Kumar Reddy, participated in the event as the chief guest. Along with him, Habsiguda President



Gannaram Vijay Kumar and Habsiguda Division General Secretary & Director, Endowments Department, Dharmendra Naik (Dharma) also attended the celebrations. The guests joined the members of G.G. Colony in cutting the Christmas cake, following which Kandi Shravan Kumar Reddy unveiled the New Year calendar. Speaking on the occasion, Kandi Shravan Kumar Reddy extended Christmas greetings to everyone and said that Jesus Christ taught the message of forgiveness, even towards one's enemies. The program was attended by Pastor Panneer, Habsiguda Division Congress Party President Gannaram Vijay Kumar, Youth Congress President Vasu Naik, Division Indiramma Committee Member Gundurajanna, Division Secretary Suman, and others including Sai Kiran, Srinu, Shiva, Sai Kumar, Ravi, Khalim, and several local residents.

## Churches steeped in the teachings and worship of Jesus Christ



Costal Church in Ayyappa Society Colony and Mount Carmel Church. In this order, the All India Cantonment Boards Vice President Jampa Pratap who were present at the invitation of the fathers of the respective churches cut cake and congratulated the Christians in the special prayers held from 11 am to 1 pm. A large number of people participated. The devotional songs and kirtans sung by the devotees praising Lord Jesus were entertaining. On this occasion, the pastors explained the uniqueness of Jesus Christ's birthday. Pastors John Victor, Dinakar, Jeevaratnam in this program. Nageshwar Rao and also participated. Former Vice President of the Board Jakkula Maheshwar Reddy released the New Year Calendar during the Christmas celebrations held at the Blessing Refuge Church in Bowenpally Pedadthokkatta. Congress leader Muppidi Madhukar participated in Christmas celebrations at Hallalay Church.

Secunderabad Cantonment. December 25 (Indian Chronicle). "Christmas celebrations were held grandly in Bowenpally under Cantonment Board on Thursday. Christians offered special prayers at Bapuji Nagar Baptist Church, Shivalayam street Faith One Church, Penta

## International Market Target Through Fish and Shrimp Farming: P. Sugunakar Rao at Kisan Mela



**Chittimalla Mahendar,** "Karimnagar Bureau," December 25, "INDIAN CHRONICLE" Karimnagar: "The second day of the Kisan Grameena Mela, being organized under the aegis of Kisan Jagarana in Karimnagar, continued with great enthusiasm. As part of the programme, seminars were held in which agricultural scientists and experts educated farmers on modern farming practices and various ways to enhance their income. Addressing the gathering, Kisan Jagarana President and Mela Convenor Sri P. Sugunakar Rao said that the undivided Karimnagar district has today transformed into a "Water Junction" with major irrigation projects such as LMD, Mid Manair, Upper Manair and Kaleshwaram. With abundant water resources available, he urged farmers not to restrict themselves only to paddy cultivation, but to focus on profitable sectors like fish and shrimp farming (aquaculture). He expressed hope that farmers from this region would reach a stage where fish and shrimp could be exported to international markets in the future. Later, Sri L. Jalapathi Rao, former Registrar of Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University, stated that farmers should aim not only for higher yields but also adopt crop diversification practices. He clarified that agriculture would become profitable only when farmers orga-



nize themselves through Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and take responsibility for processing, packaging and marketing of their produce. Renowned agricultural expert and Swaminathan disciple Sri Venkateshwari explained the current problems faced by the farming community and suggested practical solutions. On the occasion, he released a book authored by him and dedicated it to farmers. Sri Prabhakar, scientist from Jammikunta Krishi Vigyan Kendra, explained the benefits of sheep rearing and fish farming. Sri Shankar Reddy, General Manager of Karimnagar Dairy, explained how the dairy sector supports farmers and elaborated on the role of Karimnagar Dairy. Floral tributes were paid at the mela venue on the occasion of the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Sri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Several FPO presidents and a large number of farmers participated in the programme. Large crowds visited the various stalls set up at the mela. Speakers unanimously opined that strengthening the rural economy is the foundation for national development.

## Ayyappa Padipuja with full glory



processions. Cantonment MLA Shri Ganesh attended this pooja program and performed pujas and entertained everyone by singing bhajans of Ayyappa Swami. All India Cantonment boards vice president Jampa Pratap, Congress party leaders Muppidi Madhukar, Ayyappa Guru Swamulu Venkata Yadav, Srinivas, Satish Guruswamy and Sanjeev participated in these puja programs. Krishna Reddy, Mahender Shashikant, Balwant Reddy, Ganesh Temple Chairman Prabhakar Yadav, Market Committee members Sarath, Madhu, Shekhar and others participated in this programme.

Secunderabad Cantonment. December 25 (Indian Chronicle). "Ayyappa Padipujas were held in grandeur at New Bowenpally Hanuman Cooperative Society Ayyappa Swamy Temple and Mudford Tukantamman temples in Cantonment Constituency on Thursday. These celebrations include 18-step pooja and palanquin

## Change in Quantity Rules for Kapas Kisan Slot Booking

"Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, December 25 (Indian Chronicle)" As part of farmer welfare initiatives, the government has been providing cotton farmers with the facility to sell their produce through slot booking on the Kapas Kisan App, the District Marketing Officer said in a press release. He stated that, as per the instructions of the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI), changes have been made to the quantity norms for slot booking. For slots booked from midnight (12:00 a.m.) on December 25 onwards, farmers will be permitted to sell cotton only up to an additional 5 quintals over and above the quantity booked. Cotton



Kapas Kisan App: You can get your desired slot and sell your produce without waiting for your turn.

exceeding this limit will not be accepted, he clarified. Farmers have been advised to take note of this revised rule and accurately enter the quantity while booking slots on the Kapas Kisan App to avoid

inconvenience. Issued by the District Public Relations Officer, Kummar Bheem-Asifabad district.

## Live Wire Claims Life of Migrant Labourer in Wankidi Mandal

"Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, December 25 (Indian Chronicle)" A migrant labourer from a neighbouring state died after suffering an electric shock while working at a construction site in Wankidi Mandal. The deceased was identified as Gaurav Tulsiram Nikode (22), a native of Rajura Konathpur village in Maharashtra, who had arrived in Wankidi Mandal on Wednesday in search of employment. The incident occurred while he was engaged in slab construction work at an Indiramma house sanctioned to Madavi Vasu of Goyaganti village. According to sources, Gaurav was electrocuted when an iron pipe accidentally came into contact with nearby live electric wires, resulting in a severe electric shock. He was immediately rushed to the Government Hospital at Wankidi Mandal headquarters. Later, he was referred to Asifabad for advanced treatment and shifted there in haste. However, doctors examined him and declared him dead. Family members and fellow workers alleged that delay in providing timely medical care led to Gaurav Tulsiram's death. They claimed that after being brought to the Wankidi Government Hospital, the victim was left unattended for nearly an hour, and that no doctors were available at the hospital at the time.



## Government Whip and Alair MLA Beerla Ailaiah participated in Christmas celebrations in Yadagirigutta



"Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 25)- On the occasion of Christmas, Telangana State Government Whip and Alair MLA Beerla Ailaiah extended Christmas greetings

to all Christian brothers and sisters. On the occasion of Christmas, Beerla Ailaiah participated in the Christmas celebrations at the church in Yadagirigutta town. He said that Christmas celebrations are being held joyfully in the Alair constituency and that the people's government, inspired by the teachings of Lord Jesus, is working for the welfare and development of all religions.

## Strict Action Against Sale and Use of Chinese Manja: District SP Nitika Pant

"Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, December 25 (Indian Chronicle)" District Superintendent of Police Nitika Pant has warned that Chinese manja, made of nylon or synthetic thread coated with glass powder, is extremely dangerous and poses a serious threat to motorists and pedestrians. She said that while riding at high speeds, especially on two-wheelers, if the thread comes in contact with the neck or face, it can cause severe injuries and profuse bleeding, potentially leading to loss of life. As the thread is very thin, it often remains invisible while hanging in the air, increasing the risk of accidents. The SP advised motorists to wear helmets with full face-covering windshields and to reduce speed while passing through flyovers and areas where kite flying is common. She further cautioned that the sale, transport, and use of Chinese manja is a punishable offence under the Environment Protection Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Offenders may face heavy fines and imprisonment of up to seven years. The District SP urged the public to immediately inform the police, either directly or by dialing 100, if they come across any information related to the sale or transportation of Chinese manja.



## Government Whip and Alair MLA Beerla Ailaiah participated in Christmas celebrations at Atmakur mandal headquarters.



“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 25):- On the occasion of Christmas, Telangana State Government Whip and Alair MLA Beerla Ailaiah participated in the Christmas celebrations held at the church in Atmakur mandal headquarters. On this occasion, he cut a cake and offered special prayers. He said that Christmas celebrations are being held joyfully in the Alair constituency. He stated that the people's government, working with the inspiration of the teachings of Lord Jesus, is contributing to the welfare and development of all religions. On the occasion of Christmas, Telangana State Government Whip and Alair MLA Beerla Ailaiah extended Christmas greetings to all Christian brothers and sisters.



“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 25):- Grand Christmas celebrations were held on Thursday at the Bethesda Gospel Ministries orphanage located in Teachers Colony, Bhuvanagiri town, under the auspices of the

organization's Founder Chairman, Valluri John Prasad. On this occasion, Bhuvanagiri constituency MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy, who attended the program as the chief guest, participated in the celebrations by cutting the Christmas cake along with the organization's administrators and the orphaned children. Speaking on the occasion, MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy said that the teachings of Jesus Christ are practical and his teachings are worthy of emulation for world peace. He appreciated the Gospel Ministries in Bhuvanagiri town, especially under the leadership of Founder Chairman John Prasad, for running the orphanage for orphaned children for two decades and providing selfless service to them. He assured them of his continued support and assistance. PCC General Secretary Pothnak Pramod Kumar, former Municipal Chairman Barre Jahangir, District Congress Party SC wing president Dargai Hari Prasad, Eerapaka Narasimha, Padigela Pradeep, Reverend Dinakar, Pastor Johnson, Paladugu Shekhar, MD Mazhar, Vastupula Sai, and others participated in this program.

## Local MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy participated in a special program at Gospel Church



chief guest in this program and offered special prayers. On this occasion, he extended Christmas greetings to the devotees. Library Chairman Avais Chisti, Battu Prem Kumar, Tangellapalli Ravikumar, Potamshetty Venkateshwari, Barre Jahangir, Koora Venkatesh, Bisikontla Satyanarayana, Baddam Vasu, Battu Ramachandraiah, and others participated in the program.

## PRTU-TS Organises One-Day TET Training Programme for Teachers



“(Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, December 25 (Indian Chronicle)) Under the aegis of the Progressive Recognised Teachers Union-Telangana State (PRTU-TS), a one-day training programme was organised to help teachers prepare effectively for the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET). The programme focused on key strategies for qualifying the TET, effective teaching methodologies, and important topics in Social Studies, Mathematics, and Biological Sciences. The training sessions were conducted by Assistant Professor Narsimha Rao at the Vasundhara

Degree College, where detailed guidance was provided to teachers appearing for the TET examination. Special emphasis was laid on the Psychology paper, with in-depth yet concise explanations on child development, Piaget's cognitive development theory, Kohlberg's moral development theory, Erikson's psychosocial development theory, individual differences, intelligence and intelligence theories, personality, defence mechanisms, and learning theories, aimed at enabling teachers to secure success in the examination.

## Grand Christmas Celebrations at Chaitanya Bharathi High School



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 25 (Indian Chronicle): Christmas celebrations were held in a grand manner at Chaitanya Bharathi High School, located in Ganesh Nagar, Uppal. Students actively participated in the festivities by singing various Christmas songs and captivating everyone with their performances in dif-

## Bethesda Gospel Ministries Christmas celebrations held grandly at the orphanage

MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy participated



“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 25):- Grand Christmas celebrations were held on Thursday at the Bethesda Gospel Ministries orphanage located in Teachers Colony, Bhuvanagiri town, under the auspices of the

## Two Tractors Seized in Illegal Sand Transportation Case –

Karimnagar Rural Police Warn of Strict Action“Karimnagar Rural,



“Chittimalla Mahendar, “KARIMNAGAR BUREAU,” December 25, INDIAN CHRONICLE:“As part of routine village patrolling on Friday morning, Karimnagar Rural Police apprehended two individuals for illegally transporting sand without valid permits at different locations.

“In the first incident, Sudagoni Bharadwaj, son of Narsaiah, a resident of Gollapalli village in Sultanabad mandal, was caught while transporting sand illegally near the outskirts of Chamanpalli village.

“In another case, Pogula Saichand, son of Anjaneyulu, a resident of Bommakal village, was apprehended near the Lorry Association area in Bommakal village while transporting sand without authorization.

“Police registered cases against the accused and seized the tractors used for illegal transportation.

“The accused were later produced before the court for further legal action.“Speaking on the occasion, Karimnagar Rural Circle Inspector A. Niranjan Reddy warned that strict action would be taken against anyone found transporting sand illegally without proper permissions.



## Free Mega Health Camp Held in Uppal on Atal Bihari Vajpayee 101st Birth Anniversary



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, December 25, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“On the occasion of the 101st birth anniversary of former Prime Minister and Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a Free Mega Health Camp was organized at Ashok Nagar - Nehru Nagar Main Road under the Mirpet HB Colony Division of the Uppal constituency. The camp was conducted under the leadership of Mirpet HB Colony Division President Ram Pradeep, in association with Apollo Hospitals. Former MLA N.V.S. Prabhakar attended as the chief guest and inaugurated the programme. More than 500 residents



benefited from free medical services, including eye and dental check-ups, blood pressure and sugar tests, dermatology consultations, general health examinations, and free distribution of essential medicines. Addressing the gathering, the chief guest said that such service-oriented health initiatives are vital for improving public health and should be expanded further. He appreciated the efforts of the organizers for successfully conducting the camp in the interest of the public. Former MLA Subhash Reddy, along with several party leaders, division leaders, workers, and local residents, participated in large numbers.

## 65 acres, 65-foot tall statues of BJP's icons: Inside the lotus-shaped Rashtra Prerna Sthal in Lucknow



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Poems and speeches of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, nationalist quotes by Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) founder Shyama Prasad Mookerjee and Deendayal Upadhyaya, as well as audio presentations highlighting their contributions to nation-building: These are among the many features of the Rashtra Prerna Sthal in Lucknow. The complex will open to the public after its inauguration by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 25, Vajpayee's birth anniversary.

Spread across 65 acres, next to the Gomti river embankment on Hardoi Road on the outskirts of the capital, the memorial is shaped like a lotus (BJP's election symbol). The main attraction is the three towering bronze statues of Vajpayee, Mookerjee and Upadhyay — icons of the BJP and its forerunner Jana Sangh. Standing at 65 feet, LDA officials said they are the tallest among all statues of personalities installed in the state capital. Each of these statues weighs 42 tonnes; a water body surrounds their platforms. Ahead of the inauguration, roads leading to the venue are being cleaned and street lights are being repaired. (Express Photo/Vishal Srivastav) Ahead of the inauguration, roads leading to the venue are being cleaned and street lights are being repaired. (Express Photo/Vishal Srivastav) Built at a cost of Rs 230 crore, it was developed under the Basant Kunj scheme of the Lucknow Development Authority (LDA). (Express Photo/Vishal Srivastav) Built at a cost of Rs 230 crore, it was developed under the Basant Kunj scheme of the Lucknow Development Authority (LDA). (Express Photo/Vishal Srivastav) According to party sources, it is a unique memorial as it would be the first such project where tall statues of all three stalwarts of the party will be at a single place. A BJP leader said: "There are several parks and memorials that the Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party governments built in memory of their respective leaders and ideologues in UP. The Congress has developed such memorials in other parts of the country. It is good that after the development of the Rashtra Prerna Sthal, people will also know about BJP's ideologues who have made major contributions to nation building." He said party leaders can now visit the memorial on the birth and death anniversaries of these leaders to pay tribute on a grand scale. "So far, there is only one statue of Deen Dayal Upadhyay in Charbagh area, one of Mookerjee in Civil Hospital and two of Vajpayee at Lok Bhawan and the Convention Centre in Lucknow... BJP leaders usually go there to pay tribute, but large gatherings are not possible at these places. The Rashtra Prerna Sthal has a huge space to hold programmes," added the leader.

One of the many attractions at the Rashtra Prerna Sthal is a two-storey museum developed in a 6,300 sqm area. It comprises five galleries and 12 interpretation walls dedicated to three leaders. In two rooms, orientation films on their lives will be screened. "The museum is dedicated to the three great personalities. Their ideas and belongings... important events... are displayed there. For instance, the history of the formation of Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) has been displayed. The idea is that people should know of their contribution in nation building," said a LDA official. On the formation of the BJS, one of the displays reads that after resigning from Nehru's cabinet, Mookerjee resolved to take

## Junior doctor booked for 'raping' woman colleague, university suspends him

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

A 26-year-old junior resident doctor of a medical university in Lucknow has been booked for allegedly raping a fellow woman doctor on the pretext of marriage, said police. The woman, also a junior resident, who belongs to a different community, is the complainant in the case. According to police, the accused and the victim knew each other and lived in separate hostels on the university campus. Police said it has been alleged that the accused misled the woman by promising marriage, following which she was raped.

University officials said the woman subsequently slipped into depression and allegedly overdosed on medication, after which she was admitted to a hospital for treatment. She has since been discharged and is staying with her family. "The case has been registered under rape charges against the accused doctor based on a complaint referring to an incident that allegedly took place in September," said the Station House Officer of the police station concerned. The officer added that the victim has been sent for a medical examination as part of the investigation. Police said the woman's statement will also be recorded before a magistrate. Taking serious note of the alleged incident, the medical institution suspended the accused. The action was taken following an interim report submitted by the college's internal committee, constituted under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. The accused will remain under suspension pending completion of the inquiry. According to officials, the internal committee observed that allowing the accused resident to continue on



duty during the pendency of the inquiry could prejudice a fair and impartial investigation. It, therefore, recommended his suspension.

During the suspension period, the resident will not be permitted to perform any official duties and will be barred from entering the university and hospital premises without prior written permission of the competent authority, except when required to appear for inquiry proceedings. Police and institutional sources said a few days ago, the victim's family had uploaded a complaint on the Chief Minister's portal and submitted a separate complaint to the Uttar Pradesh State Women's Commission. According to the complaint, she was reportedly undergoing treatment for depression after the accused attempted to sever ties with her. According to a university official, allegations have also been raised that the accused is already married and had been pressuring the woman to convert.

## Hyderabad school principal accused of ordering seniors to thrash juniors over deflated bicycle tyres



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

The principal of a government high school on the outskirts of Hyderabad has been accused of asking senior students to assault some juniors to "teach a lesson" for allegedly deflating bicycle tyres, leaving one student seriously injured. According to police, Krishna Kumar, principal of a government school in Kompally, has been booked under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita for the incident, which allegedly occurred Monday. The district education department has also ordered an inquiry.

Police said students had been complaining that their bicycle tyres were frequently found deflated. "One teacher sent the victim, a Class 7 student, to check the bicycle stand to see if anyone was up to any mischief. While the boy was at the bicycle stand, another teacher saw him and assumed that he was the one deflating the bicycles, and took him to the principal's office," Petbasheerabad Police Station SHO Vijay Vardhan said. The principal allegedly then called some Class 10 students and asked them to assault the victim.

## Government orders on TSCO procurement go unheeded

Hyderabad: Here is another classic example of lack of coordination among departments and scant regard to government orders. Despite the State Government issuing orders last year directing all departments to procure required cloth from the Telangana State Handloom Weavers Cooperative Society Limited (TSCO), they hardly followed these orders. The State government issued GOMs 1 on March 11 last year. All government departments and corporations, undertakings and government hospitals were directed to procure cloth from TSCO to promote and provide livelihood security to weavers. Irked over many departments failing to follow these orders,



## From Camp to Khadki, Pune's midnight mass tradition on Christmas brings together faith, community and celebration



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

As the clock nears midnight on December 24, the quiet winter air of Pune begins to stir with carols and candlelight. Across Camp, Khadki, Yerawada and other neighbourhoods, thousands of faithful and many curious visitors make their way to brightly lit churches for midnight mass, a ritual that combines centuries-old Christian liturgy with the city's cosmopolitan warmth. The midnight mass marks the birth of Jesus Christ and heralds the beginning of Christmas Day. The tradition, rooted in early Christian vigils in Bethlehem and formalised in Rome around the 5th century, symbolically celebrates "light entering darkness." In India, it has become a central expression of the Christmas spirit, followed by feasts, gift exchanges, and homes decorated with cribs and stars.

For Pune's Catholic families, attending mass together on Christmas Eve is a sacred routine. "I have been coming to St?Patrick's Cathedral since I was a child," says Maria D'Souza, a 52-year-old Camp resident. "No matter how busy the year gets, the midnight mass brings our family together. The hymns and candlelight make it feel like time slows down for a while." At St Patrick's Cathedral this year, the carol singing is scheduled to begin at 10 pm, followed by the holy mass at 10.30 pm at St Patrick's School ground. Major parishes in the city are all decked up for the

occasion. Crowds gather as choirs fill the air with spirited carols before the celebration at midnight. At Saint?Mary's Church in Camp, the festivities will begin with carols at 10pm, drawing parishioners and onlookers, followed by the holy mass. More than 1,000 people are expected to attend the midnight mass tomorrow. Christmas, midnight mass, Pune, churches, Jesus Christ, Catholic families, Major parishes in the city are all decked up for the occasion. (Express photo) At Khadki, the holy mass at St?Ignatius Church will be at 11.30pm, attended by defence families and local residents, while St?Anne's Catholic Church near Solapur Road will begin its service at 11pm with a lively choir. Sacred Heart Church in Yerawada and parishes across Pimpri?Chinchwad also host vibrant night liturgies.

Most services open with hymns and readings from the nativity in the gospel, followed by the homily, profession of faith, intercessory prayers and the Holy Communion, accompanied by familiar tunes such as Silent?Night. The service concludes with a final blessing for families and the city. The celebrations begin much earlier in the evening as parishioners light candles, click family photos, and sing along with choirs often multilingual, reflecting Pune's mixed Catholic heritage. After holy mass, the crowd spills onto the church lawns, exchanging warm wishes and sharing cake before heading home for late-night meals to break the Advent fast. For younger attendees, the experience blends devotion with community. Rohan Fernandes, 23, a student from Camp, says, "Even if you are not very religious, there is something calming about being there. The choir, the lanterns, the sense of belonging. It is one of those nights where you really feel part of something bigger." Christmas restores the relationship between God and man?Beyond familiar rituals, church leaders see Christmas as a message of hope and renewal. Apollo?Raj?Kumar, Associate?Pastor at the Church of Every?Nation?India, shares, "For me, Christmas is Good News for all who are broken and suffering. It restores the relationship between God and man." The congregation cuts across age and community lines – old Anglo-Indian families from Camp, Goan and Mangalorean Catholics, students, professionals, and even non-Christian neighbours who join in. Many describe the night as peaceful and meditative. Amid candles, choral harmonies and the cool December air, the midnight Christmas mass in Pune is more than a mere ritual. It stands as a bridge between faith and fellowship, a moment when the city collectively welcomes the light into its own winter night.

## India Science Festival at IISER Pune and lots more in store for connecting minds, shaping future through science and innovation

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

A major highlight is the India Science Festival (ISF 2026) at IISER Pune on January 10 and 11, which brings together eminent scientists, innovators, astronauts, and communicators for keynote talks, interactive exhibits, and discussions across disciplines from space exploration to artificial intelligence and quantum science. From Subhanshu Shukla, the first Indian to set foot on the International Space Station, and computer scientists Ashish Vaswani and Eshan Chattopadhyay, to Professor Venki Ramakrishnan, Nobel Laureate, many experts will participate in the seventh edition of the ISF organised by the Foundation for Advancing Science and Technology (FAST India), in partnership with Bajaj Auto Limited.

Focus on inspiring youth towards SciTech, early conversations Varun Aggarwal, trustee and co-founder, Foundation for Advancing Science and Technology (FAST India), said they are stepping up efforts to strengthen the science, innovation, and evidence ecosystem with an aim to inspire the country's youth towards science and technology. "Progress is impossible without deep scientific capability and technological leadership, and this can be achieved if young minds are excited, curious, and inspired to pursue science," Aggarwal told The Indian Express. A science theatre on India's space journey has also been planned. Early conversations at platforms such as the Pune Public Policy Festival (PPPF) on technology point out the significance of knowing what lies ahead for science and innovation.

"The emphasis is shifting toward execution: aligning research priorities with regulatory preparedness, strengthening public-private partnerships, and building pathways that move emerging technologies — particularly AI, climate solutions, health biotechnology, and advanced and bio-manufacturing — from labs into society. The direction for 2026 is clear: innovation will increasingly be judged not by novelty alone, but by its readiness for deployment and governance," Professor Anu Raghunathan, chief scientist at CSIR-National Chemical Laboratory (NCL), said.

Why mathematical thinking underpins today's scientific progress The same month also features the Indo-European Conference on Mathematics at IISER Pune (from January 12 to 16). According to Dr Kishore M Paknikar, noted scientist who was recently selected as one of the first recipients of the Prime Minister's Science Award, the conference will reinforce Pune's strength in the fundamentals and remind us that mathematical thinking quietly underpins much of today's scientific and technological progress.

"What is particularly noteworthy is the balance Pune achieves between outreach and rigor, where public-facing festivals coexist with intensive training schools that shape the next generation of researchers. Collectively, these events underscore Pune's role not only as a centre for scientific discourse and innovation, but also as a city that values mentorship, continuity, and public trust in science throughout 2026," Dr Paknikar said. Across Pune's academic institutions, a series of specialised scientific gatherings has been planned in the upcoming calendar year. Sameer Dhurde, Public Outreach Officer at Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics, said that a symposium for communicating astronomy in India at IUCAA will bring together astronomy outreach experts for dialogue on effective public engagement in January.

One of the first events of its kind, the symposium is being anchored by the Public Outreach and Education Committee (POEC) of the Astronomical Society of India (ASI). It will be held from January 22 to 24. Later in the year, the Army Institute of Technology will host the IEEE ICNDIA-2026, an international conference in September, bringing global experts together to explore the nexus of digitalisation, intelligence, and technological applications. Professor Raghunathan is also keen about the synthetic biology workshop that signals not only the growing centrality of this field



to India's science and technology agenda but also the need for increased science communication of futuristic breakthroughs.

Energising research at Anusandhan National Research Foundation Dr Sunil Bhagwat, Director, IISER-Pune, said that the academic and research ecosystem has witnessed key reforms and transformation over the past few years. "As envisaged by the National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020 of India, the Anusandhan National Research Foundation has been operational over the past year. We are hopeful that this will lead to a more streamlined flow of research funds for students and faculty, which in turn will strengthen and energise the research ecosystem. As an institute, we look forward to strengthening our engagement with the industry and building on existing synergies. More broadly, with advances in Artificial Intelligence and quantum technology, the computational limitations, which may have restricted our understanding of complex systems such as climate and biological systems, are anticipated to be addressed at an accelerated pace in the future," Dr Bhagwat added. According to experts, these early 2026 forums signal a year in which policy, science, industry, and communication begin to co-evolve. "This will set the stage for 2026 to be a year of consolidation, scale, and systems-level thinking in Indian science and technology," Professor Raghunathan said.

## Christmas celebrations held at Carmel Convent High School

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Mancherial: Students celebrated Christmas on a colourful note on the premises of Carmel Convent High School (both State and CBSE syllabus) in advance here on Tuesday. Dr Manju Rose and Reverend Father Jose Manikanth were the chief guests at the celebrations.

Students presented cultural programmes and dance performances to mark the occasion, enthraling the audience. They staged skits depicting important phases of Jesus Christ's life. Prizes were given to teachers who performed well in their respective fields. Dressed in their best, a large number of students turned up for the glittering celebrations, filling the campus with cheer.

Principal Sister Saropita said Christmas was the festival of joy and happiness. She stated that by imbibing the spirit of the festival, people should spread the message of joy and happiness that was lacking in the world. She advised students to emulate the teachings of Jesus Christ and serve the needy in their own ways.

A festive mood prevailed across the campus with children donning Santa Claus and angel costumes and students taking out a parade with bands. Dignitaries cut a massive cake as part of the celebrations and distributed it to the students. Principal (CBSE wing) Rinet, Vice-principal Sister Krupa, teachers and non-teaching staff members were present.



## After Thackerays, Pawars inch closer to joining hands for civic polls



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

As Uddhav and Raj Thackeray are set to make an official announcement of an alliance on Thursday for the upcoming local body polls, the estranged Pawar family is also inching closer to an understanding ahead of the January 15 civic polls. Both the parties are discussing the possibility of joining hands for the civic polls to Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad municipal corporations. "Leaders and workers in our party have expressed the opinion that we should ally with Ajit Pawar-led NCP in Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad. When I met them yesterday, the leaders expressed this opinion. We have discussed this issue and soon a decision would be reached," said Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (SP) state president Shashikant Shinde after the party meeting in Mumbai.

Chief Minister and BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis has already announced that his party will not form an alliance with Deputy CM Ajit Pawar's NCP in Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad municipal corporations, claiming the alliance would mean opening up the space for the opposition parties in local body polls. This has opened the possibility of all parties except the BJP coming together in these two local bodies. Faced with the mass exodus of local leaders to join

the BJP, the NCP(SP) has found itself struggling. Similarly, the possibility of division of opposition votes is likely to harm Ajit Pawar's party in the upcoming polls. "This has resulted in both sides considering the option of fighting as a united front. The option to take along the rest of the opposition parties, including Congress, also stands open," said a leader from the NCP(SP). Based on the feedback from the local leaders, Shinde and NCP(SP) working president and Lok Sabha MP Supriya Sule held a meeting in Mumbai to discuss various scenarios.

Pune president of the NCP(SP) Prashant Jagtap has, however, openly opposed the idea to ally with Ajit Pawar's party. Commenting on his opposition, Shinde said, "I have discussed the issue with him. At a time when the elections are being held after a gap of 8 to 9 years, some adjustments will have to be made just as were made in nagar parishad and nagar panchayat polls. The only thing in alliance is that we need to have respectable number," he said. "Our party runs on a democratic basis. Therefore, the party will not take any decision without taking the leaders, office bearers and workers into confidence. I had a two-hour discussion with the party leader in Pune, Prashant Jagtap, on Monday. At present, we have not received an official proposal from any party in Pune regarding the alliance. There are various discussions going on regarding the alliance in Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad. But it is not right to talk about it until a final decision is made," said Sule. Sunil Tatkare, the state president of ruling NCP, however, maintained that no final decision has been taken. "The final decision regarding the alliance in the municipal elections will be taken in two days. There will be a meeting of the party MLAs on Wednesday, in which a review will be taken. Ajit Pawar will take a decision regarding Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad and he has interviewed candidates in Pune for the last two days. A decision regarding the alliance here will be taken on Wednesday," Tatkare said.

## A year after drugs worth Rs 13,000 crore were smuggled into Delhi, supplier held



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Over a year after cocaine and Thai marijuana worth Rs 13,000 crore was seized while being smuggled into Delhi by a Dubai-based cartel, the Delhi Police Special Cell has nabbed one of the suppliers from the UAE. An officer said that the man behind the cartel's operations in India and Thailand has been identified as Ritik Bajaj. On October 9, a red corner notice was issued against Ritik by the Interpol on the CBI's request. Ritik had been operating the gang's Thailand 'branch' for over a decade, and was one of the most trusted suppliers of Virender Basooya aka Veeru, a Dubai-based businessman allegedly funding the cartel's operation.

"Ritik was running a Thai marijuana supply chain from Thailand, and would regularly send consignments to Virender's cartel boys in India. Ritik had sent drugs weighing 40 kg for distribution in multiple Indian cities last year," a senior police officer said. "CBI coordinated with NCB Bangkok and got information about travel movement of the subject (Ritik) towards UAE. Thereafter, CBI coordinated with NCB Abu Dhabi to locate the subject. A team of Delhi Police visited UAE to bring back the subject and arrived in India with the subject from UAE on 23.12.2025, at New Delhi," a statement by the CBI said. Ritik (36) was declared a 'proclaimed offender' along with Virender; his younger son Rishab Basooya (25); Pramod (50); and Vikas Rane (49) in May.

Rishab, police said, was overseeing coordination

## Adani group emerges lowest bidder for both packages of Bengaluru's tunnel road project; quote much higher than govt estimate

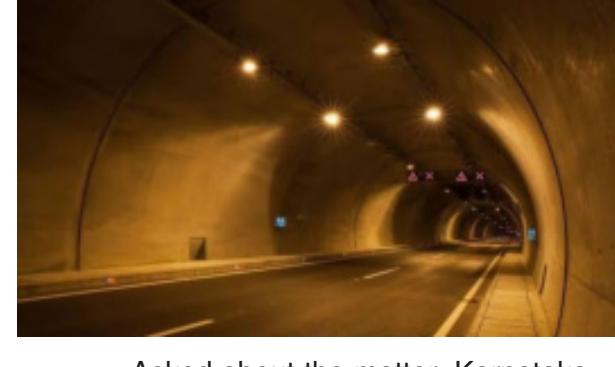
GNS News Agency, Dec 25

The Adani group has emerged as the lowest bidder for both packages of the 16.75-km tunnel road project in Bengaluru, which connects Hebbal and Silk Board junction, but the bids are higher than the government's estimated quote. According to sources, as per the bids opened by the Bengaluru Smart Infrastructure Ltd (B-SMILE), which is overseeing the project, Adani group has quoted Rs 22,267 crore against the government estimate of Rs 17,698 crore. The group's bid is approximately 24 per cent higher for the first package and 28 per cent higher for the second, raising concerns that it may require the approval of the state Cabinet before proceeding.

Asked about the matter, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister D K Shivakumar said on Monday, "I haven't received complete information on this. I can't comment on it until bids are officially revealed." The project, structured under a build-operate-transfer model, envisions 40 per cent government funding with the remaining investment coming from private concessionaires. Of the four infrastructure companies initially participating in tenders, only two advanced to the financial round following technical evaluation: Adani Group and Hyderabad-based Vishwa Samudra Engineering Ltd.

The government has estimated the first package to cost Rs 8,770 crore (Esteem Mall, Hebbal to Seshadri Road) while Adani group has reportedly placed a bid of Rs 10,867 crore. Vishwa Samudra has placed a bid of Rs 12,432 crore. In the second package (Seshadri Road to St John's Hospital, Madiwala), the government estimates stood at Rs 8,928 crore, while Adani group bid is Rs 11,400 crore and Vishwa Samudra's bid is Rs 13,042 crore. On the lowest bid amount being much higher than the original estimates, Shivakumar said, "The government is not paying any money to the bidder. The bidder has to invest in the project and we will give them only 40 per cent of our estimates." Among other par-

among Tushar Goyal, another accused, Jassi and their Mumbai customers. "Vikas Rane, a customer from Mumbai, was set to arrive in Delhi to receive the Thai marijuana from Tushar and take it back to the city to distribute at rave parties. Pramod, an important henchman of Virender, was overseeing the financial transactions," an officer said. Multiple pharmaceutical companies based in South India and Gujarat — including five legitimate and three shell firms — were allegedly used to transport 1,289 kg of cocaine and 40 kg of hydroponic Thai marijuana that was smuggled in by the cartel into the national capital in October last year. On October 1, 562 kg of cocaine was seized in South Delhi's Mahipalpur, and Goyal, along with three others, was arrested. On October 10, 208 kg of cocaine was seized from a shop in West Delhi's Ramesh Nagar. The third seizure was made on October 13, when Special Cell sleuths and the Gujarat Police recovered 518 kg of cocaine, valued at Rs 5,000 crore in the international market, during a raid at a firm, Aavkar Drugs, in Gujarat's Ankleshwar. Five people were arrested, including three of the company's listed directors — Ashwin Keshubhai Ramani, Brijesh Kothia, and Vijay Keshav Bhesania. The other two men arrested were Mayur, an employee of a fake company, Pharma Solutions Services, and middleman Amit Masuria who allegedly aided the meeting between representatives of the two firms. Aavkar Drugs, which claims to manufacture chemical products on its website, was roped in on September 23, 2016. Police said the seized drugs were all part of a consignment that the cartel operated by Virender allegedly smuggled in. "The drugs arrived at multiple locations in India from South America via Dubai. They were to arrive at Aavkar Drugs in multiple consignments by road to be refined and processed," an officer said. These drugs were then moved out of Gujarat as medical consignments and then were handed over, on paper, to Pharma Solutions Services, police said. "Those were transported as medicine packages of Pharma Solutions Services again via road to Delhi-NCR," the officer said. "The communication channels between Aavkar Drugs and the Dubai cartel are being investigated," the officer said. A chargesheet of over 10,000 pages was filed by the Delhi Police in the Patiala House court that named 19 people allegedly linked to the cartel. Of them, 17 were arrested and five were declared 'proclaimed offenders'.



Asked about the matter, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister D K Shivakumar said on Monday, "I haven't received complete information on this. I can't comment on it until bids are officially revealed."

Participants in the tender, Dilip Buildcon faced disqualification due to regulations barring firms associated with collapsed bridges or tunnels, while Rail Vikas Nigam Ltd was eliminated after its joint venture partner failed to meet technical requirements.

Once the tunnel road, which the Opposition considers to be Shivakumar's brainchild, comes up, commuters will have to pay a toll to use it. The proposal, hence, faces substantial criticism and political resistance. Senior BJP leaders particularly oppose its alignment, which necessitates acquiring six acres of the historic Lalbagh Botanical Garden. Urban mobility experts have raised additional concerns about potential conflicts between the tunnel corridor and Namma Metro's Phase 3A alignment, potentially jeopardising Metro expansion plans.

## 'Lungs of Haryana under threat': Bhupinder Singh Hooda slams state government for dodging Aravalli debate, public issues



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

The potential destruction of the Aravalli hills and the Haryana government's silence on the issue took centre stage on Tuesday as Leader of the Opposition and former chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda accused the Nayab Singh Saini-led BJP government of systematically evading discussion on matters of public interest during the recent Assembly session. A new uniform definition of the Aravalli hills has sparked a controversy as it could leave more than 90 per cent of the 692-km-long range vulnerable to mining and construction. Calling the Aravallis the "lungs of Haryana," Hooda cited a Forest Survey of India report, warning that their degradation would have the most severe impact on the state, including a sharp rise in pollution.

He said the Congress had moved a short-duration discussion on the issue in the Winter Session that concluded on Monday, but the government avoided debate. "Why did the government not defend Haryana's interests in the Supreme Court, and why is it not filing a review petition now?" he asked, adding that no clear answer had been given. Addressing a press conference at his residence in Chandigarh on Tuesday, Hooda described the BJP government's conduct in the Assembly as "anti-people and evasive". He alleged that throughout the session, the Opposition's questions, resolutions, and motions on public concerns were ignored. "For the first time in the history of the Haryana Assembly, not a single adjournment motion, suspension of business motion, or short-duration discussion proposed by the Congress was accepted," he said.

Hooda said the Congress had sought debates on a wide range of issues, including mining in the Aravalli hills, the status of Chandigarh, farmers' distress, unemployment, recruitment scams, Minimum Support Price, MNREGA, corruption, education, health, the SYL water dispute, rising pollution, and alleged hate speeches by BJP leaders. "But the government showed no willingness to discuss any of these," he alleged. He also accused the BJP of trying to divert attention from serious allegations of "vote chori" by

bringing a proposal on electoral reforms in the Assembly. "This subject does not even fall under the Assembly's jurisdiction. That is why the Congress walked out of the House. We will bring a special resolution on vote chori again in the next session," Hooda said. On sports infrastructure, Hooda said Haryana's national standing had improved significantly under the Congress government due to a focused sports policy and the construction of over 300 stadiums. "Today, these stadiums are in a dilapidated condition," he claimed. Referring to the deaths of young sportspersons Hardik Rathi and Aman Kumar in Lakhian Majra and Bahadurgarh, respectively, Hooda said government negligence was responsible and alleged that the BJP did not even respond to a motion seeking discussion on the issue. Raising concerns over MNREGA, Hooda said that while around 8 lakh people are registered under the scheme, only 2,100 have received the full 100 days of work. He also claimed that no compensation had been paid to workers in the past five years, despite mandatory provisions. He further alleged that drug-related deaths in Haryana had surpassed those in Punjab and that corruption was rampant.

On the status of Chandigarh, Hooda said the Congress repeatedly sought clarity amid reports of shifting positions and the alleged rejection by the Union Home Ministry of proposals related to a new Assembly building. "If Chandigarh is the capital of Haryana, then who can stop us from acquiring land of our own?" he asked. Referring to the SYL canal issue, Hooda said Supreme Court orders were final and reminded that an all-party meeting had earlier decided to approach the President and Prime Minister. "The chief minister took responsibility for arranging a meeting with the Prime Minister, but it has not happened to this day," Hooda said. He also questioned discussions in the Assembly on issues such as Vande Mataram and electoral reforms, calling them attempts to hide governance failures. "These are not matters that can be decided by a state Assembly," he said. Highlighting the state's financial health, Hooda cited a NITI Aayog report placing Haryana 14th out of 18 states in the Fiscal Health Index and 15th in the debt index. He said the state's total debt had crossed Rs 5.16 lakh crore and was likely to rise further. He also pointed to shortages across departments, including a 40 per cent shortfall of doctors, a large number of vacant teaching posts, and nearly half of all sanctioned government posts lying vacant. Concluding, Hooda said the government failed to respond to any issue raised during the no-confidence motion, including the cancellation of BPL cards and unfulfilled promises under welfare schemes. "The BJP government wants the opposition to remain silent, but the Congress will continue to raise the voice of the people—from the Assembly to the streets," he said.

## In Pune, a quiet Christmas turkey tradition survives on orders, hotels, and home cooks

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

In the Christmas season, Pune witnesses a small but steady demand for turkey, a festive dish that remains uncommon but deeply symbolic for the community. Unlike chicken or mutton, turkey is not part of the city's everyday food culture; instead, it appears briefly between late November and December, sustained by families who enjoy it, expatriates, luxury hotels, and a handful of meat suppliers who continue the tradition despite high costs and logistical challenges.

One of the key suppliers in this seasonal market is Bismillah Foods in Shivaji Market, Camp. For the past eight years, owner Owais Shaikh has been sourcing turkeys only on demand. "Turkey is completely seasonal for us. We do not keep stock unless there is a confirmed order. Most local customers do not ask for turkey. The demand comes mainly from Christian households, foreigners, and a few hotels," he says. Shaikh sources the birds from farmers in Karnataka, as Maharashtra has very limited turkey farming. Fresh turkey is priced between Rs 650 and Rs 800 per kg, depending on availability and transport costs as well. He also says that a single bird usually weighs between five and seven kilograms. "Because it's expensive and bulky, we cannot risk wastage. Every bird is pre-booked by us for sale," he adds.

Luxury hotels form the second pillar of Pune's turkey tradition. Conrad Pune is among the few establishments that serve turkey every Christmas. Chef Murty Sitaram said the hotel imports Butterball turkeys from the United States to maintain consistency in size and quality. "Each bird costs us anywhere between Rs 18,000 and Rs 22,000 before

preparation," he says. The preparation process is slow and precise. "We brine the turkey overnight, partially steam it and then slow-roast it while basting regularly. This ensures the meat remains moist and the skin turns golden," says Sitaram. The dish is served with winter vegetables, Yorkshire pudding, giblet gravy, and cranberry sauce. "Turkey is expensive, but for many guests, Christmas feels incomplete without it...that emotional connection is why we continue the tradition every year," he adds. Other hotels such as The Ritz-Carlton Pune, JW Marriott Pune, and The Westin Pune Koregaon Park also include turkey as part of their Christmas Eve or Christmas season brunches. These festive spreads are typically priced between Rs 3,500 and Rs 5,000 per person, depending on the order, and attract families and expatriates looking for a traditional holiday meal.

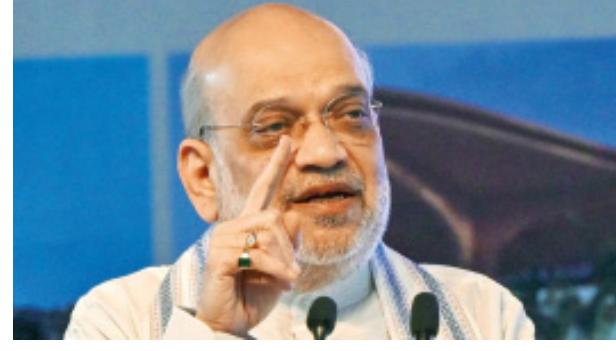
Customers, too, go out of their way to source turkey. Reeva Anthony, a Pune-based home cook, imports her turkey from Dubai. "I prefer getting it from Dubai because the cold-chain system is reliable and the bird reaches within three hours. It costs me around Rs 14,000, including transport, but the quality and freshness make it worth it for me," she says. Anthony slow-roasts the turkey with whole spices, black peppercorns, caramelised onions, and butter. "For me, turkey is not just about taste. It is about recreating Christmas memories at home," she says. Despite remaining a niche product, turkey continues to hold a special place in Pune's Christmas celebrations. Sustained by one or two suppliers, a few luxury hotels and dedicated home cooks, the tradition also survives on planning, pre-orders and sentiment, quietly bringing a global festive flavour to the city every December.

## Amit Shah to review Haryana Police passing-out parade in Panchkula tomorrow; 5,061 constables to join force

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

As many as 5,061 newly trained constables will formally join the Haryana Police on Wednesday after successfully completing their basic training. Their passing-out parade will be held at the Tau Devi Lal Stadium in Panchkula Sector 3. The grand ceremony is being organised under the aegis of the Haryana Police Academy, Madhuban, and will witness the recruits displaying parade drills, discipline, and professional excellence.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will be the chief guest at the event and take the salute at the parade, lending national importance to the occasion. Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, along with senior police and administrative officers and other dignitaries, will also be present. A traffic rehearsal and thorough inspection of the entire route of the home minister and other dignitaries was conducted by the police force across Chandigarh and Panchkula on Tuesday. "The recruits have undergone an intensive and multi-dimensional training programme conducted at Madhuban, PTC (Police Training Centre) Sunaria, RTC (Recruit Training Centre) Bhandsi, Ambala, and Naval Training Centres from December 16, 2024, to September 22, 2025. The training focused on physical fitness, legal awareness, weapon handling, field tactics, disaster management, human rights and effective public interaction, preparing the constables for modern and citizen-oriented policing," A S Chawla, Director of the Haryana Police Academy, was quoted as saying in a press statement.



"The batch stands out for its strong academic profile. Among the 5,061 recruits, 969 are postgraduates, 3,324 are graduates, and 768 hold 10+2 or diploma qualifications. Many of them are proficient in Hindi, English and Punjabi, which is expected to strengthen communication with the public, enhance cybercrime handling and support technology-driven policing. All recruits have also been registered on the Karmayogi Portal and encouraged to undertake further capacity-building courses," Chawla added. "Women recruits have recorded notable achievements in this batch, reflecting growing empowerment and equal opportunity within the Haryana Police. Nishu from Jind secured the Overall First Position, Mohit from Gurugram stood second, while Manjeet Chahal from Hissar secured third position and also won the Best Outdoor Trophy," Chawla added.

## 'Call of Duty' co-creator Vince Zampella killed in car crash



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

The developer and executive died on Sunday (December 21, 2025) while driving his Ferrari on a scenic road north of Los Angeles, according to local broadcaster NBC4. "For unknown reasons, the vehicle veered off the roadway, struck a concrete barrier, and became fully engulfed," the California Highway Patrol (CHP) said in a statement, without identifying the two victims in the crash. The CHP added that both the driver and a passenger who was ejected from the vehicle succumbed to their injuries.

Witnesses posted video of the mangled cherry-red Ferrari, engulfed in flames, on the mountain road. The cause of the crash remains under investigation. His studios created some of the world's best-selling video games, and Zampella was considered an innovator in first-person military shooter style games. This year, when his "Battlefield 6" video game set a new sales record for the franchise, Zampella expressed gratitude, saying "we never take moments like this for granted" — despite a long career of success in gaming.

The mass-combat game has won over 100 million players in the past two decades, in its various iterations. And yet, that number isn't a first. To this day, "Call of Duty" boasts

more than 100 million active players, monthly. "You have that dream of the game being popular, but I don't think you're ever ready for that level of success," Zampella told gaming site IGN in a 2016 interview. Profound, far-reaching Zampella was best known for co-creating the "Call of Duty" franchise and founding Respawn Entertainment, the studio behind "Titanfall," "Apex Legends," and the "Star Wars Jedi" games. After starting out in the 1990s as a designer on shooter games, he co-founded Infinity Ward in 2002 and helped launch "Call of Duty" in 2003. Activision later acquired his studio. He left Activision under contentious circumstances and established Respawn in 2010, which Electronic Arts acquired in 2017.

At EA, he eventually took charge of revitalising the "Battlefield" franchise, cementing his reputation as one of the most influential figures in modern first-person shooter games. "This is an unimaginable loss, and our hearts are with Vince's family, his loved ones, and all those touched by his work," Electronic Arts said in a statement. "Vince's influence on the video game industry was profound and far-reaching," the company said, adding that "his work helped shape modern interactive entertainment." A statement by Respawn, posted on the "Battlefield" X account, praised Zampella "for how he showed up every day, trusting his teams, encouraging bold ideas, and believing in Battlefield and the people building it." Zampella "championed what he believed was right for the people behind those studios and our players because it mattered." "It was a bold, transgressive method of storytelling, of a moment in time that was political, that was violent, and that was impactful," Washington Post video game reporter Gene Park told NBC4. "He really knew how to create stories and create experiences that really hit at the heart of human experience — whether it was terror, dread, heroism. I think he was really able to kind of encapsulate that through the designs of the video games that he made," Mr. Park said.

## How Bengaluru celebrated Christmas in the '80s and '90s



In the '80s and '90s, a typical Christmas morning in Bengaluru was marked by the smell of plum cake and trees outside lined with fairy lights. For those who grew up in that generation, memories such as these live more vividly in the mind than in photo albums, and are replayed every season. From a parish choir testing their mics to pressure cookers hissing and all your cousins trying to fit into a single auto, the festive spirit seemed to hover in the air. Before the time of malls and Instagram, the joy of the festival spread through word of mouth and the city's iconic streets.

Places such as MG Road, Brigade Road and Commercial Street turned into informal meeting points, spots where everyone met up at least once during the season. "In the '80s, we used to walk to church in the chill midnight for mass, because hardly anyone in our area had a car back then," recalls Jom James, a restaurant owner at Sri Krishna Cafe, in Halasurur, who has lived in the city for 52 years. Inside homes, the celebrations were simple but rooted in love and connection. James remembered his mother making appam and mutton stew as he and his sister waited, while a simple Christmas tree surrounded by balloons stood propped up as a decoration.

A 20-foot replica of the US World Trade Center at Nilgiri's 30th Annual Cake Exhibition in Bangalore on Friday. To make this replica of the destroyed towers, 3,500 kg sugar and 2,800 man-hours were employed. It took one and a half months to finish. The exhibition will be open for the public up to January 1994: Velankanni Shrine in Bangalore? This is just the 23.5 ft. replica in sugar of the St. Mary's basilica at Velankanni in Tamil Nadu, the highlight of the 24th annual cake exhibition-cum-sale held by the Nilgiris Mechanised Bakery here. The unique feature of this show is to make cakes resembling historical monuments such as the Taj Mahal, the Mysore Palace, the London Bridge, etc. | Photo Credit: The Hindu archives

These outings were a ritual, with bus rides into town, slow night walks through the lit streets and the simple pleasure of being in the city. Even the background score of Bengaluru was different from what it is today, with far less traffic and many more songs of those years drifting out of homes and school corridors. Anisha VT, a senior engineering manager at an IT firm who has lived in the city since 1985, remembers pop songs on MTV and the odd cable connection, with children sneaking into friends' houses to watch Alisha Chinai, Bombay Vikings, Colonial Cousins and others on a loop. Western tracks often arrived via the "popular kids" at school dances, and everyone else went home to chase those songs on Top 10 shows, a shared thrill of discovery Yamini feels is missing now. Sowmya Seetaram-Sagar, who has lived in Bengaluru for nearly 40 years and once worked as a scientist at pharmaceutical and drug discovery companies, talks fondly about the bike rides she and her friends once took through Commercial Street during Christmas.

1997: On Christmas eve, Mickey Mouse and Minnie Mouse of Walt Disney Inc. were in Bangalore. This three-day trip is a part of the Disney and Christmas Carnival hosted by Shoppers' Stop and the Mickey 1997: On Christmas eve, Mickey Mouse and Minnie Mouse of Walt Disney Inc. were in Bangalore. This three-day trip is a part of the Disney and Christmas Carnival hosted by Shoppers' Stop and the Mickey 1997 | Photo Credit: The Hindu archives

Now I don't even feel like going that way," she says. "It is far too crowded, and there is too much traffic; I wouldn't dream of taking my bike there the way we used to. But it's not like you stop wanting to go; now I want to go and show the Christmas tree to my children."

Bakery here. The unique feature of this show is to make cakes resembling historical monuments such as the Taj Mahal, the Mysore Palace, the London Bridge, etc. | Photo Credit: The Hindu archives

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## Search engines will soon start filtering adult content under new eSafety rules

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Melbourne: Search engines in Australia will soon have to blur pornographic and violent images in some cases to limit the chances children accidentally encounter this content. This is one of several rules outlined in a new online safety code covering internet search engines that comes into force on December 27. In 2022, Australia's online safety body, eSafety, surveyed more than 1,000 Australians aged 16 to 18 years.

The research found that one in three were under age 13 when they were first exposed to pornography. This exposure was "frequent, accidental, unavoidable and unwelcome," with content described by young people as "disturbing" and "in your face." The eSafety Commissioner, Julie Inman Grant, has said "a high proportion" of accidental exposure is through search engines, which are "the primary gateway to harmful content." The new code was co-developed by the Digital Industry Group Inc, an industry association representing tech companies including Google, Meta and Microsoft, and the Communications Alliance – the peak body of the Australian telecommunications industry. The code was announced in July 2025, but has been in development since July 2024. A single breach could result in fines of up to AUD 49.5 million. How will account holders' ages be assured? The code requires providers of internet search engine services, such as Google and Microsoft (which owns

Bing), to "implement appropriate age assurance measures for account holders" in Australia by 27 June 2026.

Age checks will identify whether search engine account holders are over or under 18. Currently, children as young as 13 can create and hold a Google account, the search engine used by more than 90 per cent of Australians.

The industry code of practice outlines several examples of appropriate age assurance strategies companies can choose, such as: • photo identification, including digital ID systems • facial age estimation • authentication by a parent of a child account holder's age • use of artificial intelligence (AI) to estimate age from user data. Some of these approaches (such as digital ID and credit card checks) can verify that a person is over 18. However, age estimation, whether based on an AI assessment of user behaviour or facial scanning, and parental attestation may be inaccurate. The implementation of social media restrictions earlier this month has already highlighted the limitations of age assurance technologies. Children may also use VPNs to get around the restrictions, or they may use adults' accounts on their devices, if these are not logged out.

How will this change how Australians use search engines?

## Duty-free access, visas as India-New Zealand seal FTA



New Delhi: India and New Zealand on Monday announced the conclusion of talks for a free trade agreement that will give duty-free access to a range of domestic goods, particularly from labour-intensive sectors, and includes an FDI commitment of USD 20 billion over 15 years. The agreement is expected to help double bilateral trade in goods and services to USD 5 billion in five years.

On the other hand, New Zealand will get duty-free access to goods such as sheep meat, wool, coal and over 95 per cent of forestry and wood articles. Under the pact, Wellington will get duty concessions on a number of other items such as kiwi fruit, wine, some seafood, cherries, avocados, persimmons, bulk infant formula, Manuka honey and milk albumins. To protect the interests of domestic farmers and MSMEs, India will not give any duty concessions in the politically sensitive dairy sector, like milk, cream, whey, yoghurt, and cheese. The other products which will not be covered under the pact include vegetable products (onions, chana, peas, corn, almonds), sugar, artificial honey, animal, vegetable or microbial fats and oils, arms and ammunition, gems and jewellery, copper and its products, and aluminium and articles. In the services sector, New Zealand will give a temporary employment entry visa pathway for Indian professionals in skilled occupations with a quota of 5,000 visas annually and a stay of up to three years. This pathway covers Indian professions such as AYUSH practitioners, yoga instructors, Indian chefs, and music teachers, as well as high-demand sectors including IT, engineering, healthcare, education, and construction, strengthening workforce mobility and services trade. The agreement is likely to be signed and implemented in about 7-8 months.

The pact would help Indian exporters, reeling under the impact of 50 per cent tariffs imposed by the Trump administration on Indian goods, to diversify shipments in the Oceania region. India has already implemented a trade pact with Australia.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his New Zealand counterpart Christopher Luxon on Monday announced the firming up of the pact. The two Prime Ministers held a phone conversation, following which the announcement on the FTA was made. With negotiations having been initiated during Luxon's visit to India in March 2025, the two leaders agreed that the conclusion of the FTA in a record time of nine months reflects the shared ambition and political will to further deepen ties between the countries.

The FTA would significantly deepen bilateral economic

## ISI plot to provoke India amid Bangladesh unrest: Intel sources



New Delhi: With the situation in Bangladesh going from bad to worse, Intelligence agencies have learnt that there is a deliberate attempt by the ISI to provoke India. The plan is to provoke India into attacking Bangladesh, so that it garners international attention, agencies have learnt. The ISI-backed elements are provoking people, stating that India is protecting ousted leader Sheikh Hasina, while backing her party, the Awami League. The August 2024 uprising managed to create an anti-Hasina wave across the country, and this is being taken advantage of by the ISI.

Following her ouster, she fled to India and remained in New Delhi since then. Following the collapse of the Sheikh Hasina government and the subsequent takeover by Muhammad Yunus as caretaker of the interim government, chaos ensued throughout the country. Street violence has become a daily routine apart from the persecution of the minority community. An official stated that there is a significant amount of anti-India sentiment that the ISI has managed to cultivate over the past year. However, the systematic persecution of the minority community, especially the Hindus, is a clear attempt to provoke India. In the last couple of days, disturbing visuals of a Hindu man being lynched have been in circulation.

ISI-backed handles are deliberately making these clips go viral in India so that it provokes the general public. The aim is to provoke the Indian public to such an extent that they put pressure on the government to act militarily against Bangladesh. The other intention is to make India look like the aggressor in the international community, an official said. An official says that India's intention is not to be the aggressor. However, it will do everything it can to protect its integrity and sovereignty. Moreover, the ISI is well aware that any such action could derail the February 2026 elections. This is what the ISI and Jamaat-e-Islami have been planning, as they want the elections to be postponed or cancelled. If this were to take place, they would run the country the way they like with their proxy Muhammad Yunus, another official said.

In addition to the lynching incidents, two student leaders have been shot in a span of a week. Osman Hadi and Motaleb Sikder, both top student leaders, were shot, and this has led to an increase in violence. The Bangladeshi agencies have accused some Awami League members of shooting the two student leaders. This is being used as a tool against Sheikh Hasina and her party. The message that is being put out is that India is sheltering the leader of a party that is responsible for the killings of Bangladeshi leaders. The ISI is trying to fuel anger against India so that the people in Bangladesh carry out more violence and develop a deep hatred for India. It is similar to what the ISI created in Pakistan, an Intelligence Bureau official said. Experts say

engagement, enhance market access, promote investment flows, strengthen strategic cooperation between the two countries, and also open up new opportunities for innovators, entrepreneurs, farmers, MSMEs, students and youth of both countries across various sectors. Both leaders expressed confidence in doubling bilateral trade over the next five years as well as an investment of USD 20 billion in India from New Zealand over the next 15 years," an official statement said. Goyal said that the investment will give a boost to domestic manufacturing and generate jobs. Further under the pact, New Zealand will set up a dedicated Agri-Technology Action Plan on kiwifruit, apples and honey with a view to helping Indian farmers enhance productivity and quality.

The cooperation includes the establishment of Centres of Excellence, improved planting material, capacity building for growers and technical support for orchard management, post-harvest practices, supply chain performance, and food safety. Commitment has been extended by New Zealand on Geographical Indications (GIs), including amendment of its law to facilitate the registration of India's wines and spirits. "Cooperation has been agreed in AYUSH, culture, fisheries, audio visual tourism, forestry, horticulture and traditional knowledge systems," the commerce ministry said.

Apart from tariff liberalisation, the pact includes provisions to address non-tariff barriers through enhanced regulatory cooperation, and streamlined customs, sanitary and phytosanitary measures and technical barriers to trade disciplines. Pharma and Medical Devices sector will get a boost through faster regulatory access in New Zealand by enabling acceptance of GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice) and GCP (Good Clinical Practice) inspection reports from comparable regulators, including approvals by the US FDA, EU's EMA, UK's MHRA. "This will reduce duplicative inspections, lower compliance costs, and expedite product approvals, thereby facilitating the growth of India's pharmaceutical and medical devices exports to New Zealand," the ministry said. Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said that this is the seventh agreement finalised by the NDA government. It includes the UAE, Australia, the UK, EFTA bloc, Oman and Mauritius. He said that the India-New Zealand pact is the first pact in which all the main officials from the Indian side involved in the negotiations were women. India's chief negotiator is Joint Secretary in the Ministry, Petal Dhillon. He also said that India has so far finalised FTAs with three members of the Five Eyes (FVEY) alliance – Australia, the UK and New Zealand. The five countries of the intelligence sharing network are Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK, and the US. India is in the advanced stage of negotiations for a bilateral trade agreement with the US and in the process of resuming talks for a trade agreement with Canada. "The current bilateral trade with New Zealand is small but the upside potential is huge," Goyal told reporters here. Bilateral merchandise trade stood at USD 1.3 billion in 2024-25, while total trade goods and services reached about USD 2.4 billion in 2024, with services trade alone reaching USD 1.24 billion, led by travel, IT, and business services. Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said that although only five formal rounds were held for the pact, both sides remained in continuous touch to close the negotiations.

that New Delhi has a lot on its plate to deal with, where the Bangladesh situation is concerned. India has maintained that it wants good ties with its neighbours. With the Awami League out of the picture owing to the electoral ban, India has been reaching out to the Bangladesh National Party (BNP). The BNP is marginally ahead of the Jamaat, where votes are concerned, and has decided not to align with the Jamaat as it had done in the past. The ISI and Jamaat will do everything to delay the elections, so that the BNP stays out of the picture. The larger intention is to keep the BNP at bay so that it does not share good ties with India. Any government that is friendly with India is detrimental to Pakistan, and this is something that it would try to avoid at any cost, another official said.

## 5 policemen killed in attack in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa



Peshawar: Unidentified armed assailants opened fire at a police van, killing five policemen in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Tuesday, officials said.

The incident occurred in the Karak district when the police officials were on a routine patrol. District Police Officer (DPO) Saud Khan said that all five police personnel in the van have been killed in the attack. A heavy contingent of police rushed to the spot, cordoned off the area, and began collecting evidence.

A search operation to apprehend the attackers was launched. Chief Minister Sohail Afridi strongly condemned the attack in the Karak district, describing the incident as "highly unfortunate" and "deplorable." He added that maintaining law and order across the province remains the top priority of the government and that such cowardly attacks cannot weaken the resolve of the state and security institutions. The government accuses the banned terror outfit Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) of carrying out terror attacks, especially in provinces bordering Afghanistan, after its ceasefire deal ended in November 2022.

## The nostalgic return of handmade toffees across India



too, toffees are entirely handmade. "I started with trials in my home kitchen and I have slowly step by step increased production in a commercial kitchen tweaking the product as our volume increases."

Another brand born out of kitchen trials is Tarvoti. Based in Goa, Preethi Hirrendra Dhekne, 44, launched the label in 2023 inspired by the many local treats she chanced upon during her travels. "My husband is in the merchant navy and while sailing with him I discovered a new joy of picking up local treats from various countries, and bringing them back home to share with my loved ones. During Covid, my husband took a break from sailing and we missed our dose of foreign chocolates. One day, we curated a unique toffee at home using local cashew, and an idea to market this unique concept as a 'gift of Goa' was born." And hence the name Tarvoti, which means 'sailor' in Konkani. The brand offers three different flavours of toffee: roast almond, cashew coffee, and country cashew. "The latter is a rustic combination inspired by the ginger used in traditional Goan sweets. We will soon introduce new regional flavours such as coconut, banana, and mint". She explains how sugar and butter are cooked together to form a creamy caramel that is then mixed with nuts and other "secret" ingredients to form the core of the toffee. "Toffee squares" are then coated with chocolate and sprinkled with nuts."

When it comes to sweet treats at Christmas, the classic rum-infused cake takes precedence with bakers hosting cake mixing parties weeks before the festival. Alongside are traditional treats such as kulkuls, rose cookies, gingerbread men, mince pies, and a range of frosted cookies. Among this varied buffet lies a silent showstopper that is central to the festival (and otherwise too) but often forgotten: the toffee. Of late, there has been a real nostalgia-driven revival of the traditional confectionery and makers across the country are creating chewy toffees and even flavoured, nut-infused variants.

Nestled in Raison, a village in Himachal Pradesh, Big Bear Farms (that launched in 2020) has been making toffees at their farm since 2022. Co-founder Nikita Kapur, 36, says the team began making toffees in their home kitchen in Kullu Valley initially only for family and friends, for celebrations and festive gifting. "We first introduced them during the festive season, expecting them to be a limited offering. The response, however, was overwhelming, and what began as a seasonal experiment soon became a permanent part of our range," she says. "Nostalgia was not something we set out to create, but it has naturally found its place in our brand." Today, they retail three variants: original caramel toffees, chocolate caramel and most recently, coffee caramel toffees. Down South, Le Cordon Bleu Chef Pooja Srinivasan launched Inippu Indulgence in April this year to spotlight heritage toffees. "I am also a mother of two young kids and I noticed that my kids and my nephews don't enjoy chocolate cake! The joy of indulging in a piece of shared pastry or dessert has been swapped for caramels, ice creams, and toffees. And I have also noticed a change in celebratory trends with customers choosing smaller cakes because in general we as a population are more mindful of what we consume," says Pooja of the Chennai-based brand, adding how this mindset led her to create bite-sized toffees. South Indian heritage ingredients are the heroes of the toffees at Inippu Indulgence and bestselling flavours include filter coffee, and Tutticorin sea salt. "Our original heritage toffees also include pure vanilla bean, Malabar spice, and Dakshina cocoa. We have introduced rum-flavoured toffees for this festive season, and also had a limited edition drop for Halloween that included roasted pecan Malabar spice, brown sugar and salted butter," explains Pooja, who will launch nut inclusions for the upcoming Wedding Edit.

But what is it about toffee that has got these brands invested? Nikita says the love received from customers across the country has been a driving factor. "We began with farm fresh fruit preserves, jams, jellies, pickles, chutneys and dessert spreads that we had been making for years for home consumption. The toffees caught up and are doing as well as our preserves," she says. Like the preserves, the toffees are made by hand in small batches, and slow cooked. "Nothing is mechanised. We stir by hand, watching closely as colour and texture develop, and relying on experience rather than metrics. Wrapping and packing are all done manually too. It's hands-on work. The human judgement involved is what gives the toffee its character." For Pooja, veering away from social media trends was key. "Our generation has a lot more exposure thanks to more travel, the Internet and just from the availability of international products a click away. I did not want to deal with another 'golden latte' trend and decided that there was no reason why I couldn't create something that was globally viable while using ingredients that have been staple in south Indian households for generations," she says. At her brand

## U.S. lawmakers condemn killing of Hindu man in Bangladesh



U.S. lawmakers have condemned the targeted mob killing of a Hindu man in Bangladesh, calling on authorities to protect religious minorities and restore the rule of law. Bangladesh unrest, highlights on December 23, 2025

Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi condemned the targeted mob killing of Dipu Chandra Das, amid rising instability and unrest. Mr. Krishnamoorthi, an Illinois Democrat, called on Bangladeshi authorities to ensure accountability, protect religious minorities, and restore the rule of law. "I am appalled by the targeted mob killing of Dipu Chandra Das, a Hindu man in Bangladesh — an act of violence amid a period of dangerous instability and unrest," Mr. Krishnamoorthi said in a statement on Sunday.

"While authorities have reported arrests, the Government of Bangladesh must aggressively pursue a full and transparent investigation and prosecute all those responsible to the fullest extent of the law. It must also take urgent action to protect Hindu communities and other religious minorities from further violence. For the sake of all Bangladeshis, this unrest must end and the rule of law must be upheld," he said. New York State Assemblywoman Jenifer Rajkumar said she is "deeply disturbed" by the ongoing violence against Bangladesh's Hindu minority, exemplified most recently by the brutal lynching of Das. Bangladesh burns again: How will Hadi's death impact elections and ties with India? | Worldview "A mob beat him, set him ablaze, and left his body on a highway. Authorities have reportedly arrested twelve individuals in connection with the horrific crime," she said. Ms. Rajkumar said the incident is part of a "troubling" pattern of religious persecution and targeted violence against religious minorities in Bangladesh. She added that the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council documented 2,442 incidents of violence

against minorities and more than 150 temples vandalised from August 2024 to July 2025.

"From Queens to countries across the globe, we all share in the fear, pain, and uncertainty faced by Hindus in Bangladesh. We stand in solidarity with Bangladeshi's Hindu community and for human rights and religious freedom globally," she said. On December 19, Das was lynched to death and his body set on fire over alleged blasphemy in Bangladesh. Das was a factory worker in Mymensingh city. At least 12 people have been arrested for their alleged involvement in the murder.

## Tripura party sets condition for reopening Bangladesh office in Agartala

Tipra Motha founder and royal scion Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma said that the Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in Tripura's capital, Agartala, would not be allowed to reopen unless attacks on Hindus and other minorities, and anti-India statements in the neighbouring country stopped.

Reacting to the suspension of all visa and consular services by the Bangladesh Assistant High Commission, he said on Tuesday (December 23, 2025) that India was capable of responding firmly to threats issued to Indian diplomatic missions in Bangladesh. Addressing the people of Tripura and members of his party's youth wing, Mr. Debbarma said that national interest must take precedence over party politics, and called for unity in the face of external challenges. "The Bangladesh mission in Agartala will not be allowed to resume operations unless the attacks on minorities in Bangladesh, especially the Hindus, end and also hostile statements against India. They are also threatening to occupy the northeast," Mr. Debbarma said.

Earlier, he said he was "astonished by a few Indian intellectuals" suggesting that former Bangladesh Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, be handed over to Dhaka. "Would they suggest handing over the Dalai Lama to China? As Indians, our policy is and should be that we stand by friends unwaveringly," Mr. Debbarma said.

## In axolotls and flatworms, regeneration is a body-wide choreograph



the body into a temporary state of readiness. At the injury site, another group kept the new limb growing. In both places, the same stress hormone, norepinephrine, a close chemical cousin of adrenaline, acted as the messenger. When the researchers blocked the animal's stress nerves, regeneration slowed down. But when they used common blood pressure drugs to mimic or block those stress signals, they could dial the response up or down, showing that the body's repair mode could be switched on and off chemically. The primed state itself faded after about four weeks, suggesting that regeneration is not a permanent condition but a short-lived 'repair mode' under the nervous system's control. The group also expressed suspicion that the system actively shut down this state rather than letting it fade, perhaps through a surveillance mechanism that reined in cell growth once the injury response had served its purpose. Rethinking regeneration The same signalling machinery exists in mammals, so scientists are now wondering if mammals could have such abilities, too. However, regenerative biologist and associate professor Jessica Whited, who led the Harvard group, strongly emphasised that any parallels to humans remain speculative. "It could be possible that humans have latent regenerative abilities that need to be coaxed out with the proper molecular instructions, in a specific sequence," she said, stressing that such hypotheses still require direct testing.

In a new study in *Cell Reports*, researchers at the Stowers Institute for Medical Research in Missouri, USA, found that the missing niche might not be local at all, but comes from the gut. They combined a powerful gene-mapping tool called Slide-seqV2 with electron microscopy to chart where thousands of stem cells sit and which genes they switch on. The maps revealed that neoblasts rarely stay in contact with nearby tissues, yet their activity depends on chemical messages sent from the intestine. When key intestinal genes were turned off, the usual post-injury burst of cell division disappeared and regeneration faltered; even day-to-day cell replacement changed. "The planarian gut functions as a central regulator for whole-body regeneration," the study's corresponding author Alejandro Sánchez Alvarado, a molecular biologist at the Stowers Institute, said. He added that the same gut signals may also help guide routine tissue renewal across the body.

The findings don't put the intestine in charge. Instead, they point to a cooperative system in which many tissues, including the gut, help steer stem cells through shared chemical cues. Because stem and intestinal cells sit only a few micrometres apart (roughly a single cell's width), their conversations are likely carried by molecules such as small proteins, fats or other metabolic signals rather than direct contact. That is to say, in planarians, regeneration seems to depend on a diffuse web of nearby chemical signals rather than a single, fixed neighborhood. When an axolotl (*Ambystoma mexicanum*) loses a limb, the cells at the stump gather and multiply into a mound of tissue called the blastema, which becomes an engine of new growth. For decades, scientists believed this small structure contained a major part of the regenerative programme. But a new study in *Cell* by a group at the Harvard Stem Cell Institute in Massachusetts, USA, has reported that the body itself joins the act. After amputation, a burst of activity in the animal's stress response nerves briefly drives cells throughout the body to reenter the cycle of division. This organism-wide systemic activation seems to prime the animal for repair. When a previously uninjured limb is later amputated, its blastema is noticeably larger by two weeks. The response was found to be carried by special proteins on cells that sensed stress signals. In distant tissues, one group of these proteins switched on a growth control system called mTOR, putting

## How are we protecting astronauts from deadly space debris?



Millions of naturally occurring Micrometeoroids and Orbital Debris (MMOD) orbit the earth, posing a constant threat to all spacecraft and space stations. The menace attracted global attention recently when a piece of debris struck the Chinese crewed vehicle Shenzhou-20, causing a minor crack in the window of its return capsule, rendering it unusable for crew travel.

### What is MMOD?

Micrometeoroids are typically extremely small, with sizes ranging from a few micrometres (a millionth of a meter) — the approximate size of a grain of dust — to up to about two millimetres. Each weighs less than a dried grape. Most of them (about 80 to 90%) originate from collisions between asteroids in the Asteroid belt (between Mars and Jupiter) with a small portion coming from comets. They also travel at extremely high velocities (about 11 to 72 km/s). Orbital debris (also called space debris, space junk or space trash) consists of human-made objects in the Earth's orbit that no longer serve any useful purpose. All orbital debris originated primarily from exploded rocket stages, satellites, accidental collisions and intentional anti-satellite weapon tests. The typical average speed of orbital debris is about 10 km/s. With increase in density of space debris, there could be a theoretical scenario wherein collisions between them may create a cascade of further collisions, eventually making space travel impossible, a phenomenon known as the Kessler Syndrome.

The Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC) — an international forum of major space agencies such as NASA, ESA, ISRO, JAXA, etc. — plays a vital technical role by generating the foundational standards for space debris mitigation. These technical standards form the basis for the space debris mitigation guidelines adopted by the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNCOPUOS). However, the guidelines are considered as "soft law" implying that they are voluntary, and have no legally binding enforcement mechanism to compel the countries to adopt them.

### How is MMOD distributed in space?

Orbital debris is mostly concentrated in a "shell" around the Earth in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) ranging from about 200 km up to 2,000 km altitude. In contrast, micrometeoroids exist everywhere in space, but due to the Earth's gravity pull their distribution is slightly higher near our planet. There are hundreds of millions of pieces of orbital debris in the LEO — an estimated 34,000 objects larger than 10 cm (and

are accurately tracked) and over 128 million pieces greater than 1 mm in size. The micrometeoroids in Earth's orbital environment are effectively uncountable and they deliver billions of impacts to orbiting space crafts annually.

How are space systems designed for MMOD impact? The risk of being hit by MMOD in the LEO is not uniform; it is highly directional. The face of the spacecraft in the direction of travel experiences the maximum overall hazard because the debris collides directly with the highest relative speed. Because of the very high velocity of the debris, even tiny fragments carry enough kinetic energy to cause catastrophic failure or critical damage to onboard systems. Space agencies utilise complex engineering models that process tracking and statistical data to determine the MMOD flux, which is the expected number of particles of a given size that will hit a spacecraft over its mission lifetime. This data with other relevant information is fed into specially developed software tools to perform a vulnerability analysis and to calculate the probability of loss or failure of critical components under the impact of MMOD. If the calculated risk exceeds the established safety standard, then the spacecraft is protected by physical shielding against the impact.

How are satellites protected from MMOD? MMOD threats are countered using a strategy of design and operational methods. Engineers rely on Whipple shields to protect the space vehicle from MMOD where energy dissipation is achieved through fragmentation and turbulence, analogous to sea waves breaking against tetra pods and splitting its energy. Whipple shields have an outer "bumper" and inner "rear wall" with a stand-off or gap between two. The bumper shatters the incoming high-velocity debris into a cloud of fragments. As the cloud expands across the stand-off distance, the momentum is distributed over a wide area, allowing the rear wall to absorb the energy without failing. For avoiding the risk from larger debris, space agencies maintain detailed tracking catalogs of objects larger than 10 cm. When a potential collision with a trackable object is projected, a debris avoidance manoeuvre is executed by firing the spacecraft's thrusters to slightly alter its orbit and move out of the projected impact zone. How is Gaganyaan crew protected? The main difference in Gaganyaan compared to other ongoing human space missions is that it is a standalone mission as there is no space station where the orbital module can dock and seek help in case of any exigency during the orbital phase. Since the mission duration is very short (less than a week), the probability of being hit by a catalogued space debris is extremely low, though the risk from small un-catalogued, high-velocity fragments still necessitates protective measures. The MMOD protection scheme for Gaganyaan is based on internationally accepted standards, such as employing passive defences like Whipple shields. To ensure that these shields meet stringent human-rating requirements, ISRO uses specialised facilities and software tools for design and validation. The gas gun facility at DRDO's Terminal Ballistics Research Laboratory (TBRL), Chandigarh, is one of the facilities used for validating the design where a 7 mm spherical projectile can be accelerated to achieve an impact velocity of up to 5 km/s.

# Institutionalising animal representation



Any meaningful conversation about the political representation of animals must begin by challenging the deep anthropocentric assumptions embedded in modern political thought. The core issue is not just cruelty but also the structural design of democracy itself, built on a rigid division between "the human" and "the animal". This foundational split, the original political boundary, positions the animal as the non-subject as it is non-rational, non-political, and a being reduced to "mere life". Across history, this single, simplified category of "the animal" has collapsed a vast plurality of non-human worlds into a negative mirror against which human superiority is defined. Language, reason and political agency were claimed for humans by denying these to others. This act of categorical "othering" is what enables the institutionalised exploitation of non-human beings today.

The task, therefore, is to expose the artificiality of this division. Animals are not a homogeneous mass but a heterogeneous multiplicity of beings whose lives impose distinct moral and political obligations. The problem we face is not a deficit of compassion but a structural flaw; democratic institutions treat animals as property, creating an institutional vacuum where their interests are never represented, measured or defended. This legal erasure is the root of systemic violence. Politically, this means that animals cannot remain passive objects of charity. Their lives place a demand on the political community; they make humans morally and politically accountable. Representation is not about granting animals anthropocentric rights such as voting. It is about formalising the representation of absolute vulnerability and unchosen dependency within democratic decision-making. This reframes the human role from benevolent caretaker to responsible political steward, whose decisions about land, food systems, environment and security must be justified in the light of animal interests. The basis for representation, therefore, is sentience and embodiment, not cognitive capacity. This requires creating fiduciary institutions or guardians whose sole democratic mandate is to articulate these interests in legislative and administrative processes. The long-standing strategy of requiring non-human animals to prove that they are "like us" to deserve protection is flawed and discriminatory. It evaluates the worth of species by how closely they mirror human abilities — an impossible and biased standard that would exclude most life forms from political standing. Representation must be grounded in morally relevant capacities shared across species, rather than human-centric criteria. From this foundation follows the need for institutional design. Majoritarian democracy, by its nature, cannot represent animals: they have no electoral power, no lobbying influence, and no economic leverage. Democratic legitimacy, therefore, requires non-majoritarian pathways of representation — fiduciary institutions or guardians whose sole mandate is to articulate animal interests within legislative, administrative, and regulatory processes. This mirrors existing mechanisms that represent humans who cannot represent themselves, including institutions for children's rights, environmental protection, data protection and future generations. The same logic must now extend to animals. This is analogous to the existing fiduciary institutions designed to protect diffuse, vulnerable interests that cannot speak for themselves, such as children's rights, environmental protection agencies, or data protection authorities. The same logic needs to be extended to animals. Institutional representation is necessary because animal interests are systematically overridden by powerful economic and political actors. Animals cannot lobby, mobilise, or litigate without human intermediaries. The current welfare frameworks are reactive, not proactive; political representation must ensure ex ante protection before harm occurs.

Animal representation requires independence because

## Trump invites families of slain and injured National Guard members to White House

Washington: US President Donald Trump on Sunday said he's invited the family of a National Guard member fatally shot last week to the White House, saying he spoke to her parents and they were "devastated." US Army Spc. Sarah Beckstrom died after the Wednesday shooting in Washington, DC, while her seriously injured colleague, US Air Force Staff Sgt. Andrew Wolfe, remained in critical condition. The president said he's discussed a White House visit for the parents of both members of the West Virginia National Guard.

"I said, When you're ready, because that's a tough thing, come to the White House. We're going to honor Sarah," Trump told reporters. "And likewise with Andrew, recover or not." In recent days, local vigils in West Virginia have honoured the soldiers, including one Saturday evening at Webster County High School, where Beckstrom attended classes.

"Sarah was the kind of student that teachers hoped for, she carried herself with quiet strength, a contagious smile and a positive energy that lifted people around her," said Gabriel Markle, the school's principal. "She was sweet, caring and always willing to help others." Beckstrom, 20, and Wolfe, 24, were deployed with the West Virginia National Guard as part of Trump's aggressive crime-fighting plan that federalised the DC police force. A 29-year-old Afghan national faces one count of first-degree murder and two counts of assault with intent to kill while armed in the shooting, which prompted the Trump administration to halt all asylum decisions and pause issuing visas for people travelling on Afghan passports.

Funeral arrangements had not been finalised for Beckstrom, according to Cathy Pettry, the owner of Dodd & Reed Funeral Home in Webster Springs. Pettry said Saturday the home has been in contact with Beckstrom's family about services. The hometown crowd, seated in bleachers and folding chairs, lit candles as they heard from clergy and Gov. Patrick Morrisey, who said he had visited Wolfe's family earlier in the day. Wolfe, of Martinsburg, entered service in February 2019. He had graduated from Musselman High School in 2019, according to Berkeley County Schools. He remained hospitalised and "fighting for his life," Morrisey said the following day during an interview with Fox News Channel's "The Sunday Briefing." US Attorney Gen-

governments cannot credibly commit to protecting animal interests when those very governments benefit from animal exploitation through tax revenue, agricultural subsidies and political support from agribusiness. Determining animal interests requires scientific expertise in ethology, cognition, and welfare science — domains where majoritarian processes are inadequate. Just as modern democracies create non-majoritarian institutions to protect diffuse, vulnerable interests that cannot represent themselves, children's rights agencies, environmental protection agencies, and data protection authorities, the same logic must extend to animals. Advisory committees controlled by industry representatives cannot protect animal interests. Neither can people appointed through standard political channels. What is needed is structural independence with constitutional protection, enforcement powers and accountability mechanisms that prevent capture by economic interests. Fiduciary institutions for animals should be built on a simple idea, humans act as accountable trustees. Their job is to protect the interests of animals with care, loyalty and prudence. This shifts the model from lobbying to genuine guardianship, where representatives speak impartially for animals' vulnerability-based needs. For this to work, these institutions must be operationally independent — with fixed terms, transparent and diverse appointments, and their own budgets — so that they are insulated from political pressure and cannot be captured by powerful interests. The Supreme Court of India created such an institution for elephants. Having understood that elephants were vulnerable to the extreme and that hundreds were being killed in captivity, the Court created a high-powered committee to look into the well-being and possible rescue of individual animals. The committee is headed by a retired Supreme Court judge and has senior officers in it. It has enormous powers. But, alas, it has degenerated into a committee that meets in different places across India, puts off decisions till it meets again in yet another exotic locale. A year ago, I had sent a list of 19 elephants (with proof), tortured and beaten by their owners. No decision has been taken on even one. Three have died. This is yet another example of a so-called fiduciary institution which does not take itself seriously.

Running the operation Animal-representation bodies should operate at several levels of government. At the executive level, advisory councils can review proposed rules for animal welfare impacts. In Parliament, dedicated committees or subcommittees can examine legislation that affects animals, propose amendments, and demand impact assessments. Non-voting delegates or expert representatives should be integrated into parliamentary processes, ensuring that animal interests are considered at the core of law-making without disrupting democratic voting structures — similar to how fiscal oversight bodies operate. To prevent these systems from becoming dependent on individual personalities, they must run on clear, rule-based procedures. Reviews should be automatically triggered whenever a policy is likely to affect animals. Welfare impacts should be assessed through standard scientific metrics and published transparently. Appointments should be based on expertise, with fixed terms and rotation to avoid capture. This converts goodwill-based advocacy into predictable institutional routines. Strong accountability systems should be in place to ensure that these bodies function with integrity. Horizontal checks should complement vertical oversight by elected bodies. Independent annual audits should evaluate performance against clear welfare benchmarks, such as reductions in preventable harms. Making audit findings should be made public. Transparency is central. All decisions, reasoning and vetoes must be published so that the public and civil society can scrutinise them. To prevent elite capture, institutions should be required to consult diverse stakeholders. Reform must be gradual. Start with pilot projects in manageable areas, such as requiring animal-impact reviews in urban planning. Use these pilots to refine tools, data systems, and protocols. Funding should come from reallocated harmful subsidies or ring-fenced public budgets. Public education campaigns should build citizen support and normalise stewardship of animals as a democratic responsibility. Institutionalising animal representation is not an abstract moral project. It is a practical deepening of democracy — one where vulnerable beings that cannot speak are still accounted for, and where independence, expertise and accountability replace goodwill or personal influence.

General Pam Bondi told "Fox News Sunday" that she also planned to meet with Wolfe's family. Morrisey called it a challenging time for the state. Calling Beckstrom a "favourite daughter of Webster County," he said he quickly learned about her reputation as someone with a big heart who loved to serve others. Beckstrom, of Summersville, graduated in June 2023 and enlisted that month. She served with distinction as a military police officer, according to the West Virginia National Guard. "She had a lot of kindness and she certainly had courage," Morrisey told the crowd during Saturday's vigil. "Though her life lasted far too short, she has left a mark that's going to last forever."

## Bangladesh ex-PM Hasina ordered 2009 killings: commission

A commission set up to investigate a violent mutiny that saw dozens of senior army officers massacred 16 years ago on Sunday (November 30, 2025) said former premier Sheikh Hasina had ordered the killings. Rampaging troops from the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) murdered 74 people, including military officers, during the two-day revolt that began in Dhaka and spread across the country in 2009, destabilising the government of then-premier Ms. Hasina, weeks after she took office. After Ms. Hasina was ousted last year following a student-led uprising, the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus formed a commission to investigate the incident. Ms. Hasina, 78, has since sought refuge in India, defying court orders that she return to Bangladesh. According to the commission's report submitted on Sunday (November 30), the then-Awami League government led by Ms. Hasina was directly involved in the mutiny. Former member of parliament Fazle Noor Taposh acted as the "principal coordinator" and at the behest of Ms. Hasina who gave the "green signal" to carry out the killings.

## How will Meta implement Australia's looming under-16 social media ban?



Story so far: Australia-based users under the age of 16 will be banned from Meta's social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and Threads from December 10. This is a direct result of Australia's ban on teens under 16 using social media platforms. To comply with the new rules being enforced this month, Meta will start deactivating user accounts or blocking new sign-up by users under 16, from December 4. What will implementation of the ban look like on Meta's side?

Why are social media platforms like Meta complying?

Meta said it has been sending two-week warnings to thousands of Australian teenagers between ages 13 and 15, notifying them to download their digital history and delete their accounts. The Facebook-parent confirmed that account removals will only be done after the sweeping law takes effect on December 10. However, it is unclear whether the process will be completed on that same day, given verification is a lengthy, multi-step undertaking. The country's internet regulator, the Australian Communications and Media Authority, has noted that there are close to 1,50,000 Facebook users between 13 and 15 years of age, as well as 3,50,000 Instagram users. The law does not currently apply to Meta's Messenger app. Meta's prompt actions are in line with the restrictions imposed by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's government on multiple social media platforms including TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube, X, Reddit, Twitch and the livestreaming website Kick.

These companies are required to take "reasonable steps" to keep underage users off their platforms, failing which they will be facing fines of up to 49.5 million Australian dollars or around \$32 million. Despite doubts surrounding around how binding the law will be and whether the regulation will lead to better mental health in children, companies are begrudgingly following instructions. A Meta spokesperson said that while they are committed to fulfilling the legal obligations, they have raised their concerns around the regulation, saying a "blanket ban" is hardly the solution. The Mark Zuckerberg-led company claimed the action will

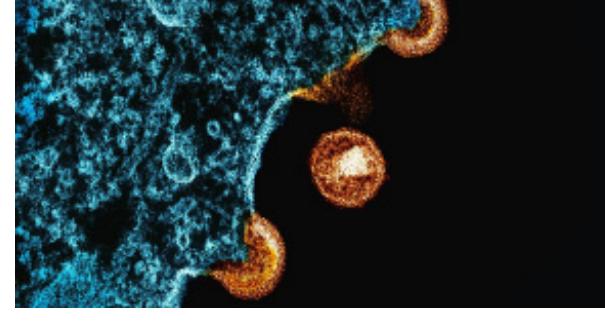
isolate teenagers from online communities and information while also giving "inconsistent protection." Albanese has responded saying that given this is the first time a law like this is being passed, there will be flaws while implementing it. And even though the system maybe imperfect, it will send a strong message to society, according to him. How is Meta verifying children's ages? Meta advised the affected users to update their contact details so the company can SMS or email them once they turn 16 years of age. Once these children cross the cut-off age, users can resume operating their accounts just as they had been left and find the same Reels, posts, messages and short videos. Users can also choose to delete their account completely, if they wish.

However, there is a fair chance that Meta might inaccurately flag a user as being under 16. An Age Estimation report published by the Australian government found that age verification systems using facial recognition showed false rejection rates higher than "acceptable levels" at 8.5% and 2.6% respectively, for users of 16 and 17 years of age. In case accounts are incorrectly flagged, Meta has said that users can verify their age either with a government ID or a video selfie via the third-party facial age-verification platform Yoti. Meta has assured users that the platform deletes personal data once verification is over. Critics have voiced concerns about the surveillance risks of checking children's ages with age-verification technology.

What are the drawbacks?

Meta vice president and global head of safety, Antigone Davis, stated that the company would like the app stores of Apple and Google Play to collect age-related data when users sign up, and verify whether they have reached 16 years-on behalf of Meta. Davis added this would ensure a standard procedure and also maintain user privacy. Presently, Meta hasn't disclosed what methods they will use to determine the ages of users, so that children under 16 don't find a loophole through which to evade the ban. But varied options have been discussed, including government IDs, facial or voice recognition, or age inference methods that consider online user data like interactions to estimate a user's age. The government has encouraged different platforms to look into their own age-verification tools. Gaming platforms like Roblox and Discord have recently been forced to introduce age restrictions for specific features, fearing that they could potentially be targeted next. Other platforms on the list are also expected to follow suit and explain how they plan to proceed. While TikTok and Snapchat have agreed to comply with the law, YouTube has differed with the Australian government's decision to be included in the ban. The video streaming platform hasn't said whether they will comply with the law but hinted at taking legal action against it.

## why HIV infections are still so hard to treat



In a landmark paper in Science on May 20, 1983, researchers reported they had isolated a "retrovirus" from a patient at risk of developing AIDS. The work, led by French virologists Françoise Barré-Sinoussi and Luc Montagnier at the Institut Pasteur, was the first glimpse of what would become one of the most devastating pathogens in modern human history. At the time, neither Barré-Sinoussi nor Montagnier knew that they had isolated the emperor of all viruses.

In the years that followed, it became tragically clear the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), as it came to be known, was not ordinary. Patients who acquired HIV did not recover and every attempt to create a vaccine failed. If left untreated, the infection had a near-100% mortality rate, relentlessly destroying the immune system and leaving patients vulnerable to fatal opportunistic infections. Today, more than four decades later, while HIV is no longer a death sentence, it remains far from cured. The virus has merely transitioned from a guarantee of death to a lifelong, tightly managed chronic illness. Survival today depends on strict, uninterrupted antiretroviral therapy — a regimen that comes with side effects and imposes the constant psychological burden of adherence, since any lapse risks viral rebound, with the added danger of the development of drug resistance. Thus after 42 years of unprecedented investment of time, money, and scientific effort, we are left with a rather abysmal report card. There is still no vaccine. And of the estimated 91.4 million people who have ever been infected with HIV, only a handful of individuals have been declared "cured". These rare cases were not cured by drugs but by bone-marrow transplants carried out to treat leukaemia, a form of blood cancer. Bone marrow transplants are risky procedures that are neither safe nor practical for the vast majority of persons living with HIV.

What makes HIV so resistant to a cure?

The answer lies in two unique properties of the virus. First, HIV belongs to a family of viruses called retroviruses. These viruses are unusual because, as part of their life cycle, they convert their genetic material from RNA to DNA, then integrate this DNA into the host's own DNA. Once this happens, the viral DNA becomes, for all practical purposes, indistinguishable from your own. The virus becomes a part of you. The only definitive way to eliminate it would be to eliminate every single infected cell. This challenge might still have been manageable were it not for the second property that makes HIV so formidable. After integrating its DNA into the host genome, HIV can enter a dormant state known as viral latency. In this state, an infected cell carries HIV's genetic material but produces no new virus particles. The virus persists silently, invisible to the immune system. At any given time, some infected cells churn out new viruses while others slip into latency, creating a shifting, hidden reservoir that has so far made a true cure impossible. This is also why antiretroviral therapy must be taken for life. The medicines merely prevent the virus from infecting new cells — but they do nothing against the silent, latent reservoir. They can't. Once therapy is stopped, a portion of these dormant infected cells will inevitably reactivate, reigniting viral replication. Together, these two properties make HIV uniquely difficult to cure. There are viruses that can integrate into the host genome: other retroviruses like HTLV-1

do this; even the hepatitis B virus sometimes leaves behind a stable DNA form in liver cells. There are also viruses that establish long-term latency: the herpes simplex and varicella-zoster viruses hide in nerve cells while the Epstein-Barr virus can persist silently in B-cells. And while a few viruses can even do both, none can do so with the efficiency observed in HIV. Moving target

Despite HIV possessing several other traits that add to its resilience, none compare to the consequences of its integration and latency. HIV's extraordinary sequence diversity, for example, is a hallmark of many RNA viruses. The hepatitis C, influenza, and some other viruses also mutate rapidly. But in HIV's case, this diversity becomes far more dangerous because it operates on top of permanent genomic integration and deep latency. That is, the virus constantly changes its appearance while simultaneously hiding inside long-lived cells, creating a moving target that the immune system can neither fully recognise nor completely eliminate. Over time, this relentless battle leads to immune exhaustion: the immune system becomes overwhelmed, depleted, and unable to keep up. This combination of rapid mutation layered onto integration and latency makes HIV one of the toughest pathogens humankind has ever encountered. Fall as it lived

Yet even in this difficult battle, there are reasons for cautious optimism. Decades of public-health efforts ranging from information and education campaigns to widespread testing and the expansion of antiretroviral therapy have transformed the global response to HIV. Today, more people than ever before are on treatment, and with consistent use antiretroviral therapy not only keeps individuals healthy but also reduces the amount of virus in the blood to levels so low that transmission becomes virtually impossible. Awareness is also higher than ever, people are getting diagnosed earlier, and treatment coverage continues to rise. As a result, the incidence of infections is falling year on year in many parts of the world, making room for hope against hope that an end to one of the worst pandemics to afflict humans may well be on the horizon. From the very beginning, HIV has been exceptional. It defied every pattern we knew. It was a virus that destroyed the very immune cells meant to fight it, that integrated permanently into our DNA, and hid in silent reservoirs for decades, that resisted vaccines despite enormous global scientific mobilisation. Where other pathogens bent to human ingenuity, HIV forced us to rethink everything: diagnosis, therapy, prevention, even the limits of biomedical ambition. Yet it may well be that the emperor of all viruses will finally fall — not to a cure but to awareness, prevention, and the steady narrowing of its paths of transmission. And in that fall, HIV may die as it lived, as the exception, as the one virus science could not conquer, but which was ultimately rendered powerless by humanity's collective will.

## Yakutpura youth loses over Rs 1 lakh in Telegram honeytrap scam

Hyderabad: A 20-year-old resident of Yakutpura was duped of over Rs 1 lakh in a Telegram-based impersonation and extortion scam, where a fraudster posed as a woman offering paid companionship. According to the Cybercrime Police, the scammer used stolen photos, fabricated feedback, and scripted chats to appear genuine before collecting multiple payments on the pretext of advance booking, security deposit, and room reservation. Believing the claims, the victim transferred money through UPI and bank accounts.

## Amid rising complaints of stuck refunds, Income Tax Dept cites high ineligible claims; asks taxpayers to file revised ITRs



The Department said it has contacted such taxpayers through SMS and email under the NUDGE campaign to correct such errors for which the revised returns need to be filed by December 31. Amid a series of complaints by taxpayers over stuck income tax refunds for the ongoing assessment year 2025-26, the Income Tax Department on Tuesday said certain taxpayers have "claimed ineligible refunds by availing deductions or exemptions to which they are not entitled, resulting in understatement of income". The Department said it has contacted such taxpayers through SMS and email under the NUDGE campaign to correct such errors for which the revised returns need to be filed by December 31.

"It is advised that the concerned taxpayers review their Income-tax returns (ITRs), verify the correctness of their deduction and exemption claims, and revise their returns, if required, within the prescribed time by December 31, 2025, so as to avoid further enquiries in the matter," it said. Taxpayers and chartered accountants (CAs) have taken to social media to complain about the stuck refunds, with many even claiming that their refunds have been stuck despite not having received any SMS or mail from the Department for any discrepancies. The ITR filing deadline for individuals and non-audit cases was September 16 this year. As per the latest official data for April 1-December 17, refunds were 13.52 per cent lower than last year. Sources said the I-T Department had been scrutinising high-value deductions and refunds above the threshold of Rs 20,000 but it

has now started to issue refunds which is likely to reflect in the next 10 days.

So far, over 15 lakh ITRs have already been revised for AY 2025-26, it said. Separately, over 21 lakh taxpayers have updated their ITRs for assessment years 2021-22 to 2024-25 and paid over Rs 2,500 crore in taxes during the ongoing financial year, it added. A revised return can be filed three months before the end of the assessment year, that is, December 31. Updated ITRs can be filed within two years from the end of the assessment year with penalty. An updated return (ITR-U) can be filed by a taxpayer within 24 months from the end of the relevant assessment year, even if the return has not been previously filed, with a penalty of 25 per cent or 50 per cent as additional tax required to be paid with such updated return. The Finance Act 2025 has increased the timeline to file updated ITRs from 24 months to 48 months effective AY 2026-27. Since the messages and emails under the NUDGE campaign were issued in December, several taxpayers are now asking for an extension of the revised ITR filing deadline by a month to January 31.

What is the Income Tax Dept's NUDGE campaign?

Under the "Non-intrusive Usage of Data to Guide and Enable (NUUDGE)" campaign, the I-T Department, which comes under the purview of the Central Board of Direct Taxes, has sent messages and emails to several lakh taxpayers for discrepancies regarding deductions, especially as donations to unrecognised political parties or charitable institutions, or for mismatches in tax deducted at source and Annual Information Statement (AIS) or non-disclosure of foreign assets and income. Terming it as an initiative to encourage taxpayers to voluntarily review deduction or exemption claims, the Department said these cases have been identified under the risk management framework with the use of advanced data analytics. "The framework includes instances where bogus donations to Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs) and other ineligible deductions or exemptions appear to have been claimed in the Income-tax Returns (ITRs). It has also been observed that, in some cases, either incorrect PANs or invalid PANs of donees have been quoted. Some cases also contain errors relating to the extent of deduction or exemption claimed," it said. Taxpayers whose "deduction or exemption claims are genuine and correctly made in accordance with law" are not required to take any further action, it said.

## No extension beyond March for IndiGo's wet-leased planes from Turkey; its Turkish Airlines 777s to go back after February



planes from Turkish carriers is there till March, the Turkish Airlines' Boeing 777s will have to go back after February.

IndiGo uses the two wet-leased Boeing 777s for its flights to Istanbul from Delhi and Mumbai. Amid backlash against Turkey in India due to the former's public backing of Pakistan during Operation Sindoora, the DGCA had informed IndiGo that it would not allow lease extensions for the two aircraft beyond August. However, in August, the regulator allowed a one-time final lease extension till February-end upon IndiGo's request, but stated that no further extensions will be given. DGCA approvals are mandatory for Indian airlines to wet-lease aircraft. "Wet leasing of aircraft is a normal practice in the global aviation industry and recently due to grounding of aircraft because of engine related issues and the delays in delivery of aircraft against orders from the OEMs (original equipment manufacturers), many Indian carriers as a stop gap arrangement are resorting to wet lease from foreign companies in order to serve Indian passengers and also to utilize the rights provided to the Indian carriers under the bilateral service agreements with other countries," the DGCA said, adding that wet lease arrangements have been allowed, including with Turkish carriers, keeping "passenger interest in mind". According to data shared by the regulator, IndiGo has a total of 15 wet-leased aircraft in operation, with eight yet to be inducted. Apart from Turkey-based airlines, IndiGo has taken aircraft on wet lease from the likes of Norway-based Norse Atlantic Airways, Qatar Airways, and Latvia's SmartLynx Airlines.

The only other Indian airline operating wet-leased aircraft is SpiceJet, with 17 such planes in operation, all from operators in Europe. In a typical wet lease arrangement, the lessor provides the aircraft with crew, maintenance, and insurance, and retains operational control. Such arrangements are best suited for short-term capacity increases or to test new routes. Dry lease, on the other hand, includes just the aircraft, which means that the lessee airline is required to provide crew, look after the plane's maintenance and insurance, and has full operational control. Dry leases are better for long-term use by lessee airlines.

## RBI to inject Rs 290,000 crore liquidity via securities purchase, swap auction

The primary objective is to add durable liquidity without permanently expanding the RBI's balance sheet which helps to keep short-term interest rates aligned with the policy corridor. The primary objective is to add durable liquidity without permanently expanding the RBI's balance sheet which helps to keep short-term interest rates aligned with the policy corridor. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to inject liquidity worth Rs 290,000 crore (\$32 billion) into the banking system via purchase auction of government securities and buy-sell swap auction in the next one month.

According to the RBI, it has planned open market operation (OMO) purchase auctions of Government of India securities for an aggregate amount of Rs 200,000 crore in four tranches of Rs 50,000 crore each to be held on December 29, January 5, 2026, January 12, 2026 and January 22, 2026. The RBI buys government bonds from banks and injects liquidity — rupees — into the system, helping lower interest rates. The central bank has also planned a US dollar-rupee buy-sell swap auction of \$10 billion (around Rs 90,000 crore) for a tenure of three years to be held on January 13, 2026. "The Reserve Bank will continue to monitor evolving liquidity and market conditions and take measures as appropriate to ensure orderly liquidity conditions," it said. In a buy-sell swap, the RBI buys US dollars from banks in the spot market (paying rupees) and simulta-

neously agrees to sell those dollars back at a future date (forward leg). The primary objective is to add durable liquidity without permanently expanding the RBI's balance sheet which helps to keep short-term interest rates aligned with the policy corridor. By absorbing dollars temporarily, the RBI can smooth excessive forex market volatility. The liquidity injection is expected to accelerate policy rate transmission and spur credit offtake. As liquidity rises, banks have more lendable resources, which typically pulls down short-term interest rates, keeps overnight rates aligned with the policy rate, and softens bond yields. "In view of the evolving liquidity conditions and the outlook, the RBI has decided to conduct OMO purchases of government securities of Rs 1,00,000 crore and a three-year USD/INR buy sell swap of \$5 billion this month to inject durable liquidity into the system," RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said while unveiling the monetary policy earlier this month. With surplus funds, banks become more willing to extend credit, improving loan flows to corporates, MSMEs and households, and thereby supporting investment and consumption. The RBI cut the policy repo rate by 25 basis points, bringing it down to 5.25 per cent in the December policy review. While the objective of purchase (sale) under OMO is to provide (absorb) durable liquidity, the purpose of repo operations is to manage transient liquidity so as to align the operating target — the Weighted Average Call Rate (WACR) — to the policy repo rate.

## These two streets in Canada are named after popular Bollywood celebrities



420, and Mera Naam Joker — resonated not just in India but across the Soviet Union, the Middle East, and parts of North America. Brampton, which has a large South Asian population, is known for recognising multicultural contributions through public spaces and street names. Raj Kapoor Crescent stands as a subtle tribute to an era of Bollywood that shaped global perceptions of Indian storytelling. The street itself is residential, blending seamlessly into the neighbourhood — making the dedication feel organic rather than ceremonial. For fans of classic Hindi cinema, the name is instantly recognisable, while for locals, it reflects the city's evolving cultural identity. Canada AR Rahman holding a sign on the Canadian street dedicated to his musical legacy (Image: facebook/arrahman)

A.R. Rahman Street honours Academy Award-winning composer A.R. Rahman, whose music has transcended language and national boundaries. From *Roja* and *Dil Se to Slumdog Millionaire*, Rahman's work has positioned Indian music on the global stage, earning him international acclaim. Naming a street after Rahman reflects not just Bollywood's popularity, but also the growing recognition of Indian artists who have shaped global pop culture. The street's name resonates with younger generations, who are familiar with Rahman's crossover appeal and international collaborations. Like Raj Kapoor Crescent, A.R. Rahman Street is not a tourist destination in itself. Still, it carries symbolic value — a reminder of how music, migration, and multiculturalism intersect in modern cities.

## This is what happens to the body when you chew a piece of ginger every day for 60 days



Ginger has potent anti-inflammatory and antioxidant compounds. But what happens if someone chews a piece of ginger daily for 60 days? This is the question we asked Dr Amreen Sheikh, chief dietitian at KIMS Hospitals, Thane, who said it gradually reduces throat irritation, relaxes the airways, and improves circulation. "Over 6 to 8 weeks, many people notice fewer coughs, better digestion, and less bloating. For those prone to seasonal respiratory symptoms, ginger can soothe the inner lining of the airways and support overall lung comfort," said Sheikh.

Are there real respiratory benefits from using ginger daily?

Yes, but with realistic expectations, contended Sheikh. "Ginger doesn't 'open the lungs' like medicine does. Instead,

it works gently. It can reduce throat congestion, ease mild wheezing from cold weather, and help people who often feel irritation from pollutants. Its warming effect also helps loosen mucus, making it easier to expel during an infection. For chronic lung diseases like asthma or COPD, ginger can help but should never replace prescribed treatment," Sheikh remarked.

Could chewing ginger daily have downsides?

Daily ginger is generally safe, but overuse can irritate the mouth, trigger acidity in sensitive people, or slightly thin the blood, Sheikh noted. "Those taking blood thinners or who have acid reflux or gastritis should consult a doctor before making it a habit. Moderation is important; a small piece is more than enough," said Sheikh.

What to note?

Quantity matters. A thumb-sized piece, or 2 to 3 small slices, is enough. Your stomach's response matters. "If you feel heartburn, reduce the amount or switch to warm ginger water instead of chewing it raw," said Sheikh. Sheikh stressed that ginger is a supportive food, not a cure. "It can soothe the throat, reduce inflammation, and improve immunity over time. However, if someone often feels breathless, has a persistent cough, or experiences chest tightness, they should seek proper evaluation. While lifestyle support is helpful, timely diagnosis is far more important for lung health," said Sheikh.

## Priyanka Chopra says she has introduced Indian 'kadha' to husband Nick Jonas: 'Hamare ghar me zaroor banta hai'



especially during seasonal changes or times when immunity faces stress", said consultant dietitian Garima Goyal. From a physiological perspective, the ingredients commonly used in kadhas offer properties that can support the immune system and respiratory health. "Ginger and turmeric hold anti-inflammatory and antioxidant compounds, black pepper enhances nutrient absorption, and tulsi contributes antimicrobial and calming effects. When brewed into a warm decoction, these compounds become more bioavailable. They can help soothe the throat, ease mild congestion, and support overall comfort during coughs, colds or seasonal fluctuations," Goyal added.

At the same time, it is essential to understand that kadhas are supportive, not curative. "They can make you feel more comfortable, hydrated, and possibly reduce the severity of mild symptoms, but they do not replace medical treatment when an infection or illness is present," said Goyal. For most healthy adults, enjoying one cup of kadha a day during cold and flu seasons — or when feeling mildly stressed from the weather — can be beneficial and gentle on the system. "Two cups may be suitable if you have symptoms like congestion or sore throat, provided the ingredients are balanced and not too spicy," said Goyal. Too much of anything, even a traditional remedy, can backfire. Excessive daily use of potent herbs and spices over long periods may irritate the digestive tract, cause acid reflux, or trigger sensitivity in individuals with gastritis or irritable bowel issues. People with certain medical conditions, such as gallstones or acid peptic disease, should be cautious and consult a healthcare professional before daily use, Goyal stressed.

## Passenger beaten by off-duty Air India Express pilot suffers nasal fracture, seeks justice



New Delhi: A passenger allegedly assaulted by an off-duty Air India Express pilot at the Delhi airport has said a CT scan confirmed a displacement of his left nasal bone. The complainant, Ankit Dewan, said he is now seeking justice in the matter. Dewan said he has submitted a written complaint to the Delhi Police and learned through media reports that an FIR has been filed. "I am right now focusing on my health, and a CT scan today showed a displaced fracture of left nasal bone. I hope I get justice in the matter," Dewan said. The Delhi Police on Monday said based on Dewan's complaint received via email, a case has been registered under sections 115 (voluntarily causing hurt), 126 (wrongful restraint) and 351 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita (BNS), 2023. An investigation is underway, they said. Earlier, the police had said they had not received a formal complaint and only became aware of the incident after Dewan's post surfaced on social media platform X.

Dewan alleged that he was physically assaulted by Air India Express captain Virender Sejwal near the security

area of Terminal 1 of the airport on December 19. He claimed the assault caused him to bleed and traumatised his seven-year-old daughter, who witnessed the encounter. According to Dewan, the altercation began when he objected to certain staff members allegedly cutting the queue at the security checkpoint.

## 'Ollie Pope is a lost cause': Geoffrey Boycott tears into England batter after Ashes flop show



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

The brickbats are out in full force for England after their 82-run defeat to Australia in Adelaide confirmed that their wait for an Ashes victory will continue beyond this year. The defeat meant that England have fallen 3-0 behind in the series. Australia have held the Ashes since the 2018, with England having failed to beat them in their last two home series and losing 4-0 and twice in 2017/18 and 2021/22. England great Geoffrey Boycott has now said that they have to take a call in changing the structure and dropping those who have consistently underperformed, naming Zak

Crawley and Ollie Pope among the batters.

"Ollie Pope is a lost cause because he never learns," wrote Boycott in The Telegraph. "I think he would give his wicket away if he were playing in a county second XI. He can't help himself as he finds ways to get out that I couldn't dream up. Somewhere in his head there is a self-destruct button." Pope has been on slippery ground since before the start of the series, being replaced as vice captain by Harry Brook. Thus far, Pope has scored a mere 125 runs in six innings in the series at an average of 20.83. Pope has played as many as 64 Tests in his career but only averages 34.55, scoring 3732 runs with nine centuries and 16 half-centuries. His record against Australia at home and away doesn't make for pleasant reading – 282 runs in 16 innings at an average of a mere 17.62 with no centuries or half-centuries. Meanwhile, Boycott, who has won the Ashes twice in Australia and was the highest run scorer for England in the first of those series wins in 1970/71, said that opener Crawley's two half-centuries in this series should not be enough for England to persist with him after it. "Zak Crawley is a hit-and-miss batsman. Mainly miss and then he seduces us with a blistering innings. It should not be enough to keep his place. Improve technique and discipline or you're out," said Boycott.

## 'He doesn't need to do some of the stuff that he's doing': Ricky Ponting on Harry Brook



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

With England's Harry Brook managing just a half century in the 6 innings he has played thus far in the Ashes, Australian legend Ricky Ponting advised the batter to adjust the way he plays Down Under or risk the prospect of more frustrating performances. "Look, I love Harry Brook. He's one of the best players in the world to watch, but I think with some of his dismissals, he's almost selling himself a bit short on how good he is. He doesn't need to do some of the stuff that he's doing. And I guess, I'm sure it's going to be frustrating for an English fan as well, or even some of his teammates. You know, he's had a chance to sit back and watch Joe Root go about his cricket for the last 15 years. And to be fair, and this is no knock on Joe Root," Ponting said on the latest episode of The ICC Review.

"Harry Brook's got every bit as much talent as Joe Root has. You see him trying to play little lap shots off Scott Boland against a yorker that could have easily knocked his middle and leg stump out of the ground when his team needs him to make a hundred and chase down 435," he added. Brook has been dismissed at critical junctures during England's batting which has led to the Three Lions collapsing and eventually surrendering the Ashes series to Australia with 2 matches in hand. "I'll be critical on that, but I

don't think I'll be any more critical than what his teammates would be or what his coach would be, because they should be critical of those sort of mistakes, because it's those sort of things that have cost them this Ashes series. They probably won't admit it. They won't talk about it. They won't bring it up. They're very defiant with that sort of criticism," Ponting said. "They'll always come back and say, 'oh, that's the way that we play and we encourage them to play their natural games'. But you can't do that in Australia and you can't do it against Australia because if you give them an opportunity, you give them an inch, they'll take a mile. And we've seen that right the way through the series," he added.

## 2025 reimagined: What if... Novak Djokovic wasn't injured at Australian Open



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Serbian tennis star Novak Djokovic has ended 2025 as distinctly the third-best player in the world; his quest for a record-extending 25th Major title looking further out of reach than ever before. But he did not seem so far off when he started the year. The Serb may have gone without a Major in 2024, but reaching the Wimbledon final a few weeks removed from knee surgery was certainly credible. Ending his long wait for Olympic gold, beating Carlos Alcaraz in the final, only strengthened his credentials.

And the Australian Open, he sprung up the kind of surprise that showed exactly why he remained dangerous at the biggest tournaments in the world. After picking up an injury while being outplayed during his quarterfinal battle against the Spaniard Alcaraz, he came up with some masterful disruptive tactics to not only scramble his younger opponent but also take his game to another level. He turned the contest around and won in four sets to go into the final four. With the confidence-boosting win, Djokovic was surely a strong contender for the title. But physical hardship struck, in what would end up becoming a prophecy for the rest of his season. The injury proved to be far more serious than initially expected, prompting him to retire an hour into the semifinal. He would never quite return to play at the same

level, suffering humbling defeats in his next three Major semifinals in which he looked gassed and jaded. In many ways, retirement in Australia perfectly summarises Djokovic's current predicament. His game clearly still has plenty of highs left in it to compete with and even beat the best of the current crop. Had he been fit for that semifinal in Melbourne, perhaps all the talk about retirements would have looked premature, maybe even totally forgotten today.

## Jemimah Rodrigues named new Delhi Capitals captain ahead of WPL 2026



The 25-year-old, who was one of DC's retained players ahead of the WPL mega auction in November, will take over from Meg Lanning, who was released by the three-time finalists before the auction.

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Indian batter Jemimah Rodrigues was announced as the new captain of Delhi Capitals (DC) on Tuesday, ahead of the fourth season of the Women's Premier League (WPL) 2026, which will commence on January 9 in Navi Mumbai. The 25-year-old, who was one of DC's retained players ahead of the WPL mega auction in November, will take over from Meg Lanning, who was released by the three-time finalists before the auction.

"It is an absolute honour to be named captain of the Delhi Capitals, and I am deeply grateful to the owners and the support staff for placing their faith in me to lead this team. It has truly been a dream year for me and my family, winning the World Cup and now being entrusted with this wonderful opportunity at a franchise that has held a very special place in my heart since the very first season of the

WPL," said Rodrigues in a DC statement.

"I have learned so much over the last three years and have shared some of my best moments with the Delhi Capitals. This team is my family. While I will miss the players who were part of our journey in the first cycle, I am excited to create new memories with both familiar faces and new teammates. We have a strong group, and I can't wait to get going as we look ahead to what we hope will be a very successful season, and finally cross that line that has eluded us in the last three years." Franchise owner Parth Jindal had announced on auction day that DC was looking for an Indian player to lead the side, ahead of the new season. "I think we are very clear that we would like to have an Indian as the captain. So, depending on you know, what who else we land. We already have our mind made up, but let's see what happens. Laura (Volvaardt) will add a lot of leadership into the dressing room, but we are clear that we want to go with an Indian captain," Jindal had said. Rodrigues has scored 507 runs in 27 matches for DC at a strike rate of 139.66 with three half-centuries. She was vice-captain to Lanning for the first three seasons of the league. After her appointment, Rodrigues credited Lanning for the way she had led the side and inspired her with her presence.

"We are gonna win this year. That's the change I want to bring. Credit to Meg, too, for the way she has led the team over the last three years and the culture she has set for the team. She has inspired me and I have to owe that credit to her," Rodrigues told Parth Jindal in an interaction. The right-hander was part of India's victorious ODI World Cup campaign and played a central role in her side entering the final with an unbeaten 127 off 134 balls in the semi-final against Australia. Rodrigues made an unbeaten 69 against Sri Lanka in the first T20I at Visakhapatnam, helping India chase down the target of 122 runs with eight wickets in hand and more than five overs to spare.

## Rohit Sharma at Vijay Hazare: Up to 3,000 spectators expected, extra security, a star-struck Sikkim team



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Leeyong Lepcha, the 34-year-old offspinner from Gangtok, believes Wednesday will be the biggest match he has ever played as captain. What would have otherwise been a nondescript game of the Vijay Hazare Trophy, between domestic cricket minnows Sikkim and giants Mumbai, has been given heavier weightage thanks to the man opening the batting for the latter team. "It is not every day that we get the opportunity to go up against a player of Rohit Sharma's stature," Leeyong told reporters. "It is huge for us to compete against him and just be in his shadow, just be around him. If we can go back home and share this experience, it will definitely help more youngsters take up the sport."

Two months ago, as Rohit fended off and narrowly escaped a fiery spell from Josh Hazlewood on a bouncy, seaming track in Adelaide to labour to a 97-ball 73, all sorts of speculation was drawn about his future in international cricket. On a lowkey afternoon at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium here on Tuesday, as he joined dozens of other players in the domestic cricket grind, training on the eve of the opening fixture of India's premier 50-over tournament, a lot of the confusion seems to have settled. Rohit Sharma VHT Mumbai team player Rohit Sharma during a net practice session ahead of their Vijay Hazare Trophy Match against Sikkim at Sawai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur on Tuesday. (Express Photo by Rohit Jain Paras) The 38-year-old batting star, now only playing the ODI format, seemingly wishes to have one last shot at a World Cup title, with cricket's marquee tournament taking place in two years' time in South Africa-Namibia-Zimbabwe. The question over his form has been answered: three of his four innings since the game in

Adelaide have been 50+ scores. That includes a match-winning, unbeaten 121 in the third ODI in Australia in Sydney, and two half-centuries in India's 2-1 home series win over South Africa. Determination does not seem to be lacking either. That Rohit has shown up for two league-stage fixtures, the next one is on Friday against Uttarakhand, which are not even going to be televised, says what needs to be said. The BCCI may well have forced his and Virat Kohli's hands; the new diktat does not allow even the glittering stars any reprieve from fine-tuning their games on the domestic circuit. Even more so if they only play one format and have big gaps in between their international schedules.

The long debates around that diktat may well continue to rage on. Will Rohit's form improve in any way by facing two teams that don't have a single player who has ever represented India in their ranks? Does his presence help Mumbai fare better if he just disappears after two games? Is this merely a case of ticking off a box – for the star to prove his motivation and for the board and Indian team management to prove the seriousness of their orders? To the fans who will turn up to catch a glimpse, none of those questions matter. And unlike in Bengaluru, where Kohli's mad faithful have been denied a chance to watch him play due to orders from the state government to have the games behind closed doors, preparation for a crowd of around 2,000-3,000 strong fans has been made in Jaipur.

The East stand, with a capacity of around 5,000, has been opened for the public who can watch the match free of cost, as is the norm in domestic games. More seating can be made available if needed. Security has been beefed up too after Yashasvi Jaiswal faced a scare from over-excited fans here during a Ranji Trophy game last month. After many of them descended upon the dressing room for pictures and autographs, Jaiswal had to make a hushed back-door exit. Local authorities are hoping to avoid that kind of lapse this time around. On Tuesday, a few fans even got the chance to watch Rohit train at the RCA Academy ground, just behind the stadium. His languid hour-long session in the nets, with him seemingly preparing for facing new-ball seamers, playing everything late and under his eyes, was watched by small groups, mostly full of kids, who thronged to him even in the brief windows of opportunity during his entry and exit. The fanfare has extended to the opposition, too. Leeyong hopes that Sikkim's playing group will get to have a chat with Rohit after the game. "We want to ask him about his mindset as a player who has played at the highest level for so long, won so many things. We won't ask him about the pull shot! He's the best, nobody can play like him," Sikkim's beaming captain says.

## India's Deepti Sharma tops ICC Women's T20I bowling rankings for first time in career

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

India allrounder Deepti Sharma, who was part of the ODI World Cup winning team one and a half months ago, now has another feather in her cap when she became the top-ranked bowler in the T20I ICC rankings for the first time in her career. Deepti took 1 wicket for 20 runs in the 1st T20I match of the ongoing Sri Lanka series which was enough for her to dethrone Australia fast bowler Annabel Sutherland, pipping her by one rating point to sit at the top of the table with 737 points. This was the latest in the spate of good news that have come Deepti's way with the allrounder bought back by UP Warriorz for Rs 3.2 crore at the Women's Premier League (WPL) 2026 auction last month after entering at a base price of Rs 50 lakhs. The all-rounder was initially bought by Delhi Capitals (DC) for Rs 50 lakh, but the UP Warriorz opted to use the Right-to-Match (RTM) card. DC valued her at Rs 3.2 crore, and the Warriorz accepted the bid to regain the player in their squad. Deepti also had a terrific ODI World Cup becoming the top wicket taker of the tournament with 22 scalps.

Meanwhile, Pacer Arundhati Reddy has climbed up five places to be 36th while spinner Shree Charan is up 19 places to 69th. Jemimah Rodrigues, who was adjudged the player of the match in Visakhapatnam for her unbeaten 69

off 44 balls, moved up five spots to ninth among T20I batters while vice-captain Smriti Mandhana continues to be the top ranked Indian, occupying the third spot. Shefali Verma who has moved down a spot to 10. On the other hand, South Africa skipper Laura Wolvaardt has replaced Mandhana as the No.1 batter in the women's ODI batting rankings. Wolvaardt slammed successive centuries in the second and third matches of their home series against Ireland – 124 and 100 not out – to run up a nine-point lead over the India opener and reach a career-best 820 rating points.

## Indonesia's Gede Priandana becomes first bowler to take 5 wickets in an over in T20Is



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Indonesia's Gede Priandana made history on Tuesday when he became the first bowler to take 5 wickets in an over in a T20I match. Priandana notched up the feat in Indonesia's match vs Cambodia in the 1st T20I at Bali. Cambodia were 106-5 needing 168 for victory when Priandana was called on to bowl the 16th over and the 28-year-old absolutely ran through the middle and lower order in a seven-ball over, handing the Indonesians a 60 run win.

The right-arterer dismissed Shah Abrar Hussain, Nirmaljit Singh and Chanthoune Rathana in successive deliveries to complete his hat-trick and followed up with a dot ball. Priandana then removed Mongdara Sok and Pel Vennak with the last two legitimate deliveries of his over, separated by a wide, to bundle out Cambodia for 107. Earlier, Dharma Kesuma slammed 110 runs which helped Indonesia post 167 runs. Etienne Beukes and Shah Abrar Hussain had taken 2 wickets each for Cambodia. Priandana had scored 6 off 11 while opening the batting for Indonesia.

Priandana has played 63 T20I matches for Indonesia and has scored 1040 runs with a high score of 65 not out. He has also taken 24 wickets in the 63 matches he has played with his 5/1 against Cambodia his best bowling figures. Bangladesh's Al-Amin Hossain and Indian Abhimanyu Mithun had claimed 5 wickets in an over in domestic T20 matches. There are 14 instances of bowlers claiming four wickets in an over in international matches, including Sri Lankan Lasith Malinga's four in four balls against New Zealand in a T20 in 2019. West Indies bowler Jason Holder also picked 4 in an over in 2022 against

England while Ireland's Curtis Campher also pulled off that feat against Netherlands in 2021. In the IPL, Yuvraj Singh and Andre Russell have also taken 4 wickets in an over for Punjab Kings and Kolkata Knight Riders against Kolkatta Knight Riders and Gujarat Titans respectively. Both of them notched up this feat in IPL 2022.

## Iniyen wins Ekagra International Open Rapid Chess Tournament in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: The prize distribution ceremony of the Ekagra International Open Rapid Chess Tournament held at the second hall of Hitex Exhibition Centre in Hyderabad was conducted with great pomp. Iniyen from Chennai, who emerged as the winner of the tournament, was awarded the first prize with prize money of Rs 5 lakh. Mitroba Guha was awarded Rs 3 lakh as the second prize and Harikrishna received Rs 1 lakh as the third prize. The remaining amount, Rs 13 lakh 22 thousand 222, was distributed to the winners according to their various categories and rankings.

Speaking at the event as the chief guests, Varun Agarwal and tournament chairman Panasha Agarwal said that chess plays a very important role in developing concentration and intelligence in children. They said that to excel in this sport, one has to practice hard and continuous effort is the way to success. Congress leader Feroz Khan said it was a joy to organize such an international level chess tournament in Hyderabad. He suggested that winning and losing are natural in the game, and that if you keep playing and moving forward, whether you win or lose, you will definitely succeed one day. Speaking on the occasion, music director Anoop Rubens said that parents need to encourage interest in children. At the beginning of the program, the organizers specially praised twins Amaya Agarwal and Anay Agarwal from Hyderabad, who trained at Ekagra Academy and achieved the title of Candidate Master. They honored them, stating that their academy has received special recognition through these twins.

