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Two women from Telangana's Mahabubabad killed in road accident in US

Mahabubabad: Two young women from the district were killed in a road accident in California in the US.

Pullakhandu Meghana (24) and Kadiyala Bhavana (24) both from Garla mandal in Mahabubabad district had gone to the USA for higher studies. They recently completed their Master's degrees and were looking for jobs. It was said that Meghana, Bhavana along with eight friends were on a tour in California in two cars. The car in which they were traveling fell into a gorge at a curve on the Alabama Hills road leading to their death.

Telangana Assembly's Winter Session begins on quiet note

Hyderabad, Dec 29

The Winter Session of the Telangana Assembly began on Monday, Decem-

Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, along with Congress MLAs, also met the veteran leader.



ber 29, with the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) supremo and former chief minister K Chandrashekhar Rao (KCR) making his first appearance as the Leader of the Opposition, even as the Vidhan Sabha saw a muted start.

Ever since the Congress came into power, KCR has maintained a conscious decision to stay away from attending the Legislative Assembly. His return to the House signals a heated Winter Session ahead.

KCR was accompanied by his party MLAs, including his son and party working president KT Rama Rao (KTR) and Siddipet MLA T Harish Rao.

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy walked up to KCR and greeted him by shaking his hands. State ministers, including N Uttam Kumar Reddy, D Sridhar Babu and

Before proceedings began, members of the Assembly observed a two-minute silence for former MLAs R Damodar Reddy and Konda Laxma Reddy, who passed away recently.

Proposals to merge municipalities within the Outer Ring Road (ORR) limits into the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), doubling the number of GHMC wards from 150 to 300, removal of the two-child norm for contesting local body elections, amendment to the Telangana Goods and Services Tax (GST) Act and undertaking employee rationalisation are among the government's key focus areas.

During the Zero Hour, Harish Rao accused the administration of neglecting government employees and flagged delays in the release of pending dearness allowances (DA) and arrears, failing to imple-

ment the Pay Revision Commission (PRC) and the restoration of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS).

The Assembly will take a break from December 30 to January 1 and resume proceedings on January 2.

Later, KTR addressed the media outside the Assembly, saying his party is ready to hold discussions on the Krishna and Godavari river water sharing and irrigation projects. He said that agreeing to share 45 TMC of the Krishna water would be detrimental to the state.

Launching a scathing attack on the CM, KTR said the latter lacked basic knowledge of river basins and irrigation projects. "Water management is not something one can master by studying a file for four days; it requires love for the state," he remarked.

He also sought restoration of the police health insurance scheme with access to corporate hospitals. All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul Muslimeen (AIMIM) MLA Ahmed Balala urged the government to release overseas and post-Class 10 scholarships for students. He said that the institutions are facing a faculty crunch and are on the verge of closing down, since they are unable to pay salaries to teachers. "This is causing a lot of trouble for the students. Since the fee reimbursement is halted, educational institutions have withheld their certificates," the Malakpet MLA said. Responding to the MLA, Telangana Minorities Welfare Minister Mohammed Azharuddin said he has noted the concerns and will pay attention to them. After a brief Zero Hour, Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar adjourned the House till January 2.

He raised concerns over alleged damage to the Medigadda barrage, questioned the absence of an inquiry despite engineers' complaints, and named a construction firm involved in related works. KTR said there was a deliberate attempt to stall the Palamuru-Rangareddy project in order to deny any credit to the previous BRS government. On allegations of phone tapping, the former IT Minister accused the government of using Special Investigation Teams (SIT) as a bait to divert people's attention from the real issues. "What has been achieved through so many investigations? Has even one allegation been conclusively proven?" he asked, adding that people clearly see through these diversionary tactics.

Telangana State Government Whip and Alair MLA Beerla Ailaiah in the Assembly

"(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 29):- He stated that the Alair constituency is one of the largest constituencies in the state, both in terms of area and population. He recalled that for the past 20 years, the people, public representatives, and various organizations have conducted numerous movements demanding that Alair be made a revenue division. Considering the sentiments of the people and the administrative necessity, he requested that the Alair constituency be established as a revenue division. He also requested the government to create a new mandal (administrative division) for Raghunathapuram village, which has a vast area and a large population. He requested the establishment of new ration shops in remote hamlets that are far from larger villages, as people and the elderly are facing difficulties due to the lack of access to ration facilities. Alternatively, he requested that measures be taken to start distribution centers under the supervision of dealers. He said that if the long-standing demand of the people of Alair for the creation of a revenue division is fulfilled, it would be a major milestone in their journey towards development. He sincerely requested the Honorable Chief Minister and ministers to consider this request favorably and take an immediate decision.



'Telangana govt to allocate 90 TMC water for Palamuru project'

Hyderabad: Telangana Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy on Monday, December 29, said the Congress government is committed to completing the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme (PRLIS) with its original water allocation of 90 TMC, a day after Bharat Rashtriya Samithi (BRS) leader KT Rama Rao (KTR) accused the ruling party of pushing the project back "into distress. Speaking to the media, Reddy said the ruling Congress is adhering to the government order (GO) issued by the previous Bharat Rashtriya Samithi (BRS) government on August 18, 2022, which proposed 90 thousand million cubic feet (TMC) of water for the project.

SC puts its own ruling on Aravalli redefining in abeyance

New Delhi, Dec 29

Noting that certain clarifications were needed regarding the definition of Aravalli Hills it recently approved, the Supreme Court on Monday ordered to keep in abeyance its November 20 ruling that was based on a committee's recommendations.

A three-judge special vacation Bench led by CJI Surya Kant decided to set up a new high-powered committee of domain experts to examine the environmental impact of the recommendations made by the earlier committee. The composition of the new panel has not been announced.

The Bench noted that there had been a significant outcry among environmentalists, who had expressed



profound concern about the potential for misinterpretation and improper implementation of the newly adopted definition and this court's directions. It said, "This public dissent and criticism appear to stem from the perceived ambiguity and lack of clarity in certain terms and directives issued by this court. Consequently, there is a dire need to further probe and clarify to prevent any regulatory gaps that might undermine the ecological integrity of the Aravalli region."

"While we have no scientific reasons justifying any ex-facie acceptance of the same, it seems prima facie that both the committee's report and the judgment of this court have omitted to expressly clarify certain critical issues," said the Bench, which also included Justice JK Maheshwari and Justice AG Masih.

It said, "In the interim, to subserve the ends of complete justice and in the broader public interest, we deem it necessary to direct that the recommendations submitted by the committee, together with the findings and directions stipulated by this court in its judgment dated November 20, 2025, be kept in abeyance."

"This stay shall remain in effect until the present proceedings reach a state of logical finality, ensuring that no irreversible administrative or ecological actions are taken based on the current framework."

"We therefore deem it appropriate that prior to the implementation of the committee's report, or the execution of the directions contained in paragraph 50 of this court's judgment, a fair, impartial and independent expert opinion must be obtained and considered, after associating all requisite stakeholders. Such a step is essential to resolve critical ambiguities and to provide definitive guidance on issues (relating to the definition of the 'Aravalli Hills and Ranges')."

As a matter of abundant caution, the Bench directed that "until further orders, no permission shall be granted for mining, whether it is for new mining leases or renewal of old mining leases, in the Aravalli Hills and Ranges as defined in the FSI (Forest Survey of India) report dated August 25, 2010, without prior permission from this court."

Issuing a notice to the Centre and governments of Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Delhi, the top court posted the matter for further hearing on January 21, 2026. It urged Attorney General R Venkataramani, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, senior advocate and amicus curiae K Parmeswar and the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) to assist it on various issues concerning the hills.

Often described as the 'green lungs' of north western India, the Aravallis have for centuries sustained diverse ecosystems and underpinned the livelihoods of numerous communities. "It serves as indispensable ecological and socio-economic backbone of the region, functioning as the primary geographical barrier separating the arid north western desert from the fertile northern plains," the Bench noted.

The top court had last month approved an elevation-linked definition for classifying landforms as part of the Aravalli range — spanning across Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat — for the purpose of mining regulation.

However, following widespread apprehensions about ecological degradation due to unregulated mining in the Aravalli Hills, the Supreme Court took suo motu cognisance of issues concerning its definition last week and urgently took up the matter on Monday.

Environmental activists expressed serious concerns over the revised definition of the Aravalli hills, saying dilution of the definition could legitimise mining and construction activities in hitherto protected areas.

Government Whip and MLA Beerla Ailaiah welcomed Chief Minister Revanth Reddy

"(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 29):- In the context of the ongoing 7th Telangana State Assembly sessions, Telangana State Government Whip and Alair MLA Beerla Ailaiah respectively welcomed Telangana State Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. Other ministers and MLAs were also present.



Two Accused Arrested During Vehicle Checks; Ganja, Copper Wire and Motorcycles Seized



"P.S.ASHOKAN"KARIMNGAR BUREAU."As part of intensified vehicle inspections, police have arrested two accused and seized 1,150 grams of ganja, 12.58 kilograms of copper wire, and two motorcycles, dis-

closed G. Vijay Kumar, Karimnagar Rural ACP. Addressing a press conference held on Monday at the Choppadandi Police Station, ACP G. Vijay Kumar stated that the arrests were made during routine vehicle checks conducted at Gumlapur Crossing under the supervision of SI Naresh Reddy. During the inspection, two persons—Ram Tek Shivaprasad of Choppadandi and Gogulakonda Mahesh of Bhupalapatnam—were intercepted while travelling on a motorcycle. Upon search, ganja was recovered from their possession. The ACP further revealed that the accused, in collusion with another individual, Neerumatta Ajay of Julapalli (currently absconding), procured ganja from Chandrapur in Maharashtra at low prices and sold it at higher rates in the Choppadandi region, using the proceeds for indulgent activities. Investigations also established that the accused were involved in thefts of electrical transformers across multiple police station limits, including Choppadandi, Karimnagar Rural, Thimmapur, Ramadugu, and Gangadhara. The stolen copper ex-

tracted from these transformers was allegedly sold to a scrap dealer, Hanumandla Mallesh, in Choppadandi. Additionally, the accused confessed to stealing a motorcycle from Sharma Nagar under the Karimnagar Two Town limits and selling it to Modampalli Shekhar of Arnakonda. The stolen vehicle has since been recovered. Police records indicate that one of the accused, Shivaprasad, has prior cases registered at Vemulawada Police Station involving motorcycle theft and house-breaking, besides copper theft cases within Choppadandi limits. Mahesh also has a previous case related to copper theft. The absconding accused, Neerumatta Ajay, is reportedly involved in multiple cases across different police station jurisdictions. ACP Vijay Kumar commended the efforts of Choppadandi CI A. Pradeep Kumar, SI Naresh Reddy, ASI Fasiyuddin, and constables Anil Kumar, Srujan, Bhargav, and Aravind for successfully detecting and solving the cases. "Celebrate the New Year with Family: ACP's Appeal" ACP Vijay Kumar urged the public to celebrate New Year festivities



peacefully with family members. He cautioned against unnecessary road gatherings and creating disturbances, warning that cutting cakes on roads and causing commotion would invite strict legal action. He also advised the youth to stay away from ganja and other narcotics, emphasizing that substance abuse ruins lives.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Reluctant 'Vishwaguru' lags in global race

Despite the oft-repeated narrative of India being a "Vishwaguru", the realities on the ground tell a different story. The country's higher education centres fare poorly in the global rankings. The 2026 Times Higher Education rankings tell a grim story: Not a single Indian university features in the world's top 200 universities. Only four universities find a place in the top 500. By contrast, Japan has five among the top 200, South Korea has six, and China has 13. The UK-based Times Higher Education World University Rankings, 2026, features 2,191 institutions from 115 countries and territories. If such a poor run continues, the much-touted "Vishwaguru" tag will remain elusive for India. What ails India's higher education sector? A complex set of factors, including lack of quality teaching and research, poor infrastructure, outdated curriculum, continued focus on rote learning, poor synergy between universities and industry and lack of genuine autonomy, has been preventing the sector from harnessing its full potential. It is time policymakers did some serious introspection on the initiatives needed to improve academic and research standards in our universities. China, on the other hand, continues to have a strong presence with 13 universities making it to the global top 200, including five in the top 40. While the desired levels of research and internationalisation of Indian campuses remain weak points, the higher education sector also suffers from a funds crunch, and its largely linear model with little focus on specialisation and innovation. Though India has over 1,300 universities, including central, State, deemed, private universities and Institutes of National Importance, the academic and research standards are not up to international standards.

"Get Ready for GHMC Elections," Says Corporator BANNALA GEETHA PRAVEEN

"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 29 (Indian Chronicle):"Chilkanagar Division Corporator and former GHMC Standing Committee Member Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj convened a meeting with leaders of the BRS Party from the division."Addressing the gathering, Corporator Geetha Praveen stated that since the party leadership entrusted her with the responsibility in November 2020, significant development work has been carried out across the division over the past four years and ten months. She said that with the collective



support of party leaders and workers, the division witnessed development works worth ₹110 crore, for which she expressed her heartfelt gratitude to everyone involved."She particularly acknowledged the strong support of MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy, stating that his cooperation played a key role in the overall development of the Chilkanagar Division. With his continued support, she expressed confidence that the party would once again secure victory in the division. She emphasized that party workers who have shown dedication and commitment will definitely be given the ticket by the party high command, to ensure that the BRS flag flies high in all divisions. The meeting witnessed the participation of a large number of BRS party leaders, women leaders, and party members.

Paramita Heritage School Student Selected for State-Level Kho Kho Championship

"KARIMNAGAR CARRASPAENT, December 29, INDIAN CHRONICLE:""Ojala Shiva, a Class 7 student of Paramita Heritage School, Padmanagar, has been selected for the 69th Telangana State Level Under-14 Boys and Girls Kho Kho Championship, organized by the Telangana State School Games Federation. The three-day championship will be held from December 30 to January 1 at Tandur in Vikarabad district. Earlier, Shiva displayed outstanding performance in the combined district-level Under-14 Kho Kho selection trials held in November at Kathalapur, Jagital district, securing his place at the state level."On this occasion, Paramita Schools Chairman Dr. E. Prasada Rao, along with Directors Prasuna, Anukar Rao, Rashmita, Vinod Rao, Rakesh, V.U.M. Prasad, and K. Hanmantha Rao, congratulated the student. Headmaster Gopikrishna, Coordinator



Nagaraju, Ramu, and Physical Education teachers M. Rajababu and P. Santosh were also present.

Ramanthapur Division Congress President Mohammed Rafiq Visits Rajendranagar



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 29 (Indian Chronicle):"On Monday, Ramanthapur Division Congress Party President Mohammed Rafiq visited Rajendranagar, which falls under the Ramanthapur Division, along with local party leaders. During the visit, he interacted with residents and enquired about their public grievances."Speaking on the occasion, Mohammed Rafiq stated that he would always be accessible to the people like a member of their own family and would stand by them in both difficult and happy times. He said that he received an overwhelming response from the residents, who openly shared their concerns and problems with him. The locals brought to his notice issues related to street lighting, drinking water supply, drainage problems, road construction, and the relocation of electricity poles in several areas. Responding promptly, Mohammed Rafiq said that he conveyed all these issues to Uppal Congress Party In-charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy. He also held discussions over the phone with Water Works DGM Rajinikanth Reddy and Electricity Department ADE Ravinder, bringing the problems to the attention of the



concerned officials. Following this, the officials deputed their staff, and steps were initiated to resolve the issues."Residents of Rajendranagar, including Rudrala Narasimha, Rakesh, Shankar Goud, Mohammed Naeem, Radapaka Venkatesh, Praveen Sai Mudhiraj, Mohammed Jilani, Mahesh Mudhiraj, Sheenu Pokala, Mahesh Prem, Anwar, Johnny, Venky, Venkatesh, Poosa Satyayya, Bestha Bhaskar, Mogili, Lagusani Srinivas Goud, Ramesh, Bachupaka Bikshapati, Pabbi Ganesh, Chotu Boy, Surya, Icon Madhu, Sai, Mohammed Jangir, Thota Shankar, and several others participated in the programme.

Film Lyricist Suddala Ashok Teja Unveils New Year Calendar of Sri Bhakta Markandeya Padmashali Sangham

"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 29 (Indian Chronicle):"The New Year calendar of Sri Bhakta Markandeya Padmashali Sangham, Beerappagadda, Uppal, was formally unveiled by renowned film lyricist and eminent Telugu litterateur Suddala Ashok Teja. The programme was attended by Vallandas Mahesh, Managing Director of Sri Abhaya Multi Specialty Trust Hospital, Dr. Prajwala Addagatla, honorary advisors, execu-



tive committee members, and a large number of community members, making the event a grand success."Speaking on the occasion, Suddala Ashok Teja advised everyone to enter the coming New Year by setting a clear goal for themselves and taking determined steps towards achieving it. He emphasized the importance of purposeful living and collective progress. Addressing the gathering, Vallandas Mahesh, Managing Director of Sri Abhaya Hospital, stressed the need to prioritize health by consuming nutritious food and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Representatives of the Sri Bhakta Markandeya Beerappagadda Padmashali Sangham committee and community members actively participated in the event.

Complaint at Prajavani Seeking Review of Unscientific Uppal Division Formation

"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 29 (Indian Chronicle):"BRS leaders from Uppal Division lodged a complaint with GHMC officials at Prajavani, demanding a fresh review and correction of what they termed the unscientific reorganization of the Uppal Division. Speaking on the occasion, the BRS leaders stated that while most



GHMC divisions were bifurcated into smaller units for administrative convenience, Uppal Division was instead made unusually large. They questioned why, when other

President of the Chiluka Nagar Division Meru Association, was formally unveiled on Monday at his residence by Mandamula Parmeshwar Reddy, Congress Party In-charge of the Uppal Constituency."On this occasion, leaders of the Meru Association felicitated Parmeshwar Reddy in a grand manner. Speaking at the event, Parmeshwar Reddy assured that he would always extend his full support for the development of the Chiluka Nagar Meru Association. He also congratulated Venu Ramesh for designing an attractive and eye-catching calendar that has drawn widespread appreciation."The programme was attended by Congress Party leaders Akiti Agam Reddy and Nelavelli Mahender Mudiraj; Meru Association Uppal Zone-7 President Kothapalli Ramesh; Vice President Odapalli Upender; and association representatives Nandagiri Raju, D. Bhaskar, Adapa Nursing, D. Venkatesh, V. Ravi, Odela Lakshman, M. Krishna, P. Narayana, R. Ashok, Mallesh, and several others.

Praja Vani to Resume as Usual from December 29: District Collector



"Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, December 29 (Indian Chronicle):"Komaram Bheem-Asifabad, December 28, 2025: District Collector Venkatesh Dhotre has announced that the Praja Vani grievance redressal programme will be conducted as usual from December 29 at the Integrated District Collectorate complex in the district headquarters."In a press release issued on Sunday, the Collector stated that following the completion of the oath-taking ceremonies of the newly elected sarpanches and ward members after the Second General Panchayat Elections-2025, the regular conduct of Praja Vani would resume without interruption."He advised the public and applicants to take note of the same and submit their representations and applications for the redressal of their grievances during the programme.

divisions have around 30,000 to 40,000 voters each, Uppal Division has been burdened with nearly 70,000 to 80,000 voters."The leaders urged the authorities to reconsider this disparity, expressing concern over how a single corporator could effectively provide civic services to such a large number of voters. They emphasized that the current structure defeats the purpose of efficient administration and public representation."The BRS leaders informed that they submitted a formal representation to GHMC officials, requesting a thorough review and necessary corrections to the Uppal Division's boundaries. A large number of senior BRS leaders from Uppal Division participated in the program.

Srihari Assumes Charge as Deputy Commissioner of Kapra Circle

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, December 29, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Srihari has assumed charge as the Deputy Commissioner of Kapra Circle-07 under the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), Uppal Zone. Following his appointment, Medchal-Malkajgiri District Right to Information Act coordinators, led by Taduri Gagan Kumar, met the newly appointed Deputy Commissioner



and extended a formal welcome. During the interaction, the RTI coordinators brought to his notice the issue of alleged unauthorized constructions taking place in several areas of Kapra Circle. They urged the Deputy Commissioner to take strict measures to curb illegal constructions and to conduct a thorough review of permissions being issued by GHMC. The delegation emphasized the need for transparency and accountability in granting building permissions and called for action to protect public land and planned development within the circle. Srihari's assumption of charge has raised expectations among residents and civic groups for effective governance and strengthened enforcement of municipal regulations in Kapra Circle.

One Killed, Another Seriously Injured in Motorcycle Collision at Kaghaznagar

“Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, December 29 (Indian Chronicle)“One person was killed and another sustained



serious injuries in a collision between two motorcycles near the Sri Panchamukha Anjaneya Swamy temple at Kapu Wada in Kaghaznagar town on Sunday. According to local sources, the accident occurred when two motorcycles collided head-on near the temple premises. While one of the riders died on the spot, the other suffered severe injuries and was shifted to a hospital for treatment. The deceased has been identified as Shaik Babu (50), a contract worker with SPM and a resident of Kapu Wada, Kaghaznagar. Further details regarding the injured person and the cause of the accident are awaited.

TRS (Democratic) Records Major Inductions in Sirpur-Kaghaznagar

“Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, December 29 (Indian Chronicle)“Sirpur-Kaghaznagar witnessed large-scale political inductions into the Telangana Rakshana Samithi (Democratic) [TRS (D)] on Saturday, marking a significant boost to the party's presence in the region. The induction programme was organised in Kaghaznagar town under the leadership of Komaram Bheem-Asifabad district president and constituency in-charge Durgam Maruti. TRS (D) State General Secretary Todeti Shankar Goud attended the event as the chief guest and formally welcomed women and youth into the party by draping party scarves. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Shankar Goud expressed happiness over the enthusiastic response following the district-level party meeting held under the chairmanship of Durgam Maruti. He urged party workers to remain committed and work diligently, assuring that sincere efforts would be recognised and rewarded with organisational responsibilities and higher positions within the party. He stated that TRS (D) accords priority to grassroots workers and that those who work consistently for the party would be elevated to leadership roles. Under the leadership of State President Narala Satyanarayana, the party aims to emerge as a formidable political force across Telangana, including all constituencies of the erstwhile Karimnagar district. Mr. Shankar Goud announced that TRS (D) would contest the upcoming ZPTC, MPTC, municipal, corporation and GHMC elections, asserting that the party is steadily positioning itself as a strong alternative political force in the State. He noted that since January, the party has witnessed large-scale inductions from all 33 districts, reinforcing its ambition to come to power with a vision centred on social justice,



Bahujan ideology and a comprehensive Telangana development agenda. Criticising the State government, he alleged that despite coming to power with six guarantees and 420 promises, the government had failed to implement them even after two years. He demanded the immediate fulfilment of all assurances made to the people of Telangana, warning that the party would launch large-scale protests if the government continued to neglect its commitments. He also assured that TRS (D) would continue to fight persistently on public issues affecting the Husnabad constituency. The programme was attended by TRS (D) State Vice-President Edunuri Narsing, Peddapalli district president Dr. Vasampalli Anand Babu, along with several party leaders from the Sirpur constituency.

Boduppal Circle Deputy Commissioner Shailaja Felicitated



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, December 29, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): Shailaja, who recently assumed charge as Deputy Commissioner of the Boduppal Circle under the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), was felicitated by former Boduppal Corporator Singireddy Padma Reddy, who met her as a courtesy and conveyed his best wishes. Several local leaders and former elected representatives attended the meeting and extended their congratulations. Medchal district B-Block General Secretary Kotha Kishore Goud, former corporators Kotha Chander Goud, Bhukya Suman, Kumbham Kiran Kumar Reddy and Cheerala Narasimha were among those present. During the interaction, discussions were held on civic issues, including sanitation, road maintenance, drainage, drinking water supply and overall urban infrastructure in the Boduppal Circle. The attendees expressed hope that administrative coordination would help address long-pending public grievances and improve service delivery. They also stated that effective implementation of municipal programmes and citizen-centric governance would contribute to the planned development of the area. The meeting concluded with collective wishes for the successful tenure of the newly appointed Deputy Commissioner.

ICBM – School of Business Excellence Hosts 18th Convocation Ceremony



“Hyderabad, December 28, 2025:“ICBM – School of Business Excellence (ICBM-SBE) successfully conducted its 18th Convocation Ceremony on December 28, 2025 at the ICBM-SBE Auditorium, Hyderabad, for the PGDM Batch of 2023-25. The ceremony marked a significant academic milestone, celebrating the dedication, perseverance, and accomplishments of the graduating students as they prepare to step into the professional world. A total of 176 students were awarded their graduation certificates upon the successful completion of the programme. The convocation was graced by C. Ramakrishna, Executive Director – AMDISA (South Asia),

as the Chief Guest. In his address, he inspired the graduates with valuable insights drawn from his vast experience in management education. The Guest of Honour was Deepak Garg, Strategic Account Director, Adobe Digital Experience. Prof Shamshuddin Zarar, Director, ICBM-SBE, extended his best wishes to the PGDM Batch of 2023-25, encouraging them to move forward with confidence, integrity, and leadership as they embark on their professional journeys. Professor Narayana Reddy, Director General of ICBM made the opening remarks and Dr Ritu Zarar administered the oath. The vote of thanks was proposed by Prof Jitender Govindani.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities Observed at Boduppal

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, December 29, (INDIAN CHRONICLE): On the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, an International Disabled Felicitation and Interaction Meeting was organised by Sri Lakshmi Prasanna Charitable Trust at Boduppal. The programme witnessed the participation of trust members and several local leaders. Nirmala Reddy, Chairperson of Nirmala Reddy Charitable Trust and Vice President of Telangana Pradesh Congress Women, attended the event as the chief guest. As part of the initiative, she distributed sarees and blankets to 100 persons with disabilities on be-

half of the Nirmala Reddy Charitable Trust, keeping in view their needs, especially during the summer season. Speaking on the occasion, Nirmala Reddy expressed her appreciation to the Sri Lakshmi Prasanna Charitable Trust for organising the programme and for including her as a participant in the International Day of Persons with Disabilities celebrations. She stated that persons with disabilities face many challenges and obstacles in life, yet continue to overcome them with determination and courage, serving as an inspiration to society. She called upon people to extend support to persons with disabilities, treat them with dignity, and acknowledge their

abilities rather than their limitations. Quoting a well-known saying, she remarked that one should see the person, not the disability, and added that art and talent have no barriers, while self-confidence is the key solution to all challenges. During the programme, she interacted warmly with the beneficiaries, enquired about their health conditions, and encouraged them. She later felicitated the organisers and conveyed her best wishes, reiterating that the Nirmala Reddy Charitable Trust would continue to stand at the forefront of such service-oriented activities. She also thanked the Sri Lakshmi Prasanna Charitable Trust for its consistent efforts in organising meaningful social welfare programmes for the benefit of the community.

New Year Must Begin on a Happy Note, Not End in Tragedy, Celebrate Responsibly, No Room for Negligence on New Year's Eve: Warns Kaghaznagar DSP; Strict Police Vigil Announced

“Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, December 29 (Indian Chronicle)“Calling upon the public to celebrate the New Year responsibly, Kaghaznagar Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Wahiduddin has cautioned that negligence and unruly behaviour should not turn festivities into tragedy. Addressing the media, the DSP stated that the district police administration has put in place a comprehensive action plan to ensure public safety during New Year celebrations. He appealed to people of all age groups to celebrate the occasion peacefully with their families at home. “Let the New Year begin with joy and happiness, not end in sorrow due to carelessness,” he said, warning that any attempt to disrupt public



life in the name of celebrations would not be tolerated. As part of precautionary measures, the police will remain on high alert from 6 p.m. on December 31, with intensified patrolling across urban and rural areas of the Kaghaznagar division. Special drunk-and-drive checks will be conducted throughout the night. He made it clear that no New Year events should be organised without prior police permission. Police Guidelines for New Year Celebrations: 1. Any celebration that causes disturbance to public life will invite legal action. 2. Use of DJs, loudspeakers and high-decibel sound systems is strictly prohibited; violators will face seizure of equipment and criminal cases. 3. Drunken driving is a punishable offence; overspeeding and rash driving will lead to prosecution and imprisonment. 4. Acts such as stone-pelting on houses, private property or streetlights, vandalism, harassment of women, or obscene behaviour will be dealt with strictly under the law. 5. Rash driving, bike racing, triple riding, riding without silencers, and creating noise pollution will attract stringent legal action. 6. Sale or consumption of prohibited drugs, ganja, or other narcotic substances during celebrations will result in severe punishment. 7. Liquor shops must be closed as per stipulated timings; sale of alcohol to minors is strictly prohibited. 8. Consumption of alcohol in public places or government premises will lead to registration of cases. 9. If minors are found driving vehicles, cases will be registered against those who permitted them; guardians will be held responsible in the event of accidents. 10. Organisers of any New Year event must obtain prior permission from police authorities without exception. The DSP urged citizens to immediately report any violation of these guidelines to Dial 100, assuring swift police response and strict action against offenders. He appealed for public cooperation to maintain peace and law and order, and conveyed New Year greetings on behalf of the police department, wishing everyone a safe and prosperous 2026.



Basti Bata & Voter Registration Drive in Balakrishna Nagar



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 29 (Indian Chronicle):”“Uppal Constituency Youth Congress President Akarapu Arun Patel stated that the voter registration drive conducted on Monday at Balakrishna Nagar, as per the directions of Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy, received an overwhelming response. He said that a large number of people turned up to apply for new voter IDs and to make address corrections. Following the voter registration programme, a Basti Bata (door-to-door outreach) programme was conducted in Balakrishna Colony, which also received an enthusiastic response from the residents. Arun Patel expressed that the affection shown by the people, who treated him like a member of their own family and as their younger brother, deeply touched his heart. He said the warmth, encouragement, and assurance shown by the people at every doorstep would remain unforgettable. He conveyed his heartfelt gratitude to the residents for their immense trust, love, and

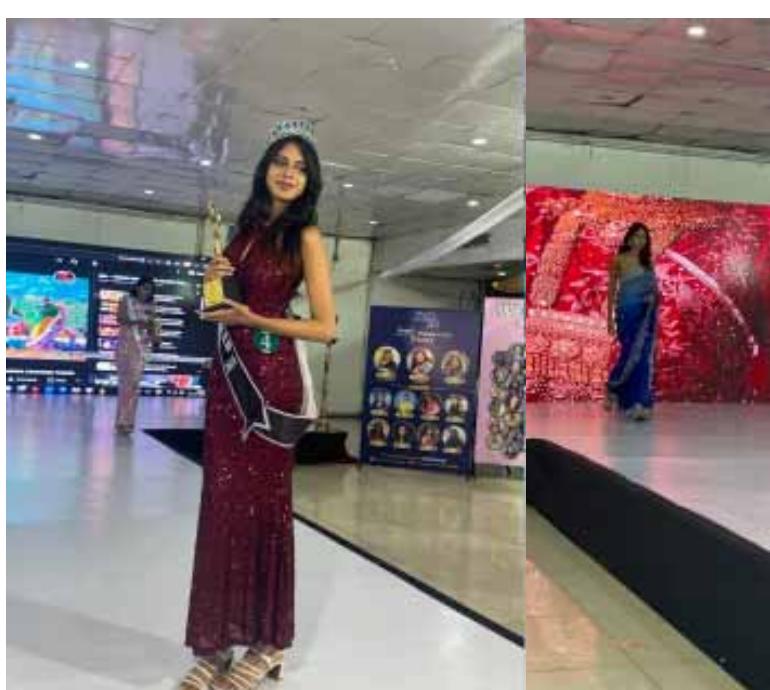
support. He assured the people of Balakrishna Nagar that he would always stand at the forefront in resolving their problems and working towards the development of the basti. A large number of women residents and colony elders from Balakrishna Nagar participated in the programme.

Adequate Urea Stocks Available in Medchal–Malkajgiri District: Collector



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal – Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, December 29, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):”District Collector Manu Chowdhary stated that sufficient stocks of urea fertilizer are available in Medchal–Malkajgiri district and farmers need not panic. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that as of today, 773 metric tonnes of urea are available in the district. He directed officials to ensure that shamianas and drinking water facilities are provided at every sale counter to avoid inconvenience to farmers. Urea sales should begin from 6.00 am at all counters, he instructed. The Collector assured that the existing urea stock is adequate to meet the current agricultural requirements of the district. He added that additional supplies are being received regularly based on demand, ensuring uninterrupted availability. He said that the Agriculture Department officials and staff are closely monitoring the urea distribution process to ensure smooth supply. The Collector warned that strict action will be taken against anyone involved in creating artificial scarcity or selling urea at higher prices. Farmers facing any issues related to urea supply were advised to contact the nearest agriculture officials. The Collector also appealed to farmers to avoid purchasing excess urea and to use it judiciously as per scientific agricultural practices.

Femi–9 Women’s Club Fashion Show Enthralls



“Indian Chronicle, “Secunderabad, December 29:”“Ramp walks are not merely about fashion but serve as a platform to instill confidence, courage, and a positive change in women’s thinking, said Mrs. India Telangana Crown Winner Sudha Naidu. She was the chief guest at the Beauty and Fashion Meet organized by the Femi–9 Women’s Club at Family World, Begumpet. Speaking on the occasion, Sudha Naidu said that the fashion show symbolized self-confidence and empowerment, going beyond physical beauty. “Women, children,

and teenagers participated in the fashion show and walked the ramp with confidence, impressing the audience with their performances. The event highlighted inner strength and self-belief among participants.” In the Miss category, Mahithi Reddy emerged as the winner, while Jhansi won the Mrs category. Chief Guest Sudha Naidu crowned the winners and presented them with prizes. “Femi–9 Women’s Club President Anu, Vice President Hema, Secretary Vijaya, Founder Rajesh, and other members were present at the event.

Drainage Issue Resolved in Adarsh Nagar by BJYM Leader Telangana Sampath



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 29 (Indian Chronicle):”“BJYM state leader Telangana Sampath stated that he is committed to working with the sole objective of resolving the problems faced by residents in the Chilka Nagar Division. On Monday, residents of Adarsh Nagar Colony brought to his notice the severe drainage overflow near the N.S. School in the colony. Responding immediately, Telangana Sampath spoke with the concerned officials and stayed at the spot until the issue was resolved. The residents of Adarsh Nagar Colony expressed their special gratitude to Telangana Sampath for his prompt action. Speaking on the occasion, Telangana Sampath said that he would make every effort to take the issues brought to his attention by the public to the concerned authorities and ensure their resolution. “Elders and residents of Adarsh Nagar Colony participated in the programme.

Villagers Seek Ration Shop in Durganagar as Distance Causes Hardship



“Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, December 29 (Indian Chronicle):”“Residents of Durganagar Village No. 10 in Kaghaznagar mandal of Komaram Bheem–Asifabad district have expressed concern over the absence of a ration shop in their village, stating that it has been causing severe hardship, particularly to the elderly. According to villagers, around 400 families reside in Durganagar. In the absence of a local fair price shop, beneficiaries are unable to collect ration supplies on time every month. They said they are forced to travel to neighbouring villages—Village No. 5 or Village No. 9—to access ration shops. “Several villagers pointed out that many benefi-

caries are senior citizens who are compelled to walk three to four kilometres each month to procure essential commodities. They lamented that the distance and physical strain have made it extremely difficult for elderly residents to avail themselves of their entitlements. The villagers further stated that many aged beneficiaries are unable even to approach government offices to voice their grievances. They appealed to the local sarpanch, the MLA, the District Collector and Civil Supplies officials to take a compassionate view of their situation and ensure the establishment of a fair price (ration) shop within their village, enabling residents to receive monthly rations locally.

Ayyappa Devotees Protest Demolition of Temple Wall at Nacharam Crossroads



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal – Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, December 29, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):”Ayyappa devotees, local residents and members of the basti staged a protest on the road at Nacharam Crossroads on Monday, expressing strong disappointment over the demolition of the boundary wall of a 45-year-old Shiva temple. Large numbers of devotees participated in the protest, alleging that the demolition hurt religious sentiments. Raising slogans in support of Sanatana Dharma, the protesters demanded protec-

tion of ancient temples and religious structures. The demonstrators sat on the road, leading to temporary traffic disruption in the area. They urged the authorities to take responsibility for the incident and ensure that such actions are not repeated in the future. Leaders and supporters from both the BRS and BJP parties extended support to the protest and participated in large numbers, expressing solidarity with the devotees and local residents. The protest remained peaceful, with participants calling for respect and preservation of religious heritage.

Six Booked Police Raid Cockfighting Den in Penchikalpet, Seize Cash and Birds



“Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, December 29 (Indian Chronicle):”“Penchikalpet, October 29: Police conducted a raid on an illegal cockfighting camp near Gundepalli village in Penchikalpet mandal on Sunday evening and seized five roosters and ₹5,600 in cash. Acting on specific information about cockfighting activities in the area, Dahegaon Sub-Inspector Vikram, along with Penchikalpet Head Constable Srinivas and police personnel, raided the spot and took into custody the individuals involved in the gambling activity. A case has been registered against six persons, and an investigation is underway, said SI Anil Kumar. The seized roosters and cash were taken into police custody as part of the case.

Bheri Ramachandhar Yadav submitted a representation to TPCC President Mahesh Kumar Goud.



“Seriengampally Indian Chronicle: Bheri Ramachandhar Yadav, State President of the BC Association, submitted a representation to TPCC President Mahesh Kumar Goud, requesting that seats be allocated to BCs on a proportional basis in the upcoming MPTC, ZPTC, and Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) corporator, councilor, and chairman elections. He urged the government to take steps to ensure that BCs, who constitute a large population, are given their due representation. “On this occasion, the TPCC President stated that they would take measures to ensure that BCs receive their fair share of seats in the elections and promised to bring these matters to the attention of the Chief Minister. Bheri expressed his happiness on this occasion and lauded him. The event was attended by Osmania University student leaders Niranjan Yadav, Sandeep Yadav, Krishna Goud, Ramesh Mudiraj, Ashok from the Padmashali community, Lenin Yadav, Shashank Yadav, Kranthi Kumar, Santosh Kumar, Sampath Kumar Yadav, and leaders from various Yadav and BC associations.

Amritsar's walled city meat vendors face uncertain future after Holy City tag



GNS News Agency, Dec 29

The December 15 notification of the Punjab government declaring the Amritsar walled city area as 'holy city' and banning the sale of non-vegetarian items there has cast a shadow on the future of around 100-150 meat and fish shops, and around 150 outlets selling non-veg items. The affected meat and fish shopkeepers gathered in the Golbagh area of Amritsar on Tuesday to voice fears over losing their livelihoods. Talking to The Indian Express, Surinder Singh, a meat vendor near Hathi Gate, said, "Our ancestors came from Pakistan in 1948, and since then we have been running this meat shop near Hathi Gate. We do not know any other business, any other work."

"Most meat stalls in the walled city are run by middle-class and poor people. So far, no one has come to us to shut our shop, but... the administration has started objecting to the outlets in the walled city," Singh added. He clarified that of roughly 100 meat shops, only 20 sell halal meat,

while 80 offer jhatka meat as per the Sikh code of conduct. Fish vendors echoed similar pleas. Makhan Singh, owner of Makhan Fish near Hall Gate, said, "We have talked to the mayor about relocating the fish market to an appropriate place, and we are hopeful that the administration will help us. There are around 20 meat and fish shops near the Hall Gate."

The 'ban' has also ignited Sikh doctrinal debates. Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) member Kiranjot Kaur objected sharply, terming the ban a "Brahmanical imposition". "Jhatka meat is our right," she asserted, citing Guru Nanak Dev cooking meat in Kurukshetra and the 1935 Jhatka Conference. "Tobacco and kutha (halal) remain prohibited in Sikhism, but jhatka aligns with the Gurus' hunting traditions. So there shouldn't be any ban on meat shops," she said in a Facebook post. Meat vendors have formed a committee to meet the deputy commissioner and mayor, seeking to limit bans so as not to affect their meat shops, which are largely near the outer edge of the walled city.

The fresh restriction echoes demands dating back to the 1980s, when Sikh bodies like the SGPC and All India Sikh Students Federation pushed for tobacco and liquor bans around the Darbar Sahib. In 1980, SGPC president Gurcharan Singh Tohra urged prime minister Indira Gandhi to prohibit the sale of these items. Demand to ban meat sales, however, emerged when the then Amritsar deputy commissioner S M S Chahal called a joint meeting of the city's Hindu and Sikh leaders in 1981. Hindu bodies raised a demand for a ban on meat shops during the meeting, to which Sikh bodies didn't object.

Shimla doctor's dismissal sparks mass leave protest; IGMC services hit



GNS News Agency, Dec 29

Patients at the Indira Gandhi Medical College and Hospital (IGMC), Shimla, faced significant inconvenience on Friday as resident doctors proceeded on mass casual leave across the city and other parts of Himachal Pradesh, affecting routine healthcare services. The leave was in protest against the termination of Senior Resident Dr Raghav Narula, who was dismissed from service for allegedly assaulting a patient at IGMC earlier this week. According to sources, nearly 2,800 doctors, including junior residents and senior residents, went on one-day casual leave across the state.

Dr Narula was terminated from his senior residency following an alleged altercation with a 36-year-old patient, Arjun Singh, in the pulmonary ward of IGMC on December 22. The state government ordered a departmental inquiry, which was completed within 24 hours, following which his services were terminated on Wednesday.

A faculty member at IGMC Shimla, speaking on condition of anonymity, said medical services were adversely impacted not only at IGMC but also at other government hospitals across the state. "Medical services were affected today as many doctors were already on leave due to winter

vacations. Though senior faculty members, including professors and assistant professors, attended outpatient departments (OPDs), the functioning was limited to barely 20 to 30 per cent. Several scheduled surgeries had to be postponed," the faculty member said, maintaining that the emergency services were functioning. At IGMC, around 450 doctors were on leave simultaneously, while nearly 50 per cent of doctors had already been on leave since December 22 due to winter vacations. As a result, many OPDs either had no doctors or were attended by only one or two doctors, leading to long waiting hours and distress among patients.

Several patients complained that they had travelled from distant areas a day earlier for treatment, only to find doctors unavailable. "Doctors' problems should not be made our problems. We came here for treatment, but there is no one to attend to us," said a patient. Others said they were unaware that doctors were on leave and questioned the hospital administration over the absence of prior notice. Meanwhile, a delegation of the Resident Doctors' Association (RDA), IGMC Shimla, met Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Friday, pressing for the reinstatement of Dr Narula, strengthening of security arrangements in government hospitals, and legal action against individuals who allegedly entered the hospital premises and threatened doctors after the December 22 incident.

Vikas Thakur, General Secretary, Himachal Medical Officers' Association (HMOA), said resident doctors had proceeded on leave in almost all government hospitals in the state. "A delegation met the chief minister today. While he expressed concern over doctors' demands, we will decide our future course of action in a meeting scheduled this evening. A decision on whether to proceed with an indefinite strike from Saturday will be taken shortly," he said. Meanwhile, family members, relatives and residents of Paonta Sahib in Sirmour district, Dr Narula's hometown, held a rally in his support, demanding his reinstatement and a fair and impartial investigation into the incident.

SIR 2.0 in Bengal: What Mamata Banerjee told WBCS officers ahead of hearings



GNS News Agency, Dec 29 Ahead of the start of hearings under the second phase of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) from December 27, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee held a meeting with West Bengal Civil Service (Executive) officers and also wrote to them, which triggered a political controversy.

According to state administration sources, Banerjee met leaders of the WBCS organisation on December 23. Following the meeting, she wrote a letter to WBCS officers, in which she referred to what her government had done for the service and acknowledged the "adverse environment" in which officers were working during the SIR process. The letter stated, "I know WBCS officers are doing their job in an adverse environment during this SIR process. But remember that our government is always with you and in the future also, we will stand beside you." Leader of the Opposition Suvenu Adhikari criticised the move in a post on X, alleging that the Chief Minister was attempting to influence officers overseeing the SIR exercise. "Mamata Banerjee is trying to woo the WBCS Officers who are overseeing the SIR exercise and in a subtle manner trying to remind them how they have benefited from this state government and, in a veiled way, tried to make them aware of the possibility that they will have to sit and discuss about their issues with her in future (implying after the elections)," Adhikari wrote. He added, "The Chief Minister suddenly lauding the contributions of WBCS officers and reminding them of their 'allegiance to the government' exposes a patronising tone, using administrative toil as leverage for loyalty. This is nothing but an attempt to intimidate the WBCS officers. However, has she actually walked the talk?" Adhikari also listed what he claimed were pending issues faced by WBCS officers under the Mamata Banerjee government. BJP sources said he has complained to the Election Commission of India (ECI), seeking necessary action.

The controversy has gained significance as Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROs) — who will conduct the SIR (Executive) cadre. A senior state government official said, "EROs and AEROs have the power to dispose of all hearings. In every Assembly constituency, there will be 11 such officers who will essentially dispose of the hearings. So, if anyone says the Chief Minister is trying to influence the process, they are not fully wrong." The ECI is scheduled to begin the hearing process on December 27. Notices have first been issued to electors whose names have no mapping with the 2002 SIR. There are 31 lakh such electors in the draft electoral roll published on December 16, of whom 10 lakh have already received hearing notices in the first round. In each Assembly constituency, 11 hearing tables will be set up, with one ERO or AERO at each table. A micro-observer appointed by the ECI will also be present at every table to oversee the process.

Gas cylinder blast in van near Ghatkesar, disaster narrowly averted

Hyderabad: A major disaster was narrowly avoided when a Maruti Omni van caught fire after a gas cylinder inside the vehicle exploded near Annojiguda in Ghatkesar on Friday. Fortunately, no casualties were reported. The incident occurred while the van was traveling from Ghatkesar towards Uppal. According to the police, flames erupted suddenly inside the vehicle, prompting the occupants to jump out and flee to safety. In the chaos, the driver reportedly failed to apply the hand brake, causing the burning van to move uncontrollably and crash into a nearby petrol bunk.

The situation could have turned tragic, but the alertness of the petrol pump staff prevented it by quickly responding by using fire extinguishers and managed to douse the flames before the fire could spread further. The incident triggered panic among petrol bunk employees, passing motorists and local residents. The Ghatkesar Police and Fire department officials later reached the spot and started investigation into the cause of the cylinder explosion.

'Hanuman stronger than Superman, Arjuna greater than Iron Man': Naidu in science conclave in Tirupati



GNS News Agency, Dec 29

Calling for innovation and creative thinking, he expressed confidence that India is on course to emerge as a global superpower in the future. Calling for innovation and creative thinking, he expressed confidence that India is on course to emerge as a global superpower in the future. (Image: @ncbn) Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said Friday that Indian epics are far greater than Hollywood superheroes and that the youth must learn about Rama, Krishna and Ram Rajya. Speaking at the inaugural session of the Bharatiya Vigyan Sammelan (BVS) at Tirupati's National Sanskrit University, Naidu said: "Lord Hanuman's strength surpasses that of Superman, Arjuna was a greater warrior than Iron Man or Batman". Naidu, who is known for speaking on information technology and artificial intelligence and has recently focused on quantum technology, called upon parents, teachers and society to instil knowledge of India's epics and cultural heritage among children and youth, instead of limiting them to Western super-

hero narratives. He said India's mythological heroes embody far greater values, strength and ideals than fictional characters like Spider-Man, Batman or Superman. "Lord Rama remains the ultimate symbol of righteousness, with Ram Rajya representing ideal governance," he said, urging people to teach children about the greatness of Hindu gods Krishna and Lord Shiva, and the lessons from the Ramayana and Mahabharata, stating that these epics "are more profound than even popular films like Avatar". The chief minister highlighted the importance of teaching children the distinction between good and evil through stories of characters such as Bakasura and Kansa, and recalled how former chief minister N T Rama Rao popularised mythological stories through cinema while upholding strong values in both films and politics. Calling for innovation and creative thinking, he expressed confidence that India is on course to emerge as a global superpower in the future. Naidu also spoke about national development, crediting former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee for laying strong foundations and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for taking India forward with remarkable progress. On Thursday, Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Naidu unveiled the statue of Vajpayee at Venkatapalem in the Amaravati capital region as part of Atal Bihari Vajpayee's centenary birth anniversary celebrations. They later planted saplings at the Vajpayee memorial park. The seventh edition of the Bharatiya Vigyan Sammelan is being held at the National Sanskrit University in Tirupati from December 26 to 29. The inaugural session was attended by RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat and Naidu. The event also saw Naidu laud Bhagwat for strengthening the organisation through his experience and dedication while staying out of politics.

Gujarat regains 'Tiger State' status after 33 years; NTCA confirms presence in Ratanmahal sanctuary



GNS News Agency, Dec 29

Gujarat has regained its status as a 'Tiger State' after 33 years, with the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) confirming the presence of a tiger in the Ratanmahal Wildlife Sanctuary in central Gujarat and including the state in the national Tiger Census. Forest and Environment Minister Arjun Modhwadia announced the development in an official statement on Friday. In the statement, forest officials detected pugmarks of a tiger on February 23 this year in the Pipalgota Round of the Kanjera Range in the sanctuary. Subsequent analysis of camera trap data revealed an image of a tiger captured on February 22 at 2:40 am. Modhwadia said the NTCA was informed about the presence of the tiger following these findings.

On the basis of that, a team of the NTCA carried out a study in Gujarat and confirmed the presence of a tiger in Ratanmahal Wildlife Sanctuary in its primary report and included Gujarat for the Tiger Census in the country, while also suggesting steps to strengthen the ecosystem, the minister was quoted as saying in the official release. The

release, however, added that the Gujarat Forest Department is yet to receive an authorised communication from the NTCA in this regard. The minister said the state Forest Department has begun efforts to strengthen the ecosystem for tiger habitation. "The area is being constantly supervised since confirmation of the tiger's presence, and necessary steps are being taken to ensure availability of water and prey base, security, and fire prevention. The number of camera traps in the area has also been increased," Modhwadia said. He added that the sanctuary already has wild boars, blue bulls and monkeys, and that prey base species are being augmented where required. "Additionally, antelopes and spotted deer were released in the area during the monsoon. At the same time, forest department officials will be trained in conservation and breeding of tigers. Moreover, attempts are on to bring a female tiger to increase the tiger population in the region. All efforts are also being made to ensure that Ratanmahal Sanctuary is declared a Tiger Reserve," the release said. Calling it a "proud moment for Gujarat", Modhwadia said the state has become the only one in India to host three big cat species — lion, tiger and leopard — simultaneously. "This is a result of forest conservation work done under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel," he said. According to the minister, tigers were once present in large numbers in Gujarat but gradually became extinct in the state. "The last time, in 1989, when the Tiger Census was conducted, officials spotted pugmarks of a tiger but no tiger was seen. In the 1992 Tiger Census, Gujarat was excluded and lost its status as a Tiger State. With the sighting of a tiger in 2019 in Mahisagar district, a ray of hope was raised, but unfortunately it survived only for 15 days. It is a matter of joy for us that a tiger has once again made Gujarat its home," he said.

Ahead of Maharashtra civic polls, Sanjay Raut targets CM Fadnavis over law and order, Satara drug case



GNS News Agency, Dec 29

With municipal corporation elections approaching, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Friday launched a sharp attack on Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, raising questions over the state's law and order situation and alleging political protection in high-profile criminal cases. Raut alleged that the son of Minister Bharat Gogawale continues to be absconding despite serious allegations against him.

Referring to the Mahad municipal election campaign, Raut said a Congress worker was attacked with the intent to murder him, and alleged that the police failed to act independently. He pointed out that the Bombay High Court had rejected anticipatory bail in the case, underlining the gravity of the charges. "If ministers speak in the Assembly about

strict action and claim that no one will be spared, then how do ministers' sons, brothers or close relatives manage to evade the law?" Raut asked, alleging selective enforcement and political interference in police functioning. Raut also flagged the alleged drug manufacturing unit unearthed in Satara district, questioning the progress of the investigation. claimed that the identities of the key conspirators were known to the government, but that the case was allowed to weaken due to pressure from senior political figures. To Raut, while Mumbai Police conducted the raid, subsequent attempts were made to obstruct the investigation. Targeting Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, Raut alleged that the land linked to the drug case was connected to Shinde's family. He further claimed that a former Mumbai police officer with close political links was associated with the alleged drug operation. Raut said he would disclose names at a later stage. He also alleged that the Satara police initially attempted to dilute the case and that interference from the Home Department and senior officers resulted in the matter being stalled. "Such serious cases being allowed to go cold raises concerns about governance and accountability," he said. On the broader political situation, Raut said that if leaders currently aligned with the BJP were willing to work towards defeating the party, they should be welcomed. He added that political realignments were natural ahead of elections and should be viewed in that context.

Centre's panel recommends green nod for Dulhasti-II hydel project on Chenab

Amid the Centre's push to expedite pending infrastructure projects in the Indus River basin, the Union Environment Ministry's sectoral expert appraisal committee (EAC) on hydel projects recommended an environmental nod for the 260 MW Dulhasti Stage-II project on the Chenab River in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district, as per official minutes of the panel's December 19 meeting. The project will be developed by NHPC Limited at an estimated cost of Rs 3,277.45 crore. The 390 MW Dulhasti-I is a run-of-the-river scheme commissioned in 2007 by NHPC Ltd. Dulhasti-II, meanwhile, will utilise the existing dam, reservoir, and power intake of the stage-I project, and draw water from the Marusudar River, through the Pakal Dul project. While giving its nod, the panel noted that the water of the Chenab basin is shared between India and Pakistan, in accordance with the provisions of the Indus Water Treaty (IWT), 1960, and the parameters of the project were planned in accordance with the Treaty. "However, the Indus Water Treaty stands suspended effective from 23rd April, 2025", the panel noted in its minutes. The Indian government put the IWT in abeyance after the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack earlier this year, in which 26 people were killed. Under the now-suspended treaty, Pakistan controlled the waters of the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab, while India controlled the Ravi, Beas and Sutlej. After the IWT was put in abeyance, the Centre has sought to expedite several hydroelectric projects in the Indus basin, such as Sawalkote, Ratle, Bursar, Pakal Dul, Kwar, Kiru, and Kirthai-I and II. The clearance will be subject to general and some important specific conditions, including the development of a river conservation strategy to mitigate the impacts of hydrological alterations due to the operations of Dulhasti-II and Pakal Dul Dam. "It was noted that the Dulhasti Stage-II HEP is planned to utilise surplus water to be diverted from the Marusudar River through the Pakal-Dul powerhouse into the Dulhasti reservoir.

Minor stabs man to death in Rohini, apprehended



GNS News Agency, Dec 29

Minor stabs man to death in Rohini, apprehended. Based on technical surveillance, the police then tracked down the juvenile and apprehended the accused.

from Prem Nagar area. A man was stabbed to death and robbed off his mobile phone by a juvenile in Delhi's Rohini area on Wednesday, the Delhi Police said. The accused has been apprehended. According to the police, the incident happened at night on Wednesday.

"On Wednesday, at about 10:33 pm, a PCR call regarding a stabbing incident was received at PS Prem Nagar station. Police staff immediately reached the spot and learnt that the injured had already been shifted to SGM Hospital, where the doctor declared him dead," Additional DCP (Rohini) Sandeep Gupta said. Based on technical surveillance, the police then tracked down the juvenile and apprehended the accused from Prem Nagar area. "During questioning, he admitted to the crime. The weapon used for the commission of the crime and the robbed mobile phone were recovered at his instance. Proceedings against the juvenile are being carried out. Further investigation is in progress," Additional DCP Gupta added.

PIL in Calcutta HC seeks stay on suspended TMC MLA Humayun Kabir's Babri Masjid plan

EMS News Agency, Dec 5

suspended TMC MLA Humayun Kabir, suspended TMC MLA Humayun Kabir Babri Masjid plan, Humayun Kabir Babri Masjid plan, Calcutta High Court, Indian express news, current affairs. The matter will be heard by a division bench of Acting Chief Justice Sujay Pal. A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) has been filed in the Calcutta High Court seeking a stay on suspended Trinamool Congress (TMC) MLA Humayun Kabir's plan to lay the foundation stone for building a mosque modelled on the Babri Masjid, in Murshidabad district on December 6. Advocate Sabayasachi Chatterjee, the petitioner's counsel, has filed the PIL seeking an urgent hearing, requesting the court to take immediate action against Kabir's provocative remarks that have allegedly disrupted communal harmony.

The petition mentions, "The writ petition pertains to stop foundation stone laying of Babri Masjid in Beldanga Block 1, Murshidabad to maintain Law and order. Mr. Humayun Kabir, Member of Legislative Assembly of Bharatpur, has decided to lay the foundation stone for a structure of Mosque named 'Babri Masjid' in the Beldanga 1 block of Murshidabad on 6th December, 2025..... MLA has been using filthy and derogatory statements and hate speech against a community which causes breach of public tran-



quility. Such kind of statements and hate speech over social media and YouTube news portal, being a Member of Legislative Assembly may break the communal harmony of our state as well as our country." Kabir while speaking to media persons said, "I have consulted with my legal counsel, they will appear before court and put forward their arguments." Over the past one year, Kabir has repeatedly criticised the party, prompting warnings from Chief Minister and TMC-supremo Mamata Banerjee and Abhishek Banerjee that such behaviour would not be tolerated.

Pollution high year-round, CAQM targets summer wheat stubble burning: Why new order to Punjab & Haryana is significant



GNS News Agency, Dec 29

Faced with a high year-round baseline for air pollution, which pushes air quality over northwestern India into the hazardous zone during the October-November kharif stubble-burning season every year, the Centre's most powerful pollution watchdog has decided to extend its vigil to the rabi season as well. This means that activities in agricultural fields in Punjab and Haryana will, for the first time, come under direct on-the-ground scrutiny following the harvesting of the winter wheat crop in April-May.

The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has written to the chief secretaries of the two state governments directing them to extend ground-level monitoring and enforcement measures to eliminate farm fires during the rabi season. The Indian Express has learnt. In its letter sent on December 1, CAQM has asked the states to submit a parali (crop residue) action plan for the wheat crop cycle ending before the summer of 2026. Since 2022, the Indian

Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) has been carrying out satellite-based monitoring of wheat residue-burning under its Consortium for Research on Agroecosystem Monitoring and Modelling from Space (CREAMS) program. The findings are alarming — during the wheat harvesting period from April 1 to May 31 this year, satellite data recorded 10,207 fire events in Punjab, 1,832 in Haryana, 14,398 in Uttar Pradesh, 34,429 in Madhya Pradesh, and 49 in Delhi. The counts for UP, MP, and Delhi were the highest since monitoring began in 2022. Also, the numbers of incidents of summer stubble-burning in all states contrast sharply with the numbers from the closely watched October-November period, during which farm fires, especially in Punjab and Haryana, fell to historical lows this year. Stubble-burning in these states is seen as a significant contributor to the terrible air pollution over Delhi-NCR at the onset of winter every year. For the first time, CAQM wants Punjab and Haryana to monitor summer stubble-burning as well. The picture shows stubble-burning near Jalandhar on May 17, 2019. Anju Agnihotri Chaba, The CAQM letter to Punjab and Haryana noted that despite measures taken to eliminate paddy stubble-burning in 2025, both detected and undetected fire events were reported, which point to gaps in implementation. The Commission had, on November 21, sought detailed reports from the states on fire locations that satellites had failed to detect, the methods used to track such events, and the preventive and punitive actions taken against the burning of paddy crop residue. Since 2020, IARI has been monitoring active fire counts in the kharif season from September 15 to November 30, which frequently coincides with air pollution levels reaching 'Severe' (AQI 400+) or worse in the capital.

Businessman killed in Gurgaon hit-and-run: Accused still on the run, family demands justice



GNS News Agency, Dec 29

Grief hangs heavy at businessman Amitabh Jain's home in Gurgaon. On Thursday, a day after he died following a hit-and-run incident, family members and friends visited the house to bid him adieu.

Jain is survived by wife, Ritu Jain, chief conservator at the Parliament Museum in Delhi, a 29-year-old son working at an IT company in London, and a 25-year-old daughter who lives in Bengaluru. After he received the news of his father's death, Jain's son rushed from London and reached Gurgaon by midnight. Unwilling to sum up his loss in words, the son said he just wanted to focus on his family for now.

Jain's daughter, on the other hand, sought justice and said arrests should be made soon without delay. "Did the police share anything more yet?" she could be heard asking amid the mourning. Jain had celebrated his 58th birthday on

October 17. He and his wife were married for over 30 years. Family members said he earlier ran a departmental store in Delhi's Malka Ganj area, and also had a security and maintenance business. Inspector Manoj Kumar of the DLF Phase-2 Police Station told The Indian Express that the police are close to caging the accused and hope to apprehend him by Friday.

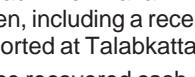
Hyderabad: The Bhavani Nagar Police on Friday arrested four men, including a receiver, in the Rs 40 lakh robbery case reported at Talabkatta on November 30.

The police recovered cash of Rs 34.6 lakh along with mobile phones, two-wheelers and a knife used in the offence.

Police said the key suspect, Mohd Zahid, a friend of the victim, Mohd Sultan had tipped off his associates after learning that the complainant had kept a large cash amount for a house purchase.

As per the plan, Syed Irfan and Mudassir Alahi allegedly entered the victim's house at dawn, assaulted him, tied his hands and fled with the money, phone and his scooter.

Four held in Rs 40 lakh robbery case



'Flew over India Gate, Nizamuddin... people waved from rooftops': Forgotten history of hot air ballooning in Delhi



GNS News Agency, Dec 29

In fact, hot air balloons first soared in the sky above the Capital more than a half century ago — for more than three decades starting 1970, Safdarjung airport was the base for an ambitious attempt to popularise the activity in India. These early balloons had interesting shapes — there was one that looked like the Taj Mahal, another resembled the face of Mahatma Gandhi, show pictures taken at the time. Some of these balloons were quite large — one, which looked like a dinosaur, was bigger than a modern commercial airliner. The man behind Delhi's first balloons was Vishwabandhu Gupta, the son of Lala Deshbandhu Gupta, a freedom fighter and member of the Constituent Assembly.

Vishwabandhu Gupta, head of the Tej-Bandhu media group who also served in Rajya Sabha in the 1980s, founded the Ballooning Club of India in 1970. hot air balloon Hot air balloon shaped like the national emblem in front of Parliament. Special Arrangement. For the next 15 years, Gupta, who desired to popularise ballooning in India, offered free, untethered rides to the public, said Anil Chopra, a veteran employee of the Tej Group who had worked with him. After 1985, however, flights required security clearance from the Home Ministry, which rarely gave permission — forcing the

club to take its rides to Damdama Lake in Haryana, Vrindavan in UP, and Jaipur and Jodhpur in Rajasthan. But its popularity suffered. "We offered free flights at Damdama Lake in the morning. But people had to leave home before dawn to reach the lake by 5.30 am, where we had built a station. After the flight was over by 9.30 am, people would get back home only by afternoon," Chopra said. "It was also not commercially viable for us, considering the costs of the gas and a team of 7-8 people. We kept it going only because of Mr Gupta's motivation and drive," Chopra added. Chopra recalled that in the early years, the balloons would wander all over Delhi. "Delhi used to be emptier then, with more places to land. The balloons would fly over India Gate, Sunder Nagar, and Nizamuddin, and people would gather on rooftops to wave," he said.

For many years from 1985 onward, the club organised a week-long India International Balloon Mela in Delhi every November. (Special Arrangement) For many years from 1985 onward, the club organised a week-long India International Balloon Mela in Delhi every November. (Special Arrangement) For many years from 1985 onward, the club organised a week-long India International Balloon Mela in Delhi every November, which saw participation by teams from Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, the USSR, and the USA. Twenty-five balloons raced from one end of Safdarjung airport to another, and were permitted to also roam above the city, Chopra said. Gupta also organised cross-country ballooning trips so that people in rural areas could see the balloons. A South India Safari was started in Hyderabad, and the club made at least one trip from Jaisalmer to Calcutta in 1987 and another from Leh to Kanyakumari in 1988. In 1985, a balloon was built in the shape of the Congress election symbol 'Hand', which then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi signed; in 1992, the club created a balloon that resembled the Taj Mahal. In August 1997, to mark 50 years of India's independence, a balloon in the shape of the lion capital, the national emblem, was displayed outside Parliament House and at the Red Fort grounds.

Mamata doubles down: 'SIR, a Shah ploy to impose President's rule in Bengal'

GNS News Agency, Dec 29

Amit Shah, Mamata Banerjee, Mamata Banerjee government, SIR of electoral roll, nationwide SIR, Special Intensive Revision (SIR), Assembly elections, Assembly polls, nationwide Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls, nationwide SIR of electoral rolls, Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls, SIR of electoral rolls, Election Commission, Election Commission of India, Indian express news, current affairs. Turning to the Waqf controversy swirling within the ruling party, Banerjee accused "certain groups" of spreading misinformation that land records were being listed as religious sites as mosques or graveyards.

Downing her attack on Union Home Minister Amit Shah over the Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday claimed that whole exercise was pushed as part of "Union Home Minister Amit Shah's trick" to create panic, and added that had her government blocked it, the Centre would have imposed President's Rule in the state. Addressing a rally against the SIR in Berhampore in Murshidabad district, the TMC supremo said the state was "not foolish enough to walk into the trap", urging people not to fear the enumeration exercise but to simply file their documents. "Don't be afraid of SIR. If we hadn't allowed it, they would have imposed President's Rule. Do you understand Amit Shah's trick? We will fight, we will win. They cannot starve us; they cannot take our property," she said. A day ago, she had accused Shah of "orchestrating" SIR to unsettle voters and "capture Bengal by trickery", saying the hurried revision had triggered panic and "dug the BJP's own grave". "The BJP is indulging in religious politics over SIR. More than half of those who died in SIR-related incidents were Hindus. Don't cut the very branch you are sitting on," she said.



The TMC supremo also reiterated that she would never allow NRC or detention camps to come up in West Bengal. "I will not allow NRC or detention camps in Bengal. Even if they slit my throat, no one will be driven out," she declared to loud applause. "If anyone is removed, we will bring them back legally. Bengal will remain safe and inclusive," she said. Turning to the Waqf controversy swirling within the ruling party, Banerjee accused "certain groups" of spreading misinformation that land records were being listed as religious sites as mosques or graveyards. We have passed a resolution in the Assembly that Waqf properties cannot be taken forcefully. Mutawallis (custodians of Waqf property) will upload the documents and give them to the state. There is nothing to fear," she said. Her comments came amid renewed heat after the state government instructed district magistrates to upload Waqf data to the Centre's UMID portal by the December 5 deadline, a move critics say signals a climbdown from her earlier opposition to the amended Waqf Act.

First expelled from TMC 10 years ago, Humayun Kabir's second stint was no less controversial

GNS News Agency, Dec 29

Humayun Kabir On March 13 this year, he was again served a show cause notice by TMC's disciplinary committee in the Assembly for allegedly threatening Leader of Opposition Suvenu Adhikari. It was his resolve to build a Babri Masjid-like mosque in Murshidabad that led to the suspension of 62-year-old TMC MLA Humayun Kabir. But this is not the first time that he has faced disciplinary action in the party. Kanir, who began his political career with the Congress and rose to become an MLA, joined the TMC, a year after the latter came to power in West Bengal, ending the Left Front's 34-year rule. In TMC, he was made a minister in Mamata Banerjee's cabinet. But within three years, he was expelled from the party for six years for "anti-party activities". In between, he joined the BJP in 2018, contested the Lok Sabha elections from Murshidabad, and then returned to the TMC in 2021 to become an MLA again, from Bharatpur.

His second stint in the TMC has been quite controversial, earning him the party's reprimand on more than one occasion. In May 2024, while campaigning for the Lok Sabha polls, Kabir made a controversial remark, saying that Muslims constituted 70 per cent of the population, while Hindus only 30 per cent in Murshidabad, and threatened to throw BJP supporters in the Bhagirathi river. In November 2024, Kabir was issued a showcause notice for demanding that TMC general secretary Abhishek Banerjee be made deputy chief minister and home minister, the portfolio held by Chief Minister and Abhishek's aunt, Mamata Banerjee. He later had to apologise. On March 13 this year, he was again served a show cause notice by TMC's disciplinary committee in the Assembly for allegedly threatening Leader of Opposition Suvenu Adhikari. According to TMC sources, he has political clout in Rejinagar and Bharatpur Assembly constituencies in Murshidabad district. "In the last Lok Sabha election (2024), he mobilised minority votes of Berhampore constituency that helped our candidate and cricketer Yousuf Pathan to defeat veteran Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury. Having said that, it is also true that he lacked organisational hold outside Bharatpur and Rejinagar. So, his exit from the party would not affect TMC, except for one or two seats in Murshidabad," said a senior

TMC leader. Ravik Bhattacharya

Ravik Bhattacharya is the Chief of Bureau of The Indian Express, Kolkata. Over 20 years of experience in the media industry and covered politics, crime, major incidents and issues, apart from investigative stories in West Bengal, Odisha, Assam and Andaman Nicobar islands. Ravik won the Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Award in 2007 for political reporting. Ravik holds a bachelor degree with English Hons from Scottish Church College under Calcutta University and a PG diploma in mass communication from Jadavpur University. Ravik started his career with The Asian Age and then moved to The Statesman, The Telegraph and Hindustan Times....

Telangana government to reclaim unoccupied double-bedroom houses

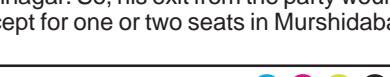
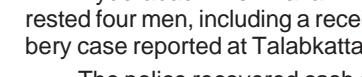
Hyderabad: Double bedroom houses allottees, especially those who have not occupied their units, are likely to lose them as the State Government is planning to take back the possession of such units. The past Government had constructed 15,660 double bedroom houses at Kollur at a cost of nearly Rs 1485 crore. However, of these about 6,500 houses are yet to be occupied by the allottees. Housing Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy has now said that a majority of the allottees were living in different areas and were not willing to shift to Kollur. For instance, under Jubilee Hills constituency limits, many poor people were allotted houses in the Kollur housing project. But due to several reasons, especially distance and challenges in conducting their petty businesses, about 6500 beneficiaries have kept the doors locked since long, he said, adding a few have even sold their houses to natives of Kollur.

GNS News Agency, Dec 29

Grief hangs heavy at businessman Amitabh Jain's home in Gurgaon. On Thursday, a day after he died following a hit-and-run incident, family members and friends visited the house to bid him adieu.

Jain is survived by wife, Ritu Jain, chief conservator at the Parliament Museum in Delhi, a 29-year-old son working at an IT company in London, and a 25-year-old daughter who lives in Bengaluru. After he received the news of his father's death, Jain's son rushed from London and reached Gurgaon by midnight. Unwilling to sum up his loss in words, the son said he just wanted to focus on his family for now.

Jain's daughter, on the other hand, sought justice and said arrests should be made soon without delay. "Did the police share anything more yet?" she could be heard asking amid the mourning. Jain had celebrated his 58th birthday on



China sanctions 20 U.S. defence firms over Trump's Taiwan arms sales



GNS News Agency, Dec 29

China on Friday (December 26, 2025) imposed sanctions on 20 U.S. defence firms in response to the Trump administration's approval of a record \$11.1 billion arms sales package to Taiwan. The Foreign Ministry in a statement warned that any attempt to provoke China on the Taiwan issue would be met with a firm response.

In response to the U.S. announcement of large-scale arms sales to what it described as "China's Taiwan region", the ministry said Beijing has decided to take countermeasures against 20 American military-related firms and 10 senior executives who have been involved in arming Tai-

wan in recent years. "The Taiwan question is at the very core of China's core interests and the first red line that must not be crossed in China-US relations. Anyone who attempts to cross the line and make provocations on the Taiwan question will be met with China's firm response," it said.

It urged the U.S. to abide by the one-China principle and to "stop the dangerous moves of arming Taiwan, stop undermining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, and stop sending wrong signals to 'Taiwan independence' separatist forces". China will continue to take resolute measures to firmly defend national sovereignty, security and territorial integrity, the statement said. The sanctions were largely seen as symbolic, as most of the targeted US defence firms do not have business operations in China. The proposed arms sales, which require approval by the US Congress, come amid concerns in Taipei over a potential invasion by China, which claims the self-governing island as part of its territory. If approved, as is widely expected given strong bipartisan support for Taiwan in the U.S. Congress, the package would surpass the \$8.4 billion worth of arms sold to Taiwan during the Biden administration, the New York Times reported earlier. The size of the proposal is likely to reassure China hawks in Washington who have grown uneasy about President Donald Trump's commitment to defending Taiwan as he seeks to cut trade and economic deals with Beijing, the report said.

Use of chemical fertilisers root cause of many diseases, says Amit Shah

GNS News Agency, Dec 29

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday (December 25, 2025) termed chemical fertilisers as the root cause of many diseases and made a strong pitch for natural farming, saying it not only increases farmers' income but also saves water and promotes public health.

Addressing a Farmers' Conference held in Rewa, Mr. Shah said the government was developing a "complete system" — from soil and laboratory testing, certification to packaging — to ensure that the agricultural produce of the country's farmers reaches global level in a better way as there is a huge market for natural farming in the world. "Chemical fertilisers are the root cause of many diseases today. Natural farming is an approach that doesn't reduce farmers' income, but instead makes their produce pure," he said. Natural farming is a traditional practice that people have forgotten over the time. A dung and urine of a single indigenous cow can help cultivate 21 acres of land, he said.

"It (natural farming) increases income, saves water, and relieves people from many diseases," he added. Mr. Shah, who is also Minister of Cooperation, said approximately 40 lakh farmers in the country have adopted natural farming and he has personally practised it on his farms. This has increased production, not decreased it, he said. "There is a huge market for natural farming in the world and to ensure that the produce of the country's farmers reaches the global market in a better way, a complete system is being developed - from soil testing to certification, laboratory testing of the produce and packaging," Mr. Shah added. According to him, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has established two big cooperative institutions through the Ministry of Cooperation, which are doing the work of certification of natural farming produce, its testing in world-class and modern labs, packaging, marketing and export.



Mr. Shah said, "In the coming time, more than 400 laboratories across the country will provide certificates to the farmers, due to which their income will increase by almost one-and-a-half times." It can guide many farmers and cowherds towards progress, he said. "There is also a cowshed here, and a complete range of natural farming methods based on cow dung has been developed. This approach, which generates incomes of up to Rs 1.25 lakh per acre of land, will certainly prove to be a great blessing for small farmers," he said. Earlier, Mr. Shah visited the Basaman Mama Cow Project and described it as a "very good approach". Basaman Mama is worshipped as a folk deity in the Vindhya region. It is believed that he sacrificed his life to protect the environment in this region in the 8th century. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, Deputy Chief Minister Rajendra Shukla, Minister Prahlad Patel and several other leaders were present at the event.

Zelenskyy says meeting with Trump to happen in 'near future'



GNS News Agency, Dec 29

A meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump will happen "in the near future," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Friday (December 26, 2025), signalling progress in talks to end the nearly four-year war between Russia and Ukraine. "We are not losing a single day. We have agreed on a meeting at the highest level — with President Trump in the near future," Mr. Zelenskyy wrote on X.

"A lot can be decided before the New Year," he added. Mr. Zelenskyy's announcement came after he said on Thursday he had a "good conversation" with U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner. Mr. Trump has unleashed an extensive diplomatic push to end the war, but his efforts have run into sharply

conflicting demands by Moscow and Kyiv. Mr. Zelenskyy said on Tuesday he would be willing to withdraw troops from the country's eastern industrial heartland as part of a plan to end the war, if Moscow also pulls back and the area becomes a demilitarized zone monitored by international forces. Though Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Thursday that there had been "slow but steady progress" in the peace talks, Russia has given no indication that it will agree to any kind of withdrawal from land it has seized.

In fact, Moscow has insisted that Ukraine relinquish the remaining territory it still holds in the Donbas — an ultimatum that Ukraine has rejected. Russia has captured most of Luhansk and about 70% of Donetsk — the two areas that make up the Donbas. On the ground, Russian drone attacks on the city of Mykolaiv and its suburbs overnight into Friday left part of the city without power. Meanwhile, Ukraine said it struck a major Russian oil refinery Thursday using British-supplied Storm Shadow missiles. Ukraine's General Staff said its forces hit the Novoshakhtinsk refinery in Russia's Rostov region. "Multiple explosions were recorded. The target was hit," it wrote on Telegram. Rostov regional Gov. Yuri Slyusar said a firefighter was wounded when extinguishing the fire. Ukraine's long-range drone strikes on Russian refineries aim to deprive Moscow of the oil export revenue it needs to pursue its full-scale invasion. Russia wants to cripple the Ukrainian power grid, seeking to deny civilians access to heat, light and running water in what Kyiv officials say is an attempt to "weaponise winter".

Cambodia says Thai fighter jets bomb its border village

GNS News Agency, Dec 29

Phnom Penh: Cambodian Defence Ministry's Undersecretary of State and spokesperson Lt. Gen. Mal Socheata said on Friday that Thai F-16 fighter jets dropped as many as 40 bombs in a border village in Banteay Meanchey province. She said in a press briefing that the bombardment destroyed civilian houses as well as public infrastructures in Chok Chey village. The Thai military also fired artillery shells into a civilian residential area in Poipet Municipality of Banteay Meanchey province, she added. Earlier on December 25, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio had urged the full implementation of the Peace Accords amid ongoing violence between Cambodia and Thailand.

a phone conversation with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet, "Secretary Rubio reaffirmed that the United States stands ready to facilitate discussions aimed at ensuring peace and stability between Cambodia and Thailand," said State Department spokesperson Tommy Pigott. Rubio

had stressed the importance of both countries fully implementing the Kuala Lumpur Peace Accords. The recent clashes along the Thailand-Cambodia border, stemming from long-standing territorial disputes dating back to the colonial era, reigned in late May following military confrontations in border regions. On Thursday, Thailand's military announced that border negotiations with Cambodia entered the second day, with overall clashes along the frontier showing a downward trend. According to Thai media reports, the Secretariat meeting of the Thai-Cambodian General Border Committee (GBC) kicked off at around 9 am local time on the Thai side of the border in Chanthaburi province. Around 30 Cambodian delegates attended the meeting, while Malaysian members of the ASEAN observer team in Thailand also presented. In a press briefing held on Thursday, a Thai military spokesperson stated that the intensity of border skirmishes between the two countries has generally decreased, with exchanges of fire remaining confined to localised areas. On October 26, during the Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit in Malaysia,

White House orders military to focus on 'quarantine' of Venezuela oil



GNS News Agency, Dec 29

The White House has ordered U.S. military forces to focus almost exclusively on enforcing a "quarantine" of Venezuelan oil for at least the next two months, a U.S. official told Reuters, indicating Washington is currently more interested in using economic rather than military means to pressure Caracas. "While military options still exist, the focus is to first use economic pressure by enforcing sanctions to reach the outcome the White House is looking for," the official said on Wednesday (December 24, 2025), speaking on condition of anonymity. While U.S. President Donald Trump has been publicly coy about his precise aims regarding Venezuela, he has privately pressured Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro to flee the nation, Reuters has reported. Mr. Trump said on Monday (December 22) it would be smart for Mr. Maduro to leave power. "The efforts so far have put tremendous pressure on Maduro, and the belief is that by late January, Venezuela will be facing an economic calamity unless it agrees to make significant concessions to the U.S.," the official said.

Mr. Trump has accused the South American country of flooding the U.S. with drugs, and his administration has for months been bombing boats originating in South America that it alleges were carrying drugs. Many nations

have condemned the attacks as extrajudicial killings. Mr. Trump has also frequently threatened to start bombing drug infrastructure on land, and has authorised covert Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) activity directed at Caracas. So far this month, the U.S. Coast Guard has intercepted two tankers in the Caribbean Sea, both fully loaded with Venezuelan crude. The comments by the White House official on Wednesday (December 24) come after Reuters reported that the Coast Guard was waiting for additional forces to carry out a third seizure, first attempted on Sunday (December 21), against an empty sanctioned vessel known as the Bella-1. Venezuela's U.N. Ambassador Samuel Moncada said on Tuesday (December 22), "The threat is not Venezuela. The threat is the U.S. government."

Huge U.S. military presence in the Caribbean. The White House official did not elaborate on precisely what it meant for the military to focus "almost exclusively" on interdicting Venezuelan oil. The U.S. military's footprint sprawls across the globe, and most missions and capabilities are unrelated to maritime interdiction. The Pentagon has amassed a huge military presence in the Caribbean with more than 15,000 troops. That includes an aircraft carrier, 11 other warships and more than a dozen F-35 aircraft. While many assets can be used to help with enforcing sanctions, many others, like fighter jets, are not well-suited for that task. On Tuesday (December 23), the United States told the United Nations it will impose and enforce sanctions "to the maximum extent" to deprive Mr. Maduro of resources. Earlier this month Mr. Trump ordered a "blockade" of all sanctioned oil tankers entering and leaving Venezuela, but the White House official's use instead of the word "quarantine" appears to echo language used during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, when the administration of U.S. President John F. Kennedy wanted to avoid an escalation. Robert McNamara, Kennedy's defense secretary at the time, said in 2002: "We called it a quarantine because blockade is a word of war."

Trump warns against infiltration by 'bad Santa,' defends coal in jovial Christmas calls with kids

GNS News Agency, Dec 29

U.S. President Donald Trump marked Christmas Eve by quizzing children calling in about what presents they were excited about receiving, while promising not to let a "bad Santa" infiltrate the country and even suggesting that a stocking full of coal may not be so bad. Vacations at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, the President and first lady Melania Trump participated in the tradition of talking to youngsters dialling into the North American Aerospace Defence Command, which playfully tracks Santa's progress around the globe. "We want to make sure that Santa is being good. Santa's a very good person," Mr. Trump said while speaking to kids ages 4 and 10 in Oklahoma. "We want to make sure that he's not infiltrated, that we're not infiltrating into our country a bad Santa." He didn't elaborate.

Trump has often marked Christmases past with criticisms of his political enemies, including in 2014, when he posted, "Merry Christmas to the Radical Left Lunatics." During his first term, Trump wrote online early on Dec 24, 2017, targeting a top FBI official he believed was biased against him, as well as the news media. But Trump was in a jovial mood this time. He even said, "I could do this all day long," but likely would have to get back to more pressing matters like efforts to quell the fighting in Russia's war with Ukraine. When an 8-year-old from North Carolina asked if Santa would be mad if no one leaves cookies out for him, Trump said he didn't think so, "But I think he'll be very disappointed." "You know, Santa's — he tends to be a little bit on the cherubic side. You know what cherubic means? A little on the heavy side," Trump joked. "I think Santa would like some cookies." The president and first lady Melania

Trump has often marked Christmases past with criticisms of his political enemies, including in 2014, when he posted, "Merry Christmas to the Radical Left Lunatics."

Trump sat side-by-side and took about a dozen calls between them. At one point, while his wife was on the phone and Trump was waiting to be connected to another call, he noted how little attention she was paying to him: "She's able to focus totally, without listening." Asked by an 8-year-old girl in Kansas what she'd like Santa to bring, the answer came back, "Uh, not coal." "You mean clean, beautiful coal?" Trump replied, evoking a favoured campaign slogan he's long used when promising to revive domestic coal production. "I had to do that, I'm sorry," the president added, laughing and even causing the first lady, who was on a separate call, to turn toward him and grin. "Coal is clean and beautiful. Please remember that, at all costs," Trump said. "But you don't want clean, beautiful coal, right?" "No," the caller responded, saying she'd prefer a Barbie doll, clothes and candy. (AP) AMJ AMJ

Two million Afghans still living in Pakistan: UNHCR



GNS News Agency, Dec 29

Islamabad: More than two million Afghan refugees are still living in Pakistan despite over a million returning to their country in 2025. In November alone, 171,055 Afghans returned to Afghanistan, with 37,899 deported through the Chaman, Torkham and Barabacha borders, Dawn reported from the statistics of a UN refugee agency. Also in November, over 31,500 Afghan Proof of Registration Cards (PoRs) card holders were sent to Afghanistan through UNHCR's repatriation centres. Heightened Pakistan-Afghanistan border tensions in November disrupted humanitarian operations, restricted cross-border movements, and prompted temporary relocation of UN agencies from the Chaman border area.

Declassified US records show India's decisive role in Paris climate deal

Washington: Newly declassified US diplomatic records show that India played a decisive role in shaping the Paris climate agreement. The documents reveal that New Delhi helped force a non-binding global deal. They also show how India preserved room for growth while joining a universal climate framework. The records, released by the National Security Archive, early this month, on the 10th anniversary of the Paris Agreement, include internal US cables and negotiating papers from 2014 and 2015. Together, they show that US officials viewed India as both indispensable and difficult. Washington believed that no global climate deal was credible without India. At the same time, US negotiators were determined to weaken the old divide between developed and developing countries that India relied on in climate talks. A February 2014 US position paper stated that the United States would "not support a bifurcated approach based on 1992-era categories. It argued that such divisions

were "not rational or workable in the post-2020 era," citing changes in emissions and economic growth. The formulation directly affected countries like India, whose climate diplomacy was rooted in equity and historical responsibility, according to these declassified documents. India pushed back through coalitions. The documents repeatedly refer to BASIC — Brazil, South Africa, India and China — and to the Like-Minded Developing Countries group. These blocs resisted legally binding emissions targets and demanded stronger recognition of development needs. US officials took these groupings seriously. In internal strategy notes and cables, they warned that India and China, acting together, could block consensus if pushed toward a binding treaty. One late-stage cable referred to the "emergence of G77 and China as a unified bloc," highlighting the negotiating leverage of developing countries. Instead of a treaty with binding emissions cuts, t

Tightening the opium belt in Madhya Pradesh



him. This scared him. They demanded money and a deal was struck for ₹22 lakh. After he paid the money, he was assured that the case would be over in a few months," a family member says on the condition of anonymity. "But the officer he had paid got transferred soon and the new person then demanded more money," he says. After locals and members of the Rajput collective Karni Sena staged protests, about ₹15 lakh was returned after his death, he adds.

In Ayodhya Basti of Mandsaur's Piplia Mandi, Bhavna Kunwar, 48, runs a small kirana (daily needs) shop next to her tin-roof house. Her husband, Govardhan Singh Songara, 51, was arrested on November 19, 2025, by the CBN for allegedly being part of a smuggling chain of doda chura. Bhavna Kunwar's husband, Govardhan Singh Songara, was arrested in an NDPS case this year. She runs a kirana shop in Piplia Mandi in Madhya Pradesh's Mandsaur district. Bhavna Kunwar's husband, Govardhan Singh Songara, was arrested in an NDPS case this year. She runs a kirana shop in Piplia Mandi in Madhya Pradesh's Mandsaur district. | iSongara, who works as a driver for a local construction company, was booked under the NDPS Act, and was accused of driving a car as a pilot vehicle to a truck that was caught carrying 1,177 kg of doda chura in May. "My husband had no connection with opium. The red car he was driving crossed a nearby toll plaza twice on May 5, within half an hour of that truck's crossing. There was no recovery from his vehicle or any other link," Kunwar says.

In Ayodhya Basti of Mandsaur's Piplia Mandi, Bhavna Kunwar, 48, runs a small kirana (daily needs) shop next to her tin-roof house. Her husband, Govardhan Singh Songara, 51, was arrested on November 19, 2025,

On the morning of August 28, a bus heading to Pratapgarh in Rajasthan was stopped soon after it began its journey from Madhya Pradesh's Mandsaur district. A group of policemen in uniform entered the vehicle and deboarded an 18-year-old boy. Sohanlal Mirasi, a resident of Sarnon Ki Dhanvi village in Rajasthan's Balotra district, was detained and later booked for illegally possessing 2.71 kilograms of opium.

He was charged under Sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985. The event was recorded on the CCTV camera fitted on the bus. Sohanlal's family approached the Madhya Pradesh High Court in Indore for his bail, armed with the 23-second footage, claiming that Sohanlal was empty-handed. On December 5, the High Court granted Sohanlal bail after his lawyer presented the footage. Justice Subodh Abhyankar remarked that the case filed at Mandsaur's Malhargarh police station is "rather suspicious". He summoned Mandsaur Superintendent of Police (SP) Vinod Kumar Meena to appear in the next hearing.

On December 6, Meena suspended six police personnel, including the Malhargarh Station House Officer (SHO) Rajendra Panwar, two Sub-Inspectors and three constables, due to "procedural lapses", while detaining and arresting Sohanlal. The case prompted the High Court to remark that the State police had "conveniently forgotten" the provisions of Sections 105 and 185 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, which lay out the procedures for search and seizure and audio-video recording of the process. It has now summoned the Principal Secretary of the State's Home Department on January 12 "to apprise this Court about the steps taken to implement the aforesaid provisions". While the M.P. police has faced backlash after the High Court's stance, the case has brought into focus the opium cultivating regions of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, and the challenges the people engaged in the generations-old livelihood are now facing.

One challenge is the illegal trade of opium and crushed poppy straw, locally known as doda chura. Farmers and other locals say that they live under the constant fear of getting booked on charges of illegal possession or being named as part of a smuggling chain. They allege that people are also caught on fake charges and money extorted from them even if they are innocent. Sohanlal's older brother, Khartaram Jaat, also alleges that his brother was "held in illegal custody, beaten and tortured" for about five hours after he was detained, and "₹12 lakh was demanded from him". He says Sohanlal had finished school a few months before and wanted to start preparations for the civil services. "He had gone to Mandsaur to visit the Pashupati Nath Temple," he says, adding that his brother has been "depressed" since the bail and barely talks to anyone.

Madhya Pradesh's Malwa region — Mandsaur, Neemuch, and Ratlam — is under scrutiny of four enforcement agencies: the opium regulatory body the Central Bureau of Narcotics (CBN), the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), the M.P. police, and the Narcotics Wing. The CBN had lodged 114 cases under the NDPS Act in 2023. This increased to 145 in 2025 (until December 18). The other agencies have registered separate cases under the same Act. The Malwa region in M.P., and Pratapgarh, Chittorgarh, and parts of Kota and Jhalawar districts in Rajasthan's Mewar region, are known as the opium belt of India.

The region produces nearly 85% of India's legally-grown opium with licences issued by the CBN that functions under the Department of Revenue (DoR) of the Union Ministry of Finance. Some parts of Uttar Pradesh also grow opium. Opium, locally called afeem, is tied to family tradition and prestige. There's a local saying: "Afeem ka patta ladke se badhkar hai," (an opium licence is bigger than a son). Farmers, some of who have inherited the growing and trade from over 200 years ago, say the licence betters marriage prospects. Across villages in the area, land parcels are protected with fencing and sarees, and nets cover the plots from the top, so parrots do not get at the poppy seed. Cultivation begins after Deepavali and ends in March, close to Holi.

The CBN issues licences and procures opium, and is also engaged in enforcement of licit production. Licences are of two types: opium gum (latex) and the concentrate of poppy straw (CPS). With the gum licence, farmers extract the opium latex by lancing poppy seed capsules, and sell it to the government. This is the traditional practice in India. In a CPS licence, the CBN procures the capsules on the poppy straw of about eight inches, including the stem and leaves. This was introduced by the Union Government in 2020-21. As per the data obtained from the CBN, 1,15,416 licences were issued to farmers in the three States in 2025. Of this, 75,333 were for gum and 40,083 were CPS ones. In Madhya Pradesh alone, 56,349 licences — 38,801 gum and 17,548 CPS — were issued this year.

After procurement, the products are sent to the Government Opium and Alkaloid Works, Neemuch, a plant for processing opium and manufacture of alkaloids. Illicit networks and extortion In Bajhkhedi village of Mandsaur's Sitamau, Krishna Pal Singh Rathore, a 36-year-old farmer, allegedly killed himself in February 5, 2024, months after he was booked by the CBN in September, 2023, for alleged illegal possession of 11kg of poppy straw. His family says that in addition, about 2.4 quintal doda chura was found at his elder brother, Narendra Singh Rathore's house. Neither had the required licences. "Narendra was suffering from cancer at the time. The officers threatened Krishna Pal that the entire quantity would be shown in the FIR lodged against

Jokchand, a former Congress leader, says that such cases put fear in people who feel they could be detained any time, and that threats are also made "just to settle scores". "The local police contact everyone whose name pops up during an investigation. If a farmer's name comes up, he mostly chooses to pay a hefty sum rather than having his name in a case and risk losing his opium licence. Others pay the money because they know they can be in jail for a long time and the conviction rate is high in these cases," Jokchand explains, saying that the practice of 'settling' is locally called khada tod (instant deal).

In Luhari village of Ratlam's Jaora, Ambaram Singh, a 68-year-old farmer, says that due to the risks involved with opium cultivation, farmers have to take various precautionary and safety measures to avoid any legal troubles. "Once the crop begins to grow, 2-3 of us sleep there so that someone does not steal even a single plant or seed," he says, pointing to his field where two women are working. Piling up of cases

In 2024, the Mandsaur police arrested 377 people in 146 NDPS Act cases. Until November 30, 2025, up to 448 people have been arrested in 163 cases. The police denies the allegations of extortion, while highlighting a crackdown on smuggling rackets involving multiple states. Nikhil Kumar Gandhi, Deputy Narcotics Commissioner, CBN Neemuch, also denies charges of any fake cases by his officers. Mandsaur SP Meena says that Sohanlal's case is not fake and he did not admit to that in the court as reported by various media outlets. "All I admitted to was some procedural errors by some personnel who have been suspended. We have also arrested the man, Chandra Prakash Patidar of Piplia Mandi, who sold him the opium, and a man named Vikas Chaudhary from Jodhpur, who had sent Sohanlal here. These men have two NDPS cases each against them," Meena says. The procedural lapses include late FIR filing and not informing the local police station after detaining Sohanlal from their jurisdiction.

Another officer involved with the investigation cites evidence that Sohanlal visited Mandsaur eight times in the past month and a half. "We have gathered CCTV footage and human intelligence. He did not go to the temple but did visit about 50 villages in the region. Why would a student come here alone so many times and visit villages he claims to have no connection with?" the officer says.

He adds that boys and men between 16 and 22 are being employed by smugglers to carry opium and doda chura. As per police data, at least 26 men around this age, including one minor, have been arrested by the police of Malhargarh sub-division in 2025. Many of them hail from Rajasthan. Dilip Patidar, founder of the Malwa Kisan Sangathan farmers' collective and district president of the Kisan Sangharsh Samiti, says, "People here are so scared that if you ask someone to hold your bag on the roadside for a minute and say that you have to use the bathroom, they won't do it. They fear that you could be carrying opium and they could get caught."

In Neemuch's Kanawali sub-jail, out of the 441 convicted and under-trial inmates, 291 are lodged in cases under the NDPS act as of December 18, as per data obtained from the jail.

The police and CBN officers from the region say the major substance smuggled out of the region is doda chura, while opium is sold in smaller amounts. "A 10 are plot with gum licence produces opium latex between 8 and 12 kg. Some farmers only sell 7-8 kg to the CBN. This is the required amount. They keep the remaining amount to sell in the black market," an officer says, requesting anonymity. The government rate is ₹1,500-2,000 per kg of opium latex. The black market pays ₹1.5-2 lakh, he adds. Doda chura used to be bought by the State's excise department until 2016, when it was brought under the purview of narcotics laws and banned by the Union government. Police officers and farmers say the main problem began after poppy straw was banned.

Officers explain that the destination of most of the doda chura smuggled out of the region is Punjab and Haryana, where it has been traditionally consumed as a drink. "Most cases are linked to four States: this region of M.P. where it's bought, Punjab and Haryana where it is sold, and Rajasthan where most rackets operate from. Since this region is close to some prominent national highways, transport trucks are one of the main carriers used in smuggling," the officer says, adding that due to the crackdown on trucks, smugglers have also started using smaller cars. Officers also highlight various challenges in tracking smugglers saying that they use fake identities, virtual or international numbers, or even communicate through gaming apps.

Farm labourers working in an opium field in Bahi village of Mandsaur, M.P., where lancing of poppy seeds is under way. Officers say local farmers get caught in the middle of smuggling and crackdown through lucrative offers from smugglers and extortion by police personnel. "The doda chura they sell for ₹2-3 lakh (per quintal) is sold at much higher rates later. The prices shoot up massively as you move up the smuggling chain for opium and poppy straw. The farmers barely get any share of this, but end up getting caught in the mess," he says. One officer agrees that some personnel have been involved in "extorting" money from those whose names come up in the smuggling chain. Gandhi says that the task of destroying the poppy straw does not fall with the CBN. "We are currently working on a proposal for the State Government to address this issue and take the responsibility of disposal of poppy straw in its control," he adds.

Carrying the red flag into the next century



of these demands found reflection in the Constitution and in post-independence policy debates, demonstrating the lasting imprint of communist intervention.

Internationalism was integral to the CPI's political worldview. The party consistently opposed imperialist wars, fascism, and militarism, and took the lead in building solidarity with anti-colonial and progressive movements across the world. Whether opposing war as an instrument of imperial domination or standing in solidarity with peoples struggling for peace and self-determination, the CPI affirmed that the fight for justice in India was inseparable from the global struggle against exploitation and aggression.

The final phase of the struggle against British rule witnessed a dramatic intervention by the working class in the form of the Royal Indian Navy mutiny of 1946. The CPI regarded this uprising as the last war of Indian independence. Indian sailors rose against racist treatment and colonial authority, and their revolt quickly won the support of workers and students, particularly in Bombay. Communists played a critical role in mobilising solidarity strikes and mass support, despite facing brutal repression. The mutiny exposed the erosion of colonial control over the armed forces and convinced the British that their rule was no longer sustainable. It underscored the CPI's belief that organised mass action, especially by the working class, could decisively alter the balance of power. Independence in 1947 did not end the CPI's struggle. It marked the beginning of a new phase focused on dismantling feudal structures, resisting monopolistic capitalism, and deepening democracy. The party led historic peasant struggles against landlordism and played a decisive role in advancing land reforms in States such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Tripura, and Bihar. In parliamentary and extra-parliamentary arenas, the CPI championed public ownership of key sectors of the economy and consistently advocated the nationalisation of banks, coal, insurance, and other core industries, arguing that strategic resources must serve national development and social welfare rather than private accumulation. The CPI was also a strong defender of federalism and linguistic and cultural diversity, strengthening India's democratic fabric. Its commitment to social justice found expression in its defence of the rights of Dalits, Adivasis, minorities, and women, as well as its steadfast adherence to secularism and rational thought. Across decades, the red flag symbolised reform, progress, and resistance to reactionary forces. It stood for scientific temper against obscurantism and solidarity against divisive communal politics.

Grave challenges Today, as the CPI enters its second century, India confronts grave challenges. Communalism and emerging fascism threaten the foundations of the Republic. Economic growth has been accompanied by massive unemployment, precarity, and widening inequalities. Ecological crises driven by unregulated capitalism endanger livelihoods and the future itself. New technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, are transforming work in ways that intensify insecurity and weaken labour protections, raising urgent questions about ownership, control, and human dignity in the age of automation.

For the Left, the challenge is to once again become synonymous with the aspirations of the masses. This requires renewing its understanding of contemporary capitalism while remaining anchored in its core values of equality, democracy and justice. Technological change cannot be accepted as inevitable progress divorced from social responsibility; it must be critically analysed and politically contested so that human advancement serves collective well-being rather than deepening exploitation.

At this critical juncture in our history, the centenary of the CPI is not merely a moment of remembrance but a call to action. Democracy itself is under assault, people's rights and livelihoods are being systematically eroded, and the achievements of the freedom movement are being deliberately undone. The RSS-BJP combine seeks to dismantle our social solidarity, hollow out our economic sovereignty, and subvert the Constitution to impose an authoritarian, exclusionary order. This danger cannot be resisted in fragments. The CPI and the Left must be strengthened and brought closer together to form a broad democratic resistance. Class exploitation, caste oppression, and patriarchy remain formidable structures of domination, demanding organised and uncompromising struggle. The task before us is clear: cleanse institutions of their corrosive influence, reclaim the Republic, and rebuild India on the foundations of equality, secularism, and justice. United we must resist. United we must advance. United we must create a new India: egalitarian, democratic, and prosperous. The red flag must rise higher. The people must prevail. The future must be ours. As the Communist Party of India turns 100, its history stands as a record of courage and sacrifices. From its founding in Kanpur to its role in anti-colonial struggles, from radicalising the freedom movement to shaping post-independence reforms, the CPI has consistently sought to align national sovereignty with social transformation. The challenges ahead are immense, but the legacy of a century affirms that organised people, guided by communist ideas, can change history. In a time of uncertainty and crisis, the red flag must rise again as a symbol of hope, reminding India that a just, democratic, classless and casteless socialist society is not only a dream but a necessary and achievable future.

Housing sales volume down 14 pc in 2025 in 7 cities: Anarock

New Delhi: Housing sales declined 14 per cent this year to nearly 3.96 lakh units across seven major cities, mainly due to high prices and poor demand following layoffs in the IT sector, but rose 6 per cent in value terms to Rs 6 lakh crore, according to Anarock.

The average housing price rose by 8 per cent in the top seven cities. Friday, Anarock, one of the country's leading real estate consultants, released data on India's seven major primary housing markets. Housing sales in the top seven cities witnessed a 14 per cent decline in 2025 to 3,95,625 units, from 4,59,645 units in the preceding year, the consultant said, while attributing the fall to hardening property prices, layoffs in the IT sector, geopolitical tensions and other economic uncertainties. Sales declined in six major cities, Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Delhi-NCR, Bengaluru, Pune, Kolkata and Hyderabad, while the demand rose only in Chennai. Anarock, however, noted that the total sales value grew 6 per cent to over Rs 6 lakh crore this year from Rs 5.6 lakh crore in 2024. 2025 has been a year of broad-spectrum upturn, including geopolitical turmoil, layoffs in the IT sector, tariff tensions and other uncertainties," Anarock Chairman Anuj Puri said. As per the data, the housing sales in MMR fell 18 per cent to 1,27,875 units this year, from 1,55,335 units in 2024. Pune saw a 20 per cent decline in sales to 65,135 units from 81,090 units,

Ukraine fights on: A journey through a nation living under relentless war



On the intervening night of November 18 and 19, at around 2.30 a.m., as the air-raid sirens went off in Kyiv, situated in the central part of the country, I hurriedly grabbed my jacket from my hotel room and ran to the shelter of the hotel premises where I was staying. I was one of the first ones to reach the shelter or basement for the third-day in a row. Perhaps years of working in conflict zones, and the loss of a few colleagues has given me the instinct to move quickly and instilled in me a deeper sense of caution. Others from Ukraine staying in the same hotel trickled in a few minutes later, explaining that such alarms had become routine for the last three-years. The neighbourhood around the hotel, where I was staying, had not been attacked so far, and several Ukrainian nationals, who were staying in the same hotel, appeared unfazed. The next day, as we caught up with the developments with the locals, it emerged that at least 25 people had been killed, including three children, and nearly 100 injured in a barrage of Russian drone and missile attacks across Ukraine. The strikes on Ternopil, on the country's western fringe, were the deadliest in weeks and the worst the region had seen despite being far from the frontline. The Russian missiles had travelled nearly 900 kilometers to reach their target. That same night, while being in the shelter, I was shown by Ukrainians on a live map on the mobile where the missiles were landing, each marker a reminder of how no corner of the country is beyond reach in the modern-day warfare. The radars alert the mobile apps as soon as the missiles turn towards the Ukraine's air space.

I spent nearly eight-days in Ukraine, gaining access to a country that has become one of the most closely watched conflict zones since February 2022. My focus was on understanding how the war is reshaping Ukrainian society and transforming daily life. Travelling there is far from easy; no region has been spared the impact of the conflict. Several family members and friends had advised me against visiting, their concern fueled by the grim reports of drone strikes and missile attacks that surface with unsettling regularity. Yet it was precisely this reality, lived every day by millions, that made witnessing it firsthand essential. With 20 percent of the territories no longer with Ukraine, many millions displaced internally or externally, and no recent nationwide census (the planned census was postponed because of the war) it is extremely difficult to produce a definitive "current population." However, some of the estimates put the population has shrunk from 42 million in 2021 to 31-32 million in 2025 in the area that is still under Kyiv's control. The journey from west to the eastern borders of Ukraine offered a rare opportunity to witness the country first hand, observe the lives of ordinary people, and listen to their perspectives on the conflict. There is hardly a night when one is not confronted with the realities of war. Almost every night I was in Ukraine I had to rush to a shelter, sometimes two or three times, and on the final night, I spent four to five uninterrupted hours underground. The journey to Ukraine started through the Polish border as it is the only way to enter as all air routes are blocked due to the conflict. On the 14-hour train journey from Lviv to Kharkiv, I was struck by the warmth of the local co-passengers. Yet what stands out most is the atmosphere on board as there is an understated resilience and quiet camaraderie that reflect the country's spirit in wartime. Seeing a foreigner my co-passengers were curious about my visit and immediately thanked that I was visiting their country during the conflict when there are hardly any foreign visitors.

The 14-hour train journey from Lviv to Kharkiv offered glimpses into both Ukraine's resilience and its anxieties. The trains are well-maintained, cleaner than many I have used in Asia, the US or Europe, with spotless restrooms but relatively lesser space in the berth compartments. Yet beneath this quiet efficiency runs an undercurrent of fear shared by passengers and crew alike. As the train cuts across the breadth of a country at war, everyone knows that missiles have targeted rail infrastructure before. The hum of the carriage is therefore punctuated at times by tense glances at phones, the checking of alerts, and whispered conversations about recent strikes. Even in these moments of uncertainty, the passengers display a composed, almost habitual endurance as life must go on, despite the risks that accompany every mile.

For me, it was a rare opportunity to observe ground-level realities in Kharkiv, where the tension was palpable even before I arrived. As the train moved eastward, the cold deepened noticeably. Eastern Ukraine experiences harsher temperatures because it lies farther from the moderating influence of the Atlantic winds and sits firmly within a continental climatic zone, where winters are sharper and the air is drier. The open steppe offers little protection from icy fronts sweeping in from Russia. I was somewhat underprepared for this sudden drop in temperature and I realised, to my surprise, that it felt colder than New York, where I had lived for more than eleven-years and which had long been my reference point for tolerating winter. Much of Ukraine's industrial base and a large concentration of its engineering and medical institutes lies in the east. These regions have borne the brunt of the fighting over the past three years. Kharkiv, in particular, was long a major hub for international students from developing countries, including India, who came largely for STEM courses. Before February 2022, Kharkiv was a thriving region home to more than 900 large and medium enterprises, 715 schools, 745 kindergartens, over 800 healthcare facilities, and a dense network of cultural and educational institutions. With nearly 1.18 million people employed and an active entrepreneurial base of over 160,000 individuals, it was one of Ukraine's most productive regions. From nearly 24,000 before the war, the number of Indian students in Ukraine has fallen to about 3,000, informs the energetic Kyiv based young surgeon Anurag Krishna, who hails from Bihar. He told me that as surgeon the past three-years, marked by a steady stream of war-related casualties and complex trauma cases, have given him an exposure and surgical experience he could never have imagined elsewhere. The war has transformed the landscape in frontline areas dramatically. Since early 2024, according to Ukrainian estimates, settlements in Kharkiv have been shelled more than 21,000 times, with over 900 additional attacks recorded in the first months of 2025 alone. Guided aerial bombs, missiles, UAVs, artillery and multiple rocket launchers (MLRS) strikes have left a wide arc of destruction. As a result, more than 80,000 infrastructure objects, including nearly 38,000 residential buildings, thousands of non-residential premises, hospitals, schools, trans-

port hubs, and industrial facilities, have been damaged. Large swathes of liberated territory remain dangerous, with 1.25 million hectares potentially contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance. Despite new demining machines and coordination centres, rebuilding remains an immense challenge in a region still under constant attack. The destruction is most stark in Kharkiv, the eastern region bordering Russia. Scores of buildings lie damaged, entire neighbourhoods bearing the scars of relentless shelling.

Ukraine has endured a multi-dimensional crisis which has military, economic, humanitarian, and psychological components. Families have been torn apart. One illustrative case is Tetiana's. Her father in his early 50s is currently on the frontlines, while the women in her family have been scattered across Europe. Each day she waits for a given code from her father on WhatsApp family group to indicate that he is safe. Stories like hers reflect a broader reality: families torn apart and dispersed by a war that shows no sign of ending. In Warsaw, a week later, I saw apartment blocks converted into shelters for Ukrainian women and children, many of whom have since moved further west in search of stability.

Irrespective of where one stands on the Russian invasion, it is impossible not to be moved by the resilience of ordinary Ukrainians. For instance, in some areas of Kharkiv, for instance, communities have set up modern underground schools to ensure that children's education continues despite relentless shelling. "We cannot allow our future generations to grow up uneducated," a local community leader told me. The school is extraordinary as classes run in a hybrid format, combining offline and online teaching, and the children remain steadfast learners even amid circumstances that would overwhelm most adults. Kharkiv, what Serhi Plokhy, author of *The Gates of Europe*, calls the city a birthplace of Ukrainian romanticism. Once a bustling industrial hub shaped by Ukrainians, Russians, Jews, Poles, and others, the city reflected as the mosaic character of Ukraine's eastern lands. Today, under relentless bombardment, Kharkiv remains a symbol of endurance. In this gateway city, long defined by "the coexistence and contestation of cultures," residents now defend not only their homes but the plural identity that has always animated it. In one devastated residential block, I approached three elderly women for a conversation; they declined, saying they were too traumatized by the war.

There is a bigger challenge facing Ukrainian society today: many regions that were part of Ukraine are now under Russian control, leaving countless families divided across political lines. I met several people whose relatives are split between these territories. One of them was a young woman of Crimean Tatar origin, an ordinary citizen carrying an extraordinary burden of displacement. Now a political artist with exhibitions in Berlin, she embodies the quiet resilience of a community uprooted by force, living with the ache of separation and the memory of a homeland altered beyond recognition. She is now separated from her parents who live in Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014. She communicates with her parents through VPN. In this equation, the story of the Crimean Tatars is even more complex. The present conflict unfolds against the backdrop of their mass deportation to Central Asia in 1944 and their eventual return to Crimea decades later after the break-up of Soviet Union. There are granularities of evolution of identity that can only be understood on the ground. I asked some residents about the widely circulated claim that these are "Russian-speaking areas" towards the east. Several people explained that the reality is far more layered: during the Soviet Union, Russian functioned as the dominant administrative and social language, which meant that generations grew up speaking it irrespective of ethnicity. But younger members of many families have consciously moved away from Russian in recent years, reclaiming Ukrainian as part of a broader search for cultural and political self-definition. There is no doubt that at times language becomes a political signal rather than a cultural one, revealing the shifting fault lines of a society navigating war, memory, and the struggle to remain whole. At the same time, the lesson is that the idea of viewing political identity through the lens of linguistic identity can produce very different conclusions. This divergence underscores a crucial point: linguistic affinity does not automatically translate into geopolitical alignment. Instead, identity is shaped by lived experience, historical memory, and civic values, often outweighing the linguistic categories imposed from outside.

In Lviv, where I had started my journey in Ukraine and boarded the train to Kharkiv, the spirit of rebuilding and defending national identity was visible everywhere. Long a gateway between Ukraine and the rest of Europe, the city's streets are lined with monuments that testify to its layered past, especially its deep connections to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Being farther west, Lviv has also become a major centre for medical treatment and rehabilitation, with Ukraine establishing extensive facilities for trauma care and recovery. Thanks to support from European partners, cutting-edge services are available for both psychological and physical injuries.

If there is one place that embodies the pain of this war, it is the Lychakiv Cemetery in Lviv which is an expanse that grows larger by the week. Even a half-hour spent there reveals an unending procession of grief: family members arrive almost every hour, tending graves, wiping the marble, placing flowers, maintaining a connection that war has violently severed. When I spoke to the person overseeing the cemetery, a former army personnel and medic, he pointed to the range of ages buried there as "from an eighteen-year-old to a seventy-year-old," he said quietly. Conscription applies only to those above twenty-one, but many younger and elderly Ukrainians, both men and women, driven by conviction or circumstance, volunteered. The rows of fresh graves stand as a ledger of that sacrifice, each one a reminder that the war's burden is borne across generations. Finally, it is Kyiv, the country's capital, located in the center, which is at the heart of national planning. Like anywhere in the country, a nightly curfew from midnight to 5 a.m. reminds residents and visitors alike that the conflict is never far from daily life. Yet, as in cities across the world, the youth have adapted: new cafés have opened, cultural spaces continue to emerge, and the rhythms of urban life persist with quiet defiance. The city's architecture, layered with medieval, imperial, Soviet, and modern influences, is a living archive of Eastern Europe's turbulent history. Beyond the immediate danger to human lives, one cannot help but fear the colossal loss to human civilization itself if this architectural heritage were to be damaged. Kyiv, after all, is not just a capital under siege but it is a repository of memory, identity, and centuries of cultural evolution. Mindful of the vulnerabilities created by the ongoing conflict, one can spot that the city administration has moved to protect its key monuments, encasing them in protective coverings and barriers designed to withstand potential missile or drone attacks. Even amid the uncertainties of war, art installations appear in unexpected corners, and the city's legendary parks remain alive with families, students, and elderly couples who refuse to surrender public life to fear.

How luxury hotels in India are championing homegrown culinary stories



A couple of months ago, over 150 litres of water were sent by road from Punjab to The Leela Palace Bengaluru — accompanied by vadis, rajma and Amritsari aam paapad. All this, just to capture the flavours of Punjab as faithfully as possible for the hotel's new regional popup series. Called Citrus In The Spotlight, the ongoing series is helmed by Executive Chef Simran Singh Thapar, who opened with a Punjabi showcase — the first in the line-up. "Hotels bring in external specialists to showcase their culinary skills. We decide to look for talent within our hotels, and this is how Spotlight came into play," he says. The concept is simple: each month, one in-house chef presents food from the State they come from. The result — themed menus shaped by over 100 chefs.

So far, their popups have showcased cuisine from Kongu nadu, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand, and Simran intends to take Spotlight to all Leela properties across the country. At Vivanta Chennai, IT Expressway — under the umbrella of The Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) that helms Taj properties — a recent Rajasthani food festival had Chef Pankaj Meghwal from Umaid Bhawan Palace, Jodhpur, at the forefront. Pankaj brought with him traditional sweets, and the menu comprised dishes such as Mathanai mirchi murgh ka soola cooked in a traditional clay oven; murgh Jodhpuri, churma, and more.

Simran also brought in mini pressure cookers to serve mutton curry, and designed family tables to make the Punjabi popup experience more intimate. "The water was brought from Punjab to ensure dishes like the rajma maintain their authentic taste. We also got homemade masala prepped in Amritsar, and set up an entire pickle pantry, an element that featured in all pop-ups," says Simran. He explains how every household has pickles and chutneys through the year, and for the first event, they started prep almost one-and-a-half months in advance, making khata meetha achar, gajar gobi shalgam achar, green chilli with mustard oil, and a range of chutneys, salads, and relishes. For the Uttarakhand popup, Chef Jashbeer Singh, sous chef, Jamavar, sourced ingredients such as jakhya, bal mithai, and stinging nettle from the State, whereas Chef Hitendra Singh, sous chef at Citrus, brought jowar flour, ker sangri, seer fish, and khichiy paapad from his hometown, Udaipur. The trend has propelled an exchange of chefs within hotel branches across the country. The concept of in-house chef-led popups at IHCL aims at showcasing the "magic of our celebrated kitchens across India and beyond to our guests, allowing them to experience authentic flavours from other regions without having to travel," says Ian Dubier, area director, Operations, Tamil Nadu, and general manager, Taj Coromandel, Chennai. Recent popups include the Sri Lankan Odyssey at Vivanta Chennai, IT Expressway, that was curated by Chef Prasanna Rathnayake from Taj Samudra, Colombo. "His menu transported guests to Sri Lanka with dishes like the Jaffna-style crab curry, kalupol chicken curry, egg hopper with sambal and kiri hodi, among others," says Ian, adding that in a similar fashion, Thonthong Sungkaha, also known as Chef Lily, of Taj Holiday Village, Goa, brought in her signature flavours to Chennai's Taj Wellington Mews. At The Chambers at Taj Coromandel, Chennai, the Rendezvous — Conversations and More series, that launched in 2021, took this concept further with immersive evenings. "Guests sat down to curated five-course dinners by chefs from IHCL hotels across Gurugram, Goa, and Hyderabad," explains

Ian. At Renaissance Bengaluru Race Course Hotel, Executive Chef Ho Chi Ming says they wanted to provide their cooks "a stage to display culinary history and home cuisine." He adds, "Our chefs' enthusiasm for highlighting Himalayan and Uttarakhand cuisine was incredibly motivating. They procured essential ingredients from their hometowns in addition to creating authentic menus." The chefs are now cross-hosted across their parent company Marriott's 158 hotels spread across over 42 cities. Upcoming popups at IHCL include chefs from Southern Spice and Golden Dragon from Taj Coromandel, Chennai, taking their South Indian and Chinese menus respectively to Bengaluru and Kerala. Cuisine from the South ranks high on the list with several menus based on cuisines from Tamil Nadu, Chettinad and Andhra Pradesh, and more. At the Southern Spice popup at Taj Palace, New Delhi, Chef M Rajendran from Taj Coromandel, plated the flavours of Tamil Nadu, honed through years of working across Chettinad, Thanjavur, and Chennai. Rajendran's menu featured dishes such as royyala iguru, prawns simmered in a rich coconut, cashew, and Andhra spice blend, kozhi melagu curry, chicken in a fiery black pepper and fennel gravy, meen pollichathu, and more.

How do the chefs ensure that these popups are different from those led by external chefs and home cooks? Kiron Kumar, director, operations, at The Park, Bengaluru, says they kickstarted in-house popups three years ago. "They are creative laboratories where our chefs are encouraged to break boundaries, explore new ideas, and craft new dining experiences. Unlike popups hosted by external chefs or home cooks, which often showcase individual expertise or niche styles, our internal pop-ups are deeply collaborative and rooted in the identity of the hotel itself," he says, like their popular 'The Forgotten Greens' pop up, which reimagined indigenous greens in modern dishes. "The creative ownership is where the biggest difference is found," says Ho Chi Ming, who plans on showcasing South Indian and East Indian cuisine in the future. Moreover, these events serve as a powerful tool for team development, says Kiron. "By challenging our chefs to think differently and work outside their comfort zones, these events stimulate creativity. They also foster a sense of pride and ownership," he adds. Upcoming events include a celebration of Cantonese cuisine, and a reinvention of classics from around the world. The coming weeks at Sheraton Grand Pune Bund Garden Hotel will see chefs exploring regional and seasonal flavours. The Tamil Table by Chef Shankar Devendra will showcase recipes from his grandmother's kitchen, coastal seafood, and classic Chettinad spice blends, and the Winter Menu will celebrate Maharashtra's seasonal ingredients. Sagar Kulkarni, director, Food and Beverage at the hotel, says these events were introduced two years ago. "In-house popups focus on authenticity and storytelling, whereas visiting chefs bring fresh perspectives, innovative techniques, and unique interpretations of global cuisines. By hosting both types of experiences, we combine the best of both worlds."

At The Leela Bengaluru, upcoming Spotlight popups in January will spotlight food from Coorg, Hyderabad, and the Malabar region, and while Simran led the first one and created a framework, he is hopeful of this trend picking steam. "You can represent any cuisine: each individual has their roots, home rituals, and skills. Food is just one part of these meals."

Thiruparkundram 'deepam' row: Tamil Nadu government seeks early hearing in Supreme Court, respondents accuse state of playing drama

The Supreme Court on Friday (December 5, 2025) saw a mercurial few moments when a Tamil Nadu State counsel's effort for an early listing of an appeal challenging a Madras High Court order allowing worshippers of the Arulmigu Subramanya Swamy Temple to light lamps at the Deepathoo (stone lamp pillar) atop the Thiruparkundram hill, located close to a dargah, was resisted by the rival camp as an attempt to create "drama".

The oral mentioning happened as soon as the Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant assembled in the courtroom in the morning. The tension triggered by the High Court decision spilled over into the Supreme Court on Friday morning, shortly after a lawyer appearing for Madurai District Collector K.J. Praveen Kumar and police chief J. Loganathan, IPS, urged the Chief Justice to list the petition.

The petition was filed late on December 4, a few hours after the High Court passed its order. The mentioning took an adversarial tone as advocate P.V. Yogeswaran, for the respondents, intervened strongly, accusing the State of playing drama in the Supreme Court. "The State is only trying to convey to the High Court that it has moved the Supreme Court," Mr. Yogeswaran interjected. The State counsel said he was merely trying to get a listing in the case. The Chief Justice asked the lawyers to calm down, saying "It is only 10.30 in the morning."

The CJI then turned to the State counsel and said the plea for listing would be considered in due course. On December 4, the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court declined a State plea challenging a Single Bench order for the lighting of the lamp under Central Industrial Security Force cover.



Bharti Enterprises, Warburg Pincus set to acquire 49% stake in Haier India



Sunil Mittal-controlled Bharti Enterprises and US-based global investment firm Warburg Pincus have announced a strategic investment in Haier India, a subsidiary of China's Haier Group. After the completion of the transaction, Bharti and Warburg Pincus will both acquire a 49 per cent stake in the consumer appliances company. Haier Group will continue to hold a 49 per cent stake in the unlisted Indian arm, while the remaining stake will be owned by Haier India's management team. The companies did not disclose further details of the transaction, though industry executives peg Haier India's enterprise value at around Rs 15,000 crore.

Announcing the deal, Bharti said the partnership would strengthen Haier India's "Made in India, Made for India" strategy by deepening local sourcing, expanding manufacturing capacity, driving product innovation and accelerating market penetration. The capital infusion, it said, would also enhance Haier India's competitiveness across the value chain. India's consumer appliances market is witnessing robust growth, supported by rising disposable incomes, changing lifestyles and increasing penetration of durables. Haier India is currently among the top three consumer durables companies in the country, with a diversified product portfolio spanning air conditioners, refrigerators, televisions, washing machines and kitchen appliances. Over the past seven years, the company has clocked a compound annual growth rate of about 25 per cent in India — among the highest in the industry — driven by strong performance

across product categories and regions. Haier India initiated the manufacturing of refrigerators in India in 2007 at its factory in Ranjangaon, Pune, which was further expanded into the company's first industrial park in India. It also set up one of the biggest industrial parks in DMIC Integrated Industrial Township, Greater Noida, to produce home appliances and its related components. "The company looks forward to playing a significant role in the evolving consumer durables industry and leveraging the collective strengths of all parties to meet the needs of Indian consumers," Bharti said. The company said it is confident that Haier India will further consolidate its standing as a leading brand in India. "This investment reflects Warburg Pincus's ability to leverage its pan-Asia franchise, deep local insights, global expertise, and its expansive network to support and accelerate growth for leading companies across the region," it said in a statement. "The collaboration with Bharti Enterprises and Warburg Pincus marks an important milestone in Haier India's development journey. The strategic partnership fully embodies Haier's approach of "serving globalization with global capabilities and advancing globalization through localization," it said. Bharti Enterprises is one of India's leading business conglomerates with interests in telecommunications, digital infrastructure, space communications, financial services, real estate, data centres, hospitality and food processing. Bharti Airtel, its flagship company, is a leading global communications solutions provider with over 600 million customers in 15 countries across India and Africa, with an additional presence in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka through its associate entities. Globally, Airtel ranks among the top three mobile operators with its networks covering over two billion people and is the second largest mobile operator in Africa, providing telecommunications and mobile money services across 14 countries. Warburg Pincus LLC is the pioneer of global growth investing formed in 1966. Today, the company has more than \$85 billion in assets under management, and over 215 companies in their active portfolio, diversified across stages, sectors, and geographies. Warburg Pincus has invested in more than 1,000 companies across its private equity, real estate, and capital solutions strategies.

'Sure of remarkable change in IMF's assessment of Indian statistics'



The International Monetary Fund's (IMF) assessment of India's official statistics should improve significantly once the ongoing review of the key macroeconomic indicators is complete, according to Mridul Saggar, Chairman of the Technical Advisory Committee on the Index of Industrial Production (IIP). "We started this workshop with a note about IMF assessment. You wait for next year's assessment — I am sure there will be a remarkable change in the assessment," Saggar said on Tuesday at a workshop organised by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).

Last month, the IMF had retained its overall 'B' grade on India's official statistics and 'C' grade for the GDP data, while acknowledging the government's ongoing effort to update data such as GDP and Consumer Price Index (CPI). Noting that the IMF's three main concerns had to do with the old base of the GDP, the lack of double-deflation method to compute real GDP, and statistical discrepancies, Narendra Kumar Santoshi, MoSPI's Director General of Central Statistics, said at the workshop that the new data series were addressing these issues to the "best possible extent". Commenting specifically on the new CPI series, which will be released on February 12, 2026, Santoshi said it will be "fully aligned with international standards".

As part of the statistical overhaul, MoSPI is changing the basket of goods and services on which CPI inflation is calculated, along with several other methodological alterations. Currently, a basket based on the 2011-12 household consumption expenditure survey is used; this will be updated to a 2023-24 basket, with the base year being updated to 2024 from 2012. Further, GDP data is also set for a big revision, with the base year moving to 2022-23 from 2011-12 as well as new data sources being used to more accurately measure the final value of goods and services. According to MoSPI Secretary Saurabh Garg, while it's too early to comment on the impact of the various changes being made to the new GDP series — which will be

released on February 27, 2026 starting with data for October-December — "we don't expect much changes from what our previous expectations are". BN Goldar, Chairman of the Advisory Committee on National Accounts Statistics responsible for making suggestions to revise the GDP data, added at the workshop that "we will produce as good an estimate as possible".

The two latest GDP growth prints of 7.8 per cent for April-June and 8.2 per cent for July-September have led to economists raising questions about certain methodological aspects. While Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran said at the workshop that "half-baked" questions sow seeds of doubt in people's mind about the numbers, Niti Aayog Vice Chairman Suman Bery said it was important to have a "series of fierce and knowledgeable critiques" of the GDP methodology as that would lead to improvements. "I think the Indian public is owed a responsible discussion so that after this enormous amount of work, the issues of — within a range — the credibility of the data can be set aside," Bery said. As part of the IIP revision, which is used to calculate industrial growth, MoSPI has already released a discussion paper in which it has proposed to swap from its sample factories that have shut down with new ones. On Tuesday, officials from the statistics ministry said it is also being discussed if the fixed panel of factories used to calculate industrial production can be expanded every year. Another discussion paper on the same will be published for comments. "The main criticism of the IIP has been divergence in NAS (National Accounts Statistics) growth, ASI (Annual Survey of Industries) growth, and IIP growth. But it should be noted that the ASI frame is revised and updated every year and using this frame ASI estimates are compiled. But for IIP, we have a fixed panel of factories... Some factories get closed and new factories may emerge with significant production, or a factory which was not selected in the base year may become a significant producer of an item. To account for this underestimation by IIP... it is proposed to augment the factories annually in the IIP compilation and align it with ASI numbers," Ankita Singh, a Deputy Director General in MoSPI, said. Mridul Saggar, head of the IIP review committee, added that the thinking at the moment was to add new factories in the panel only once a year and only in cases where it's a "very significant effect coming from entirely new production processes or new, substantive production that might get missed. So, that call will have to be taken once a year and not as a rule, but as an exception, was our thinking." However, when asked if changes being made for the new IIP series will put to bed the criticism the data attracts, Saggar and Ila Patnaik — a member of the IIP review committee and Aditya Birla Group's Chief Economist — said that was unlikely to be the case.

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-ruppee buy-sell swap auction of \$1 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 simultaneously 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.

Decoding the efficacy of an Ayurvedic concoction made with carom, fennel, and fenugreek seeds for glowing skin



*Boil for 5-10 minutes until it's reduced.

*Strain. Add jaggery.

Enjoy on an empty stomach every day.

Does it work?

A combination of various spices like fenugreek seeds, carom, fennel, cinnamon, and cardamom with jaggery indeed makes the skin glow, said Soumita Biswas, chief clinical nutritionist, Aster RV Hospital, Bengaluru. "This combination of spices is good for gut health, improves metabolic rate, reduces flatulence, and thus purifies the blood, detoxifying and improving skin health," said Biswas. herbal drink Is this effective? (Source: Getty Images/Thinkstock)

radicals are responsible for the development of wrinkles and age spots on the skin, stated Biswas, adding that the seeds contain vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that can strengthen the immune system and help the body fight infections, which are reflected in the skin. However, Dr Rinky Kapoor, consultant dermatologist, cosmetic dermatologist and dermatologist, The Esthetic Clinics, Mumbai said one those over 40 must not have fenugreek seeds for a long time without consulting an expert as their "metabolism tends to be slower." "Moreover, higher jaggery consumption causes bloating, indigestion, constipation, and tooth decay. It is better to avoid any home remedies for glowing skin, and seek the help of a dermatologist who will design a proper skincare routine for you," said Dr Kapoor. One should also stay hydrated, eat a well-balanced diet, and exercise daily instead of adhering to any herbal or home remedies as there is no concrete evidence regarding their safety and results. Be careful before trying any herbal drinks, or concoctions, said Dr Kapoor.

Like diet and fitness, skincare is a continuous process that needs commitment. So, when Michelle Ranavat, founder of a beauty brand, shared an Ayurvedic drink recipe for glowing skin at 41, we decided to take note. "I've been drinking this one lately and have noticed how it has improved my skin from the inside OUT!" Ranavat stated on Instagram.

How to make the concoction?

Ingredients

2 cups – Water

2 tsp – Ajwain seeds or carom seeds, saunf or fennel seeds, methi or fenugreek seeds

1 – Cinnamon stick

3 – Cardamom pods

Jaggery to taste.

Method

*Add all ingredients except jaggery.

'My vascular function improved by a ten-year reduction in age': Bryan Johnson calls sauna his most effective health protocol, but doctor urges caution



20 min," "Frequency: 4-7x a week." On safety, he advised, "Most importantly, ice the balls," and stressed hydration: "Dry sauna induces sweating as part of its beneficial mechanism... you might need to rehydrate with up to 16-32 oz (0.5-1 L) of fluid after a sauna session. Be sure to add electrolytes." Use of sauna to reduce environmental toxins or microplastics in the human body Dr Palleli Siva Karthik Reddy, MBBS, MD, general medicine and consultant physician, tells indianexpress.com, "Currently, the direct evidence that sauna use meaningfully removes environmental toxins or microplastics from the human body is limited. Some studies show that sweating can excrete certain heavy metals and organic compounds, but the magnitude and clinical relevance remain unclear. While regular sauna use may support general detoxification pathways by promoting circulation and sweat production, claims specifically about microplastics are largely speculative and not yet substantiated by rigorous human trials." Relationship between frequent high-heat sauna exposure and male fertility

to Dr Reddy, frequent high-heat sauna exposure can temporarily lower sperm count and motility because elevated scrotal temperatures affect sperm production. However, most research suggests that these effects are reversible and sperm parameters typically return to baseline after discontinuing high-heat exposure. "Conflicting findings, such as improved metabolic markers or cardiovascular benefits, should be interpreted with caution. Men who are trying to conceive may want to limit prolonged or persistent sauna sessions. In contrast, others may balance sauna use with their fertility goals and overall health priorities," stresses the expert. Proven cardiovascular and metabolic benefits of sauna use Robust evidence indicates that regular sauna use is associated with improved cardiovascular outcomes, Dr Reddy states, including reduced blood pressure, better arterial function, and enhanced heart rate variability. Sauna use may also improve metabolic markers such as insulin sensitivity.

"Safe practice includes staying hydrated, limiting sessions to 15-20 minutes at temperatures typically between 70-100°C, and allowing the body to cool between sessions. Individuals with cardiovascular conditions or heat sensitivity should consult a physician before initiating frequent sauna use," recommends Dr Reddy.

'Training will make it worse': Fitness trainer lists 6 situations when skipping your gym is actually smarter

Most people pride themselves on showing up to the gym no matter what. But pushing through every dip in energy isn't always a sign of commitment. Sometimes, it's the fastest way to get injured, burnt out, or stuck in a cycle of inconsistency. That's why fitness trainer Adi Rad recently shared a list of situations where skipping the gym isn't laziness at all; it's smart training. In an Instagram post, she wrote: "These are ACTUAL skip days" and then broke down six scenarios where showing up can backfire. The first: "When you're sick (fever, flu, infection). Not a 'little tired' – actually sick. Your body needs ALL your energy to recover. Training will make it worse." She added a simple guideline many people already use but rarely understand fully: "above the neck = okay to train / below the neck = REST."

Rad also highlighted situations where basic physical needs haven't been met, like "When you haven't eaten all day. No fuel = trash workout + higher injury risk. Eat real food first (protein + carbs), THEN GO." Sleep plays a similar role, with Rad warning: "One bad night? Go. ZERO sleep? Stay home. Your coordination, strength, and focus all drop; injury risk goes up." Another key sign she mentions is pain — not general soreness but actual pain: "When you feel pain (not soreness – PAIN). Sharp, stabbing, or joint pain. NEVER push through the pain." Yet she clarifies that movement is still possible: "you can ALWAYS train differently... Avoid the painful movement, train another muscle, do cardio, stretch, go for a walk."

Emotional states matter too. Rad notes that immediately training after intense distress can overwhelm the system: "Right after a huge emotional meltdown... Walk, breathe, calm down first. Then go lift – you'll actually feel AMAZING after." And finally, she points to the commonly ignored warning signs of burnout: "If you're exhausted, los-

ing strength, not recovering, moody, no appetite... Your body is begging for REST, not another session." Sadhna Singh, senior fitness and lifestyle consultant at HereNow Official, tells indianexpress.com, "The 'above the neck' rule is a useful general guideline, but it should not be treated as a medical green light. Symptoms limited to a mild runny nose or nasal congestion are usually safe for light activity, provided there is no fever, body aches, chest congestion, or fatigue." She continues, "People should avoid training if they experience fever, chills, elevated resting heart rate, shortness of breath, chest tightness, dizziness, or a deep cough. These are clear signals that the immune system is under stress, and exercise can prolong recovery or increase cardiac risk."

How lack of sleep, lack of fuel, and acute emotional stress affect coordination, injury risk, and overall workout safety Singh shares, "When the brain is fatigued, motor control becomes less precise, balance deteriorates, and joint stability is reduced, which dramatically increases the risk of strains, sprains, and poor loading mechanics. Training in a fasted or severely underfed state lowers blood glucose, which can cause light-headedness, weakness, and impaired decision-making during a session." She adds that emotional stress elevates cortisol and adrenaline, which can make movements more rushed, aggressive, and less controlled. Together, these factors make training unsafe, as the body and nervous system are not in a state to handle technical or heavy exercise safely. The difference between harmless soreness, early injury signs, and pain that requires complete rest or medical attention Normal muscle soreness feels like a dull, tight, or aching sensation that appears 12 to 48 hours after exercise and reduces as the body warms up. Injury-related pain is more localised, sharp, stabbing,

Michael Vaughan slams Melbourne pitch after 20 wickets fall on Day 1 of Boxing Day Test match



GNS News Agency, Dec 29

Former England captain Michael Vaughan has criticised the pitch used for the Boxing Day Ashes Test match against Australia at Melbourne, stating that it favoured the bowlers a bit too much. The 51-year-old said that the strip used for the match was "unfair" for the batters. 20 wickets fell on Day 1 of the Boxing Day Test match, with Australia ending proceedings 4/0 and a lead of 46 runs. "We're always looking for a fair balance between bat and ball. I thought that was unfair for the batters. The pitch has done plenty. There's been plenty of movement out there. It's not been easy for both sides, but I don't like seeing a pitch do

so much," Vaughan told the BBC. The 2005 Ashes-winning captain said that Australia were the favourites to win the fourth Test, but warned everyone against ruling England out completely, as they had a good record, chasing down scores in the final innings.

"They are a good chasing side. We have had three heavy rollers already, and there will be another one tomorrow morning. This England team can chase. Australia are favourites, but don't rule England out," Vaughan said. Former Australian pacer Glenn McGrath concurred with Vaughan about the pitch being too helpful for bowlers, adding that England may get to bat when the wicket was best suited for the batters in the fourth innings. "That pitch has too much life in it for Test cricket. It was 10mm of grass when I think 7mm would have been better, but I think he [the groundsman] was more concerned with what was happening on days three, four and five." "The weather is getting warmer, which will have an impact on the top of the rollers. So, it could get to the stage where England are batting in the fourth innings in the best batting conditions of the match," McGrath said. Australia were bowled out for 152 in their first innings with Josh Tongue claiming figures of 5/45. England were then dismissed for 110 in their first innings, with Michael Neser taking 4/45 and Scott Boland taking 3/30 to hand Australia a lead of 42 runs.

India vs Sri Lanka: Vaishnavi Sharma's international debut is a reward for domestic performances, says coach Amol Muzumdar

GNS News Agency, Dec 29

It was something of a surprise when Vaishnavi Sharma – widely touted as one of the most promising names in the mega auction pool for WPL – found no takers from the five franchises. The young left-arm spinner from Madhya Pradesh, who just turned 20 last week, was India's leading wicket-taker at the U19 World Cup earlier this year, including a memorable 5/5 against Sri Lanka where she also registered a hat-trick. In the Senior Women's T20 Trophy she was again at the top of wicket-taking charts with 21 from 9 innings. While a WPL bid has proved elusive for now, head coach Amol Muzumdar said on Thursday that the promising spinner has been rewarded with an international debut against Sri Lanka based on the consistency of her domestic exploits.

"I think she responded really well," Muzumdar said in Thiruvananthapuram ahead of the third T20I. "Credit to her that she comes from under-19. And I would like to stress that domestic performance was rewarded by the selectors. So real credit to them." Vaishnavi impressed with her economical bowling in the first match in Visakhapatnam though she was unlucky not to pick up a wicket. In the second match, after being targeted in her first over, she bounced back impressively to pick up two wickets. "I think in the last two games what we have seen, it seems very promising.



The control that she has shown, not just on her skills but also her mental control out there. She's calm, collective," Muzumdar added.

Muzumdar also confirmed that Deepthi Sharma is fit and available after missing the second match due to illness. Jemimah Rodrigues, however, missed the pre-match training due to "little bit of an issue but I think she's fine. She's just resting today." The decision to leave Renuka Singh Thakur in the first two matches, however, is tactical. "We were looking at a different combination. Also trying out a few things and she's an integral part of this team as you've known in the last two years," he said of the pacer.

Australia announce playing XII for Melbourne Test: Steve Smith to lead in absence of Pat Cummins; Jhye Richardson returns after 4 years

GNS News Agency, Dec 29

After a dominating show in the first three Tests, which helped Australia retain the Ashes 2025-26 series in just 11 days, the home team is all set to play an all-pace attack for the Boxing Day Test against England at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground. Having missed out on the Adelaide Test, Steve Smith is back in the side and will lead the unit in the absence of Pat Cummins, who has been ruled out of the remainder of the Ashes as Australia opted to include four fast bowlers in its 12-man squad, with spinner Todd Murphy, brought in to replace Nathan Lyon, not finding a spot.

Pacer Jhye Richardson, who has not played a Test for Australia since 2021, has been brought back after a fine domestic form on his return from shoulder surgery. It will be the second time in the series Australia have picked a four-pronged specialist pace attack with Brendan Doggett and Michael Neser both playing in the day-night second Test in Brisbane, the latter taking five wickets in the second innings.

With Australia expected to play four pacers, stand-in skipper Steve Smith says the hosts are yet to settle on their final XI for the fourth Test. Smith's inclusion resulted in



Josh Inglis' omission, while Usman Khawaja also made the cut for the 12-man squad for the home side. Speaking on the team selection, Smith said: "We've landed on a 12, we just want to take a look at the wicket tomorrow. We're going to be playing four quicks and no spinner. (The pitch) has 10mm of grass, quite fury, quite green," he said. "I dare say it's going to offer quite a bit, particularly (day one) is similar conditions to today, quite cold and overcast so I dare say there's going to be quite a bit of movement," added Smith.

Pat Cummins sets eyes on T20 World Cup in India after missing last of Ashes: 'High risk to play back-to-back Tests'



The Melbourne Cricket Ground has been a fast bowler's paradise on Day 1 of the fourth Ashes Test. Both Australia's and England's first innings were wiped out and things might have moved faster had Pat Cummins been around. However, the Australian captain said that he was pretty clear on wanting to make sure he stays fit to travel to India and Sri Lanka for the T20 World Cup earlier this year.

"Feeling good, so got through Adelaide unscathed so pretty happy," he told Channel 7 during the lunch break on the first day of the Boxing Day Test here. Cummins had missed the first two Tests of the Ashes before finally making an appearance in the third in Adelaide. "As of a few weeks ago, was still coming back from a back injury so playing back-to-back Test matches was pretty high risk. So, will cool the heels for a little bit with T20 World Cup next month," Cummins added. took six wickets in the Adelaide Test as Australia won by 82 runs. The victory took their lead to 3-0, thus confirming a series win and with the Ashes urn firmly in the bag, Australia ruled Cummins out for the rest of the series, with Steve Smith returning as captain. Australia have held the Ashes since taking it from England in the 2017/18 series, winning thrice at home and drawing back-to-back series in England.

Cummins said that the veteran spinner Nathan Lyon is facing a lengthy spell on the sidelines. With Lyon predominantly playing only Test cricket, though, his absence

won't be too much of a concern for Australia, whose next Test assignment after the Ashes isn't due until August. "He had surgery a couple of days ago, so he'll have a lengthy layoff, I don't know exactly, but will be at least a few months," Cummins said. "Bit of a long road ahead for him, but he's done it before so hopefully he'll be back. It was a big one, so surgery, and he has his crutches in the change room at the moment so we wish best... it was a shame but he put a brave face after the Test."

Rishabh Pant spends a lonely hour in the nets after Delhi's Vijay Hazare Trophy match, searching for white-ball consistency



GNS News Agency, Dec 29

Soon after Delhi wrapped up a convincing win over Andhra in the Vijay Hazare Trophy opening round, their captain Rishabh Pant walked to the centre wicket to have an open net session. While all eyes have been on Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, Pant knows how important this tournament is for his white-ball career, where he is currently caught in the middle of nowhere. A back-up to KL Rahul in ODIs, he will have to watch the T20 World Cup from afar, with Ishan Kishan taking the second wicketkeeper slot.

At roughly around 4.30 PM on Wednesday, Pant took guard at the BCCI's Centre of Excellence and what followed for the next hour or more was the left-hander indulging in some excellent ball-striking. Even though the rest of his teammates were enjoying a moment with Kohli in the dressing room, Pant was toning sixes in the middle. With one of Delhi's coaching staff hurling the white-ball with a side-arm and off-spinner Hrithik Shokeen bowling, he would try packing his game. One moment, he would give a mighty swing of his bat and in the next moment would dead bat a few before running down the pitch and smashing it over long-on or through the covers. He would even bring out his audacious ramps and reverse-sweeps, sending the ball to all corners of the ground, leaving the lone ball boy grasping for breath and searching for water. As he connected a couple of big hits that sailed all the way to the main ground, he would plead with the CoE staff: "Bhaiya... just one more time. Sach mei, mei udhar nahi marunge vapas (I won't hit it there again)..." And he would hit the next one in the same direction. Watching Pant in this sort of batting mood, the staff would give up.

Rafael Nadal explains the difference between Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz: 'They're different players from what I was'



Nadal noted that Sinner seems more organised and methodical while Alcaraz was a little more "scattered" and yet somehow maintained remarkable consistency. (AP Photo) Nadal noted that Sinner seems more organised and methodical while Alcaraz was a little more "scattered" and yet somehow maintained remarkable consistency. Twenty-two-time Grand Slam champion Rafael Nadal has explained what differentiates Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz, saying that the former was a lot more methodical, while the latter did not have a clear playing pattern, which made him unpredictable.

The 39-year-old admitted that he did not identify himself in either player, adding that both Sinner and Alcaraz

With shadows lengthening, Delhi's coach Sarandeep Singh would walk in and help the ball boy and the staff to fetch balls straight down the ground. He would keep pointing to the watch, but Pant would have none of it. Last 10 balls, he would say, before Shokeen alone delivered a couple of overs. By now, banter was brewing between the off-spinner and Pant. Shokeen forced some mis-hits – all via sweeps, prompting the batsman to shout to himself, "Come on yaar, mat karo. Watch the ball, play straight." Rishabh Pant and Virat Kohli during a training session for Delhi at the Vijay Hazare Trophy. (There was desperation in the tone as well as frustration. It is one area Pant probably knows what has stopped him from flourishing in white-ball cricket. When he struggled in the IPL last season, there was a pattern where he was dismissed while trying to play behind the wicket. Although the ramps and scoops have been an asset to Pant's range in Tests, in white-ball cricket, with different field placements, it hasn't always worked.

"We have to recognise that he's still yet to totally understand the white-ball game – both formats, 50-over cricket as well as T20 cricket," former India batting coach Sanjay Bangar had said during the IPL. "You pull out the best innings of Rishabh – where has he looked to score the runs? Drives through covers, step down the track and try to hit the sightscreen or go over midwicket, square. As a batter, I think probably he just got caught in that confusion and forgot that his best game is when he's looking to score down the ground," Bangar had said. It is one aspect that Pant has been trying to improve. Even during the ODIs against South Africa, he made efforts to play straight in the nets. Eight years since his ODI debut, he has just played 31 matches, with his last outing coming in August 2024. That India's team management went in for Rituraj Gaikwad to bat at No 4 in the ODIs against South Africa when Shreyas Iyer wasn't available showed where Pant stands. With Rahul being the first-choice keeper, Pant knows he needs big scores to even be in the discussion for the upcoming New Zealand series. The Vijay Hazare Trophy provides an opportunity. In a team that is filled with right-handers, Pant has a lot to offer. At present, India are using Axar Patel, Washington Sundar and Ravindra Jadeja as left-handed options. While Rahul is definitely indispensable at this stage for the World Cup in South Africa, Pant's X-factor will be needed. A left-hander, floater, a 360-degree batsman, equally marauding against pace and spin – Pant has it all. Just the runs are missing.

were a lot different from him. "I don't identify with either. They're different players from what I was. I think Carlos is more random. He makes more errors, hits more spectacular shots, sometimes doesn't such a defined game pattern, which makes him unpredictable and fun for spectators. Jannik is more methodical, focused, with a more defined pattern, and he keeps adding things little by little. That's why he's so solid and loses very few matches," Nadal told AS in an interview. The 14-time French Open champion added that he found it amusing to see that Alcaraz had such a fine year despite having such a "scattered" game. "Sometimes Carlos seems more scattered, but when you look at the results, he's had an incredibly consistent and solid year in all the big tournaments. That's why it makes me laugh when I hear that he's scattered. The results say the opposite. That's my view," he said. Nadal retired from professional tennis in November last year after playing the Davis Cup against the Netherlands in Malaga. He competed in the singles and the doubles events at the Paris Olympics, bowing out in the second round against Novak Djokovic in the former and exiting the latter with Alcaraz in the quarter-final stage. On the opening day of the 2025 French Open, Roland Garros organisers unveiled a footprint carved into clay in Court Philippe-Chatrier. He won his 22nd and final Grand Slam in Paris in 2022 and is the only player apart from Djokovic to have won each of the four Grand Slams at least twice.

Juan Carlos Ferrero opens up about his player-coach split with Carlos Alcaraz: 'Everything seemed to be going well'



maybe we both need some time to fully process this breakup. It's not so easy. Right now, I'm hurting. These kinds of relationships are difficult to end overnight. And there has to be a grieving period. And, above all, I suppose it will also hurt when I see him play in tournaments. A lot of shared experiences come into play there. I think it's going to take some time," he added. revealed that plans were in place for him to travel with Alcaraz for the 2026 Australian Open before they decided to split the partnership. He added that he and Alcaraz had an "emotional connection" and things turned upside down at the end. "Yes, yes. It's clear that it's been a radical change for everyone. Adapting isn't easy. For me, obviously, it's not a pleasant time at all. In the end, it's a long-standing relationship where we've been through a lot together, and you develop a strong bond. We had this emotional connection during training, and we experienced every important situation that arose with him in tournaments very intensely.

Juan Carlos Ferrero, the former coach of six-time Grand Slam champion Carlos Alcaraz, has revealed that disagreements between him and Alcaraz's team over a new contract led to them splitting as a player-coach pair before the start of the new season. Alcaraz had announced the decision to split with Ferrero on social media last week, a few weeks before the start of the new season.

"Well, let's see, everything seemed to be going

well. It's true that when a year ends, certain things need to be reviewed regarding contracts. And as with any new contract, looking ahead to the following year, there were certain things we disagreed on. As with all contracts, one side pulls in one direction and the other in another. Carlos's camp thinks about what's best for him, and mine thinks about what's best for me." "There were certain issues on which both parties disagreed on. Perhaps they could have been resolved if we had sat down to

'My relationship with Priyanka Chopra has changed': Sister Mannara calls actor 'guide, godmother'; says Malti is 'proper LA baby'



the US, fans get excited whenever they catch a glimpse of her talking adorably Hindi language. Now, Priyanka's cousin sister, actor-model Mannara Chopra recently opened up about her relationship with the *Aitraaz* actor. During an interview with *Filmgyaan*, she also revealed that Malti is a 'proper LA baby' and knows only a few Hindi words.

When asked if she considers Priyanka as her godmother, Mannara replied, "She is my sister, I would say." Recalling the actor's recent India visit, she shared, "Recently, she was visiting India so I went to meet her. You just take your heart out and you can tell her what you are feeling right now. So, she is like that calming factor who doesn't have that thing where she will solve everything for you, but she will guide you in a way which is so proper." The actor further added, "You think about yourself that why didn't I think like this. She guides me very nicely as a sister. I feel very emotional whenever I am around her, past two years especially. When I used to meet her earlier, it was mostly fun, chirpy, just giggling, now I am always hugging her." Mannara expressed that she has witnessed a shift in her bond with sister Priyanka Chopra. "There's some kind of change which is internally there within me. That shift is taking place and I don't know why. I feel that whenever I am too emotional or something and I see her, I am always like 'Ek jaadu ki jhappi' (a magical hug). Of course, then you move on with your life and carry forward with your work," she said. When asked about Priyanka's daughter Malti and if she speaks in Hindi language, she replied, "She communicates properly in English. Of course, she has picked up a few words of Hindi. Last time I met her was during my brother's wedding this year. She is still quite young, so I will tell you more when I meet her the next time."

Mannara Chopra revealed her sister Priyanka Chopra's daughter Malti Marie is a 'proper LA baby'. Mannara Chopra revealed her sister Priyanka Chopra's daughter Malti Marie is a 'proper LA baby'.

Actor Priyanka Chopra and singer Nick Jonas' daughter Malti Marie Chopra Jonas' video of speaking in Hindi went viral last year. Having born (2022) and brought up in

'I got anxiety attack after being finalised to sing for Shahid Kapoor, got admitted to a hospital': Shahid Mallya on struggle, success



Singer Shahid Mallya today is a widely celebrated name, both within the industry and among audiences. After all, he has lent his voice to some of the defining songs that continue to dominate playlists, like *Ikk Kudi*, *Radha*, *Daryaa*, *Shauq*, *Kudmayi*, among several others. However, one of his most popular tracks remains *Rabba Main Toh Mar Gaya Oye*, which also happened to be his debut song. In a recent conversation with Digital Commentary, Shahid opened up about the moment he learned he would be singing for a Shahid Kapoor film (*Mausam*), under music composer Pritam, and how the news triggered an anxiety attack.

"Before I got a break with the song, I had known Pritam sir for about a year, but he had never heard me sing. So one day, he asked me if I wanted to sing a song for a film he was working on. I latched onto it and said, 'Of course, sir. I have come to this city only to sing.' He further added: 'I had no clue that it was a song for a Pankaj Kapur film. All I knew was that Pritam ji was getting continuous calls and they wanted the song to be dubbed quickly. I also didn't know that two other singers were going to dub for the same song later. But Pritam sir was very happy, and he told his team to mix it and send it to the producer. Soon after, the team informed me that they liked the composition and the song had been approved."

Shahid further recalled that for the same film *Mausam*, he had also sung another track, *Ik Tu Hi Tu Hi*. He narrated how, six months after the first recording, he received another call from Pritam's office asking him to come in and record the chorus. Though a little heartbroken at being called only for the chorus, he went anyway. At the studio, he saw two prominent singers also present to record the chorus. After recording his version, he left, but around 5 pm the same day, he received another urgent call from the studio. When he returned, he saw Pritam along with Pankaj Kapur and Supriya Pathak waiting for him inside the studio premises. "Pritam sir held my hand and took me to him, and called Pankaj ji saying, 'this is Shahid.'

Shahid recalled thinking something was wrong, won-

dering why they wanted to meet him. What followed, however, left a lasting impact. Pankaj Kapur hugged and told him "Son, you sang so well. Nobody else could sing it like you. You will do the final song." Recalling that moment, Shahid said: "I got an anxiety attack because I had got my first song." He went on to describe how overwhelmed he felt. "I was sweating badly, and the moment I went to record, I was very nervous, the feel wasn't coming. Thankfully, Pritam sir understood my state and packed up for the day. The moment I left the studio, I got myself admitted to the hospital because I couldn't believe it. I kept thinking, how did I get a break so early? I had struggled for just 12-13 years. I thought it would take another ten years."

Shahid also recalled the first time *Rabba Main Toh Mar Gaya* played on television before the film's release. He immediately called his parents to listen. "The song started and I called my mother, father, everyone, and they began to cry, and then I gave them a chair and said, sit and cry if you want to cry. I was joking." In the same conversation, he spoke about attending the film's premiere with Pritam, which was graced by the A-listers of the industry. When the film began and his song came on, he was once again hit by anxiety. "That song comes just 15-20 minutes into the film. And as soon as the song started I thought I should leave. Pritam sir tried to stop me and said, 'Pankaj ji will feel bad.' I told him let him think like that, but if I stayed there, I would die listening to my own song."

'Salman Khan roasted me constantly': Tanya Mittal hits back at Bigg Boss host; shows off her plush home, businesses



Among several revelations, Tanya disclosed that she owns a condom manufacturing factory. "There are several staff members," she told *News Pinch*. When asked whether entering the condom business was a bold decision, Tanya agreed, acknowledging that it is "something people often hesitate to talk about." As the video progressed, factory staff assured viewers that Tanya genuinely owns multiple factories and that the claims are not rumours. Showcasing large machines used in condom manufacturing, Tanya said, "All these machines have been imported." She also walked the reporter through the factory's laboratory, where product testing is conducted.

While Tanya maintains that she does not need to prove herself to anyone, she explained that the sole reason for sharing these tours was her fans. "They fought for me and stood up for me even when they didn't know my truth. They believed me without questioning anything. Because of that, they were targeted and trolled for supporting a 'fake' girl. I was being lynched the whole time," she said. She also took a dig at the show's host Salman Khan, stating, "Inside the house, they would lynch me for six days. And then the man who came on weekends would pull my leg even more. He roasted me the entire time." One of the statements that had earlier made her a subject of trolling was also addressed in the video. "My driver and other staff members also address me as 'didi' or 'boss', Tanya said. When questioned, a staff member quickly clarified, "We call her 'Boss'!" They also confirmed that they are paid on time. In an earlier house tour video, Tanya introduced viewers to her extended joint family, including her mother. Family members presented proof of their lifestyle, showcasing the viral kitchen lift, silver utensils used daily, and references to the many factories Tanya claims to own. Her sister-in-law added, "Because we live in a joint family, all of this is very common for us."

She first shared a house tour featuring a massive garden and an entire floor dedicated to herself, complete with a personal gym, jacuzzi, and water fountain. Now, she has taken her followers inside one of her factories located in Gwalior. Tanya Mittal owns a condom factory.

Among several revelations, Tanya disclosed that she owns a condom manufacturing factory. "There are several staff members," she told *News Pinch*.

After giving a tour of her lavish home, Tanya Mittal went on to offer a glimpse into one of her many factories. Tanya, who has claimed to own a pharmaceutical company, a solar company, and a farmhouse where organic fruits and vegetables are grown, had earlier become fodder for meme pages. However, the social media influencer and entrepreneur has been on a mission to prove that everything she claimed is true.

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Child actor who was a Nickelodeon star, published 2 books, started YouTube channel; is now unrecognisable, living on the streets



Back in 2004, Nickelodeon launched a new show titled *Ned's Declassified School Survival Guide*. The series aired for about three years and received decent ratings. It revolved around the lives of teenage students, with Devon Werkheiser in the lead role, alongside Lindsey Shaw and Daniel Curtis Lee in important supporting roles. The show also featured child actor Tyler Chase, who played Martin Qwerly, a recurring character. In 2005, Chase appeared on the television series *Everybody Hates Chris*, and in 2007 he made his film debut in *Good Time Max*. He remained active in film and television until 2011, when he was around 22 years old.

In 2012, Chase launched his own YouTube channel, where he primarily discussed his writing and poetry. In one of his introduction videos, he shared, "I have a passion for writing, and I will try to post pieces with inspirational topics and themes." He uploaded his first video on May 7, 2012, and his last on May 31 of the same year. After that, he stopped posting altogether. About eight years later, he self-published two books under the pen name "Shrine Tylor." The first, *A Vampire's Salvation: Shrine and Ellen (The Tales of Shrine Book 1)*, was released in January, followed by *SO BE IT: Says Jehovah (Shrine and Ellen Book 2)* in July.

In 2025, concerns about Chase's mental well-being began circulating online. More recently, a video went viral showing him homeless in Riverside, California. The footage, originally recorded in September, quickly became a source of concern for fans and former co-stars. Later, Ned's Declassified co-star Daniel Curtis Lee, who portrayed Simon "Cookie" Nelson, reunited with Chase. Lee shared a video of the two having a hot meal at a nearby pizzeria.

Goodbye June review: Kate Winslet's directorial debut is a warm family drama that lacks depth



Goodbye June review: It's a moment worth celebrating that one of the finest contemporary actors—Kate Winslet—makes her directorial debut with *Goodbye June*, as well as acts in it. The movie, written by her son Joe Anders, is a sappy and poignant movie centered around a much-adored matriarch, who is hospitalised some days ahead of Christmas. The matriarch June, played by Helen Mirren, is the glue who keeps the family together in spite of their differences. Her sudden hospitalisation and deteriorating health due to cancer relapse bring the four siblings and their exasperated father together. This also reveals the messy family dynamics and resentments. As the film is soaked in the pre-Christmas vibes, one gets the feeling that these issues will be sorted out and they eventually do. However, the process of how that happens is not as engaging for the viewers as it should have been.

Anders, of course, seems sincere as he draws the story from a personal place, remembering how his family was around his grandmother when they lost her. While he has drawn out the characters well and created some moving moments in this movie, the script lacks nuance and layers. Even though the movie features several brilliant actors—Toni Collette, Johnny Flynn, Andrea Riseborough and Timothy Spall—and their heartfelt performances, it still remains simplistic, leaning on emotional shortcuts.

As someone whose presence looms large even as her health fades, Helen Mirren's character is meant to be quick-witted and spirited. But, the script fails to bring that out. In one of the moving scenes, Kate Winslet, who plays the role of her professionally successful and responsible daughter, moves Mirren's bed close to the hospital bed so that she can watch the snowfall. Mirren asks Winslet for mascara and lipstick to look better and perk herself up. This offers a glimpse of Mirren's spirit. Though Mirren is the titu-

lar protagonist, Winslet does the heavy lifting as a prominent member of this ensemble cast. She and Andrea Riseborough, who plays her younger sister, have an emotionally-charged scene where they address their years of conflict. It reveals how, at times, certain things inexplicably go wrong between siblings. But the film offers a quick resolution to this with the help of a bar of chocolate. The differences between Johnny Flynn and Timothy Spall, who play son and father, respectively, are also resolved similarly, albeit with the help of music.

Goodbye June works as a Christmas film steeped in sentiment and nostalgia, celebrating the enduring strength of family bonds. With greater emotional depth and narrative complexity, it could have secured a place in favourite festival watchlists. **Goodbye June movie director:** Kate Winslet **Goodbye June movie cast:** Toni Collette, Johnny Flynn, Andrea Riseborough, Timothy Spall, Kate Winslet and Helen Mirren **Goodbye June movie rating:** Two stars

Sharmila Tagore says son Saif Ali Khan taught her important parenting lessons: 'Ibrahim was in Pataudi, I wanted perfection'

Sohail Ali Khan recently invited her mother Sharmila Tagore and her niece Sara Ali Khan on her YouTube channel and amongst many subjects, the trio also discussed parenting. Sharmila has brought up three children—Sohail, Saba and Saif Ali Khan. Sohail is the mother of an 8-year-old daughter Inaaya. And while Saba is not a parent, she grew up in a non-traditional household as her parents—Saif and Amrita Singh—divorced when she was 9, and she largely grew up with her mother in those impressionable years.

'Saif Ali Khan is an excellent parent'

Sharmila, while speaking on the subject, said that she had learnt a lot from her kids as she saw them becoming parents and said that unlike her, who relied on older adults in the family for raising children, the newer generation was more dependent on books, and their friends. Speaking about Saif, she recalled that when Saba was younger, she would go to late night movie premieres with her parents, but would also finish her homework after coming back. "Saif has been an excellent parent. I have seen him with you (Saba). Like if they had to go to a premiere in the middle of the night, she went with them but we can see it hasn't harmed her, and she would come back and do her homework," Sharmila shared. Saif Ali Khan with son Ibrahim Ali Khan Saif Ali Khan (R) with son Ibrahim Ali Khan. (Photo: Ibrahim Ali Khan/Instagram)

She recalled another incident from Ibrahim Ali Khan's childhood where Saif taught her that being perfect wasn't

the most important thing. "With Ibrahim, I remember... I think it was Pataudi and they were doing the Christmas tree and I was trying to be perfect and trying to put it in the right way. And Ibrahim was putting it all over the place. So Saif said, 'Do you mind? It has to be participative.' I also learnt that you don't have to be perfect but allow the children to grow at their own pace. And he has been really really wonderful," she said. Sharmila added that with his young children, Taimur and Jeh, he was "very real" when an intruder entered their house in the middle of the night and Saif got severely injured in a scuffle.

Sara was also asked about what she learnt from both her parents and she laughed and said, "On a bad day, you don't want to ask Abba or Amma because they are like, 'You are like your father' or 'You are like your mother'. And I am like, 'Guys, this is bound to happen, you studied DNA right? Yes, I am like my mom and yes, I am like my father'." Sara Ali Khan Sara Ali Khan with mom Amrita Singh (Photo: Sara Ali Khan/Instagram) Talking about what she has learnt from her father, Sara said that she also has "eclectic likes" like her father. And speaking about her mother Amrita, she said that she learnt to be "unfiltered" from her. "Staying real in a world where it's difficult to be that way. People are like, 'Oh you are so binaas, you are so unfiltered. How are you that way?' And I think that's because of mom. I think she is not at all watching her Ps and Qs."