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Crimes in Adilabad rise by 63 per cent in 2025

Adilabad: The district recorded a sharp surge in various crimes in 2025 compared to 2024. Superintendent of Police Akhil Mahajan briefed the annual crime report to the media here on Monday.

Akhil Mahajan said the district reported 6,486 crimes this year as against 3,979 offences in the previous year, reflecting an increase of 63 per cent. In particular, cases of cheating, house burglaries, ordinary thefts, culpable homicide, rioting, kidnappings, robberies, rapes, breach of trust and missing persons registered a substantial rise, according to the report. The district recorded 47 house burglaries during the day and 132 burglaries at night in 2025, compared to 24 daytime burglaries and 194 night burglaries in 2024. Ordinary theft cases rose to 419 this year from 194 in the previous year. Cheating cases jumped to 655 in 2025 from 255 in 2024, registering an increase of 241 per cent.

Mamata govt 'abetting infiltration' from Bangladesh, says Shah: 'It has become a national issue'

GNS News Agency, Dec 30

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday alleged that the Mamata Banerjee-led government in West Bengal was abetting the "infiltration" of Bangladeshi migrants for electoral gains, and said the "issue" had now gone beyond the state and become one of national security. Addressing a press conference in Kolkata, Shah also rejected allegations of any "setting" or understanding between the BJP and the Trinamool Congress. "BJP never makes relations with those who give shelter to ghuspetias (intruders)," he said. Shah is in West Bengal on a three-day visit to meet party workers and leaders.

Shah said the BJP would "drive out illegal immigrants once it comes to power" in West Bengal, adding that people in the state are "anxious" about infiltration. "Unable to complete fencing across border because of state govt," Mamata Banerjee is abetting the infiltration of Bangladeshi for electoral benefit," Shah said. "We will not only identify infiltrators, but we will also drive them out," he added. He said the BJP would "stop infiltration" from the eastern borders and ensure the "revitalisation of Bengal" once it comes to power. Shah alleged that the Centre had been unable to complete fencing along the India-Bangladesh border as the West Bengal government was not providing the required land. "Ghuspetia (infiltration) is not only a problem of West Bengal anymore. This has gone beyond that. It is now a question of national security," he said. Shah also claimed that the BJP would form the next government in West Bengal with a two-thirds majority, though he did not speculate on the number of seats.

He alleged that the TMC had surpassed the Left in institutionalising politics of fear and violence. "People of Bengal have resolved to replace fear, corruption and misgovernance with good governance," Shah said. He further alleged that over 300 BJP workers had been killed and more than 3,000 were still unable to return to their homes. "They are being pressured that they will be allowed to return only if they carry the TMC flag," he said. Shah said several top TMC leaders had been jailed on charges of corruption.



tion, with machines used to count recovered cash malfunctioning due to overheating. "People of Bengal have given Congress, Left and TMC opportunities to govern. Now I appeal to them to give BJP a chance," he said. On economy, Shah alleged that the state had seen an "unprecedented slide", with industries leaving due to misgovernance. When asked about delays in Kolkata Metro projects, Shah said the work was stalled due to the state government's failure to provide land. "I have written seven letters to Mamataji. In the last six years, the Home Secretary has come to West Bengal for three meetings. Why is the Trinamool government not giving land?" he asked. Shah addressed the Matua community, saying that the voting rights of those who have applied for citizenship under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act would be protected. "The people from the Matua community have nothing to worry about. Every refugee who has come to India will be treated as a citizen. This is the BJP's promise. No one can harm them, not even Mamata Banerjee," he said, adding that protection for refugees would continue alongside action against infiltrators. Asked about expelled TMC MLA Humayun Kabir's claim about building a Babri Masjid-style mosque in Murshidabad and the state government's plans to build temples, Shah said, "Who is doing the politics of temples and mosques in Bengal? An MLA who quit Trinamool, and Trinamool itself. The time has come for the people of Bengal to understand who is right."

Nava Bharat Energy distributes 250 desks to government schools in Kothagudem

GNS News Agency, Dec 30

Kothagudem: As part of its corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes, Nava Bharat Energy India Limited of Paloncha, distributed desks to government schools for the benefit of students. As many as 250 desks were provided to seven government institutions in Paloncha, Manugur, Burgampahad and Tekulapally mandals in the district. District educational officer- ZP CEO, B Nagalakshmi attended an event at Paloncha on Tuesday and handed over desks and the related documents to the authorities.

Speaking on the occasion, Nagalakshmi referring to the contributions made by Nava Bharat to different government schools said that the company has provided science laboratories and experimental equipment to several government schools. Skilled teachers were also appointed to provide computer education to students and organised free tuition classes. The DEO further added that when students in 39 government schools were facing difficulties due to the lack of toilets, Nava Bharat provided them with washrooms and hand wash facilities. She com-



mended Nava Bharat for undertaking many programmes for the benefit of the students. Later, Nava Bharat Limited general manager (CSR) MGM Prasad explained the activities undertaken by the company in government schools so far. He informed that the company has provided as many as 4,500 desks to several government schools in the district. MEO Srinivasa Murthy, Nava Bharat School Principal NVK Prasad, Nava Bharat High School headmistress P Jyothi, Rajeshwara Rao and Rajesh were present.

Defence Ministry inks 4,666-crore contracts for battle carbines, torpedoes

Systems Pvt Ltd. The induction of these indigenously manufactured carbines marks the culmination of a long-standing effort to replace legacy small arms with modern, high-lethality weapons in line with the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' vision. Designed as a key component of the modern infantry arsenal, the CQB Carbine offers a compact design, high rate of fire and enhanced lethality, providing a decisive advantage in close-combat and confined-space operations. The project also underscores growing government-private sector synergy, strengthening the Make in India initiative while boosting employment, supporting MSMEs, and deepening India's indigenous defence manufacturing ecosystem, the Ministry added. The second contract, valued at approximately ₹1,896 crore, was signed with WASS Submarine Systems S.R.L., Italy for the procurement and integration of 48 Heavyweight Torpedoes along with associated equipment for the Indian Navy's Kalvari Class (Project-75) submarines. The acquisition will significantly enhance the combat capability of the Navy's six submarines under the class. Officials said delivery of the heavyweight torpedoes is scheduled to commence from April 2028 and will be completed by early 2030. Equipped with advanced technological features and robust operational capabilities, the torpedoes will strengthen the Navy's underwater warfare prowess. The latest acquisitions underline the Government's commitment to meeting the evolving operational requirements of the Armed Forces through the induction of advanced and niche technologies. In the Financial Year 2025-26, the Ministry of Defence has so far signed capital acquisition contracts worth ₹1,82,492 crore, reflecting a sustained focus on the modernisation and indigenisation of India's defence forces.



GNS News Agency, Dec 30

The Ministry of Defence on Tuesday (December 30, 2025) signed defence procurement contracts worth ₹4,666 crore for the acquisition of Close Quarter Battle (CQB) Carbines for the Indian Army and Navy and Heavyweight Torpedoes for the Indian Navy, in a major push towards modernisation and operational preparedness of the Armed Forces. The contracts were inked in the presence of Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh at South Block, New Delhi, officials said.

According to Ministry of Defence, under the first contract, over 4.25 lakh CQB Carbines along with accessories, valued at ₹2,770 crore, will be procured for the Indian Army and the Indian Navy from Bharat Forge Ltd and PLR

Fake identity angle deepens iBomma piracy case

Hyderabad: The 'iBomma' piracy case, which has created a stir across the Telugu states, has taken a dramatic turn with investigators uncovering shocking details about the prime suspect Immandi (Emmandi) Ravi's fake identity. The Hyderabad Cybercrime Police probing the case have found that Ravi allegedly operated his large-scale piracy network using forged identity documents belonging to an unsuspecting individual.

He further claimed that though he possessed a Caribbean Island citizenship, he was staying in Kukatpally in Hyderabad and did not go absconding as claimed by the police.

Seven killed, 12 injured as bus falls into gorge in Almora

GNS News Agency, Dec 30

Dehradun: Seven people were killed and about 12 injured after a bus fell into a gorge in Uttarakhand's Almora district, police said on Tuesday. The accident occurred in the Bhikiyasain area when the bus was en route to Ramnagar in Nainital from Dwarahat in Almora, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Devendra Pincha said. According to the SSP, 18 to 19 passengers were on board when the driver lost control of the vehicle, and it fell into a gorge, six kilometres ahead of Bhikiyasain. Upon receiving information about the accident, the police, along with State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) teams, reached the spot and launched rescue and relief operations, he said. Six people died on the spot in the accident, while another succumbed to injuries on the way to hospital, the officer added.

SSP Pincha said 12 people, including the driver, were injured in the accident and rescued from the gorge. The injured were admitted to the hospital. Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami expressed grief over the loss of lives in the accident. In a Facebook post in Hindi, Dhami said, "I pray to God for the speedy recovery of all the injured. The entire



incident is being continuously monitored, and I am in constant contact with the local administrative officials." "I pray to God for the peace of the departed souls and strength to their grieving families to bear this immense loss," he added. The chief minister in his post also said that the injured passengers have been admitted to nearby hospitals by the district administration, and those seriously injured have been referred to higher medical centres for better treatment.

Harish Rao slams Congress govt's delayed Supreme Court move on Andhra's Polavaram-Nallamala Sagar link project

GNS News Agency, Dec 30

Hyderabad: Former Irrigation Minister T Harish Rao on Tuesday mounted a scathing attack on the Congress government, accusing it of an inordinate and suspicious delay in approaching the Supreme Court and in a manner that was 'shallow and deceptive' on the Polavaram-Nallamala Sagar link project. Harish Rao said the Telangana government filed a case in the Supreme Court only on December 16, after the Andhra Pradesh government had already floated tenders for the Polavaram-Nallamala Sagar project and after the December 11 deadline for submission of bids had elapsed. He alleged that the legal move was meant only to mislead the people of Telangana and create a false impression of resistance.

Contradicting its own claim of opposing the project, the Congress government went on to constitute a committee on December 23 to resolve technical issues related to the project, a step that would fatally weaken Telangana's case in the apex court, he said. The Centre, he argued, would easily inform the Supreme Court that the Revanth Reddy government had agreed to the project and even constituted a committee to address concerns amicably.

Laying out documents, Harish Rao said the Central Water Commission had on July 31 this year already accorded approvals for the Polavaram-Banakacherla project, which was now "repackaged" as Polavaram-Nallamala Sagar project. The permissions included those to divert 200 tmcft of Godavari waters to Andhra Pradesh. Even five months later, and despite Andhra Pradesh floating tenders, the government led by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy remained either unaware or willfully silent, he charged.

Branding Revanth Reddy a Telangana agitation traitor and a facilitator for Andhra Pradesh, Harish Rao demanded that the Chief Minister stage a dharna at the Prime Minister's



Office, the Jal Shakti Ministry or Jantar Mantar in New Delhi to oppose the clearances. "The Bharat Rashtra Samithi will extend all support in protecting Telangana's interest. The KCR government secured 940 tmcft River Godavari waters but the Revanth Reddy government is enabling exploitation of Telangana's rightful share by Andhra Pradesh," Harish Rao said at a press conference here.

He recalled that when the Centre refused to procure paddy, BRS chief K Chandrashekhar Rao had staged a protest in New Delhi. In contrast, even as Andhra Pradesh moved swiftly to secure approvals and float tenders, the Revanth Reddy government failed to act decisively to protect Telangana's interests, he alleged. The former Minister demanded that the Congress government immediately scrap the committee headed by former Andhra Pradesh Chief Secretary Adityanath Das, arguing that the appointment of Das itself exposed the government's intent. He noted that Das had earlier served as Andhra Pradesh Irrigation Secretary and had also filed a case in the National Green Tribunal against the Palamuru Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme.

Large number of devotees congregate at Bhadrachalam temple for 'Uttara Dwara Darshanam'



GNS News Agency, Dec 30

Kothagudem: Devotees in large numbers witnessed the ritual of 'Uttara Dwara Darshanam' at Sri Seetha Ramachandra Swamy Devasthanam at Bhadrachalam in the district on Tuesday. The ritual was performed with grandeur as part of Mukkoti Vaikunta Ekadashi celebrations. Special pujas started at 5 am at the temple and priests explained the significance of Uttara Dwara Darshanam (northern entrance of the temple) also described as 'Vaikunta Dwaram'. At 6 am the Vaikunta Dwaram was opened for the devotees to have darshanam of the presiding deities as the temple priests chanted Kodandapani kirtan. Special arrangements have been made for the convenience of the devotees.

Former vice president Dhankhar yet to get govt accommodation

GNS News Agency, Dec 30

New Delhi: Jagdeep Dhankhar, who quit as vice president in July, is yet to be provided with an official residence, people close to him said on Tuesday. Citing health reasons, Dhankhar quit as the vice president on July 21, the first day of the Monsoon Session of Parliament this year. Weeks later, in September, he vacated the Vice President's Enclave, the official residence of the vice president, and moved to a private farmhouse in south Delhi's Chhatarpur area. The farmhouse in the Gadaipur area of Chhatarpur belongs to INLD leader Abhay Chautala. On August 22, Dhankhar wrote to the Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, requesting an official residence entitled to former vice presidents. "But so far, he has not been provided with an accommodation he is entitled to," a person close to him pointed out. As a former vice president, Dhankhar is entitled to a pension of nearly Rs 2 lakh per month, a type VIII bungalow, one personal secretary, one additional personal secretary, one personal assistant, one physician, one nursing officer, and four personal attendants. After a former vice president dies, his or her spouse is entitled to a smaller type VII house.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Shattered lives—the human cost of India's migrants

Homebound, India's official entry for the 2026 Oscars in the International Feature Film category, captures the stark reality of internal migrant workers; men and women packed into overcrowded trains, labouring in hazardous factories, and surviving in cramped, makeshift settlements at the edges of our cities. What may appear to some as cinematic dramatisation is, in fact, an everyday truth. For any conscious citizen, these scenes are painfully familiar, echoing real bodies, real tragedies, and real despair.

The struggles of migrant labourers, their silent endurance, health issues and broken dreams reveal a harsh truth that in today's India, the search for a 'better life' still remains a cruel and dangerous gamble to many. In spite of their vital contribution to India's economy, internal migrants continue to face severe health vulnerabilities and inadequate protection, demanding policy and humanitarian attention. The scale of internal migration in India is staggering. The 2020–21 MoSPI survey shows that about 28.9% of Indians are internal migrants, with around 26.5% in rural areas and a significantly higher proportion in urban regions. Of these, roughly 10.8% move primarily in search of work and livelihood. Current estimates place the overall number of domestic migrants at nearly 40 crore people — a massive population whose survival depends on stable employment, safety, and access to basic services. Despite their vital contribution to the economy, the search for a 'better life' remains a cruel and dangerous gamble for migrants. While international migration is often driven by war, conflict, persecution, and geopolitical instability, migration within India has largely been a struggle for basic living.

Chiluka Nagar Corporator Bannala Geetha Praveen Offers Vaikuntha Dwara Darshan of Sri Venkateswara Swamy

““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 30 (Indian Chronicle):““On the auspicious occasion of Vaikuntha Ekadashi, Chiluka Nagar Division Corporator and former GHMC Standing Committee Member Bannala Geetha Praveen Mudiraj offered special prayers and had Vaikuntha Dwara Darshan of Sri Venkateswara Swamy. As part of the religious observances, she visited



the Thene Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple at Beerappa Gadda, Chiluka Nagar, and the Kanigiri Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple in Uppal Division, along with TRS (BRS) party leaders of the division. Speaking on the occasion, Bannala Geetha Praveen stated that she prayed for the divine blessings of Lord Venkateswara, the presiding deity of Kaliyuga, to be bestowed upon all the people of the Uppal constituency, bringing peace, prosperity, and welfare. The programme was attended by Edula Kondal Reddy, Kokonda Jagan, Masa Shekhar, Rajeshwar Reddy, Balakrishna Goud, Balu, Muddham Srinivas Yadav, Pochayya, Shyam, Jilla Praveen, Ponna Mahender, temple committee members Srinivas, Anand, Pitla Srinivas, Indrasena Reddy, Satyanarayana Temple Committee members, along with BRS party leaders and their family members.

Corporator Jeripothula Prabhudas Unveils Calendar

““Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, December 30:““Corporator Jeripothula Prabhudas attended as the chief guest and unveiled the 2026 New Year calendar at the Sri Vighneswara Swamy, Panchamukha Anjaneya Swamy, and Sri Panduranga Swamy Temple Rukmini Devi located in Annapurna Colony mallapur. “Temple Committee President Gopi Rajeshwar Patel, General Secretary Pandala Narasimha Goud, Sanjay Naik, Madhu, Prem Sagar, Shyam, Bonala Srinivas, Vijay Goud, Shankar Goud, along with leaders Enumula Mahesh, Shailesh Reddy, Sai Kumar, Chandrashekhar Goud, Dandem Narendra, and others participated in the program.

Special Pujas by Parameshwar Reddy Couple at Sri Karigiri Venkateswara Swamy Temple



““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 30 (Indian Chronicle):““On the occasion of Vaikuntha Ekadashi, special prayers were performed at the Sri Karigiri

Venkateswara Swamy Temple located in Swaroop Nagar, Uppal. Uppal Assembly Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy and Uppal Corporator Mandumula Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy offered special pujas to Lord Venkateswara. The couple participated in the sacred Uttara Dwara Darshanam and performed special rituals seeking divine blessings. Temple authorities and priests including Srinivas Sharma, Venkateswara Panthulu, and Srinivas Panthulu conducted the religious ceremonies. Colony President Srinivas Goud, along with Modugu Shekhar Reddy, Modugu Mohan Reddy, and members of the Sri Karigiri Venkateswara Swamy Temple Committee—Baikumalla Ramesh Gupta, Srinivas Reddy, Satti Reddy, Anand Prabhu, Hanumanth, Shamirpet Rakesh Reddy, Bhaskar Reddy, Narasimha Chari, Pawan Kumar, Anji Reddy, Madhukar Reddy, Tummala Devender Reddy, Ganeswar Gupta, Santosh, Sarayya, Venkateswarlu, Anjaneyulu Goud, Anand, Santosh, and Chari Raghavender—were present on the occasion.

Paramita Students Excel in National-Level Physics Examination



““Karimnagar Carraspandent, December 30, INDIAN CHRONICLE:““Chavata Venkata Mokshith and Gampa Sahasra, Class X students of Paramita Heritage School, Padmanagar, have brought laurels to their institution by excelling in the National Standard Examination in Physics (NSEP), recently conducted by the Indian As-

sociation of Physics Teachers (IAPT). “Based on their outstanding performance, the students have been selected for the Indian National Physics Olympiad (INPhO)—2026, which will be conducted by the Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education (HBCSE), Mumbai, in February 2026, according to the school Principal, Gopi Krishna. “It is noteworthy that out of nearly 12,000 students who participated from Telangana State in these competitive examinations, only 18 students qualified for INPhO—2026, and two among them are from Paramita Heritage School. “On this occasion, the achievers were felicitated along with their guide teachers Chandramouli Sharma and Srinivas. The Chairman of Paramita Educational Institutions, Dr. E. Prasada Rao, along with Directors Prasuna, Anukar Rao, Rashmita, Rakesh, V.U.M. Prasad, Vinod Rao, Hanmanth Rao, Principal Gopi Krishna, and Coordinators Nagaraju and Ramu, congratulated the students for their remarkable achievement and wished them success in future competitions.

Ramanthapur Division Congress President Mohammed Rafiq Visits Indranagar Colony



““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 30 (Indian Chronicle):““At the invitation of local residents, Ramanthapur Division Congress Party President Mohammed Rafiq conducted a Praja Bata (public outreach) programme on Tuesday in Indranagar Colony, Ramanthapur Division, along with Electricity Department Assistant Engineer A.E. Lavanya and Line Inspector Sariaah. “The programme received an overwhelming response from the residents. Locals shared their grievances and day-to-day problems with the leaders. They appealed for the replacement of damaged electric poles, removal of low-hanging electricity wires obstructing the road, and the early laying of proper roads in the colony. “Speaking on the occasion, Mohammed Rafiq assured the residents that all the issues would be brought to the notice of Uppal Congress Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy. He further stated that he would coordinate with concerned officials and strive for a permanent solution to the problems at the earliest. Residents including Pussa Satyiah, Chikka Satyanarayana, Adinarayana Goud, Mallikarjun, Vinay, Vinod Charay, Poosa Balaraj, Angala Sandeep, Balam Srinivas, Mohammed Shakeel, Sangeetha, Jayashree, Devender Reddy, Ganti K. Saritha, Ashok, Gangaputra Shekhar, Vinay, Mohan, Besta Bhaskar, Mogili Lingam, Ganda Ramesh, Mohammed Nayeem, Buggapati Paramesh, Soori, Icon Madhu, Swami Sai, and several others participated in the programme.

Former MLA N.V.S.S. PRABHAKAR Performs Special Prayers at Sri Rama Sahita Satyanarayana Swamy Temple



““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 30 (Indian Chronicle):““On the occasion of Vaikuntha Ekadashi, former Uppal MLA N.V.S.S. Prabhakar offered special

prayers at the Sri Rama Sahita Satyanarayana Swamy Temple located in Indiranagar, Ramanthapur. “Prabhakar entered the temple through the Uttara Dwaram (northern entrance) and performed special rituals, as per tradition. Speaking on the occasion, he said that on Vaikuntha Ekadashi, the gates of Vaikuntha (the abode of Lord Vishnu) are believed to open, and devotees who have darshan through the northern gate are said to attain moksha (salvation). He extended Vaikuntha Ekadashi greetings to all devotees. The programme was attended by Ramanthapur Corporator Bandaru Srivani, Ramanthapur Division President Vangala Santosh Gupta, Medchal District Council Member Thalla Balakrishna Goud, along with temple committee members and devotees in large numbers.

Corporator Bandaru Srivani Venkatrao Pays Courtesy Visit to Uppal Zonal Commissioner

““KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 30 (Indian Chronicle):““After the formation of the Uppal Zone, Radhika Gupta assumed charge as the Zonal Commissioner. On Tuesday, Ramanthapur Corporator Bandaru Srivani Venkatrao paid a courtesy visit to the newly ap-



pointed Zonal Commissioner, felicitated her, and extended warm greetings. On this occasion, the Corporator brought several division-related issues to the notice of the Zonal Commissioner and discussed matters concerning local civic administration. Uppal Deputy Commissioner Raju, BJP senior leaders Bandaru Venkatrao, Muttineni Jagadish (Censor Board Member), Sankuri Kumaraswamy, and others were present during the meeting.

Greater Leaders Participate in Vaikuntha Ekadashi Special Prayers



““Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, December 30:““On the occasion of Vaikuntha Ekadashi, Greater leader Nemali Anil Kumar along with his spouse offered Uttara Dwara Darshan and participated in special prayers at Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple located in Mangapuram Colony, H.B. Colony Division.

Darshan Through Uttar Dwaram on Vaikuntha Ekadashi Brings Great Merit: Talasani Srinivas Yadav

Indian Chronicle, Secunderabad, December 30:““Former Minister and Sanathnagar MLA Talasani Srinivas Yadav stated that devotees attain immense spiritual merit by having darshan of Lord Venkateswara through the sacred Uttar Dwaram on the auspicious occasion of Vaikuntha Ekadashi. “On Tuesday, marking Vaikuntha



Ekadashi, the MLA visited the Sri Kalyana Venkateswara Swamy Temple at Namalagundu in Secunderabad. He had darshan of the Lord through the Uttar Dwaram and participated in special prayers conducted on the occasion. “After the rituals, Temple Chairman Nomula Prakash felicitated MLA Talasani Srinivas Yadav. Speaking on the occasion, the MLA noted that devotees had gathered in large numbers at temples from the early hours of the morning to seek the blessings of the Lord. “He appreciated Chairman Nomula Prakash and other temple committee members for making special arrangements that enabled devotees—who are unable to visit Tirupati and have darshan of Lord Venkateswara, revered as the living deity of the Kali Yuga—to experience a similar spiritual atmosphere here. “Students dressed in various traditional and devotional costumes added special attraction to the celebrations. “Corporator Samala Hema, Lashkar District Sadhana Samithi President Gurram Pawan Kumar Goud, General Secretary Sadam Balraj Yadav, and leaders Shailesh, Karate Raju, Balaji Rajesh, Baburao, Mallikarjun and others accompanied the MLA.

Genuine journalists will not face injustice...

Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy-Telangana Journalists' Associations JAC meets the Minister



“(Mandava Srisailam, Hyderabad, Indian Chronicle, December 30): “State Information and Public Relations Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy said that more media accreditation cards will be issued in Telangana than in the past, and that genuine journalists will not be subjected to any injustice during his government's tenure. He said that journalists need not worry about GO 252 regarding accreditations, and that if there are any errors, they will be rectified soon after meeting with journalists' associations. On Tuesday, leaders of the Telangana Journalists' Associations Joint Action Committee (TJA JAC) met Minister Ponguleti at the State Secretariat and requested him to amend GO 252 and resolve other problems faced by journalists. On this occasion, the Minister said that the government will hold discussions with all journalists' associations very soon, and another GO will be issued after considering everyone's opinions. He said that many welfare schemes will be provided in phases to both desk journalists and field journalists. On this occasion, the committee representatives submitted memorandums containing several demands to Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy and the Special Commissioner of the Information and Public Relations Department, Ch. Priyanka. They requested that the objections in the guidelines of GO 252 recently issued by the state government be rectified before the notification, and that accreditation cards be issued to every journalist, including those from small newspapers, cable channels, and other publications not currently empanelled, taking into account their seniority.

Celebrate Mukoti Ekadashi with grandeur



Secunderabad Cantonment. December 30 (Indian Chronicle): “On the occasion of Vaikuntha Ekadashi, Bowenpally New City Venkateswara Swamy Temple was filled with the chanting of Govinda Govinda by devotees. As the gates of the Vaikuntha Temple doors were opened from three o'clock in the morning on Tuesday, the temple premises were crowded with devotees. On the occasion of the celebrations, the priests performed kainkaryas privately at the base of the temple. The priests opened the gates of Vaikuntha after conducting special pujas. Devotees were allowed to have darshan from 5 am. The devotees expressed their happiness that the temple committee members made all the arrangements without causing any disturbance to the devotees. On the occasion of Vaikuntha Ekadashi, the temple is beautifully decorated with green flowers with electric lamp lights. Devotees strongly believe that having a darshan of Lord Swami through the northern gate on Vaikuntha Ekadashi (Mukoti Ekadashi) is the most auspicious and that all sins are destroyed and salvation is attained. The temple committee members made arrangements to meet the rush of devotees. To prevent any incident, the police made a heavy security and allowed the devotees to have darshan in the queue line. After that, the devotees were served hot milk along with Tirdha Prasad. Narayana, Laxman, Yadaiah Jagannatham, Ram Mohan, Sumanth Reddy Pawan, Deepak, Sridhar and others participated in the program.

Special Prayers by Parameshwar Reddy Couple at Sri Sita Ramachandra Swamy Temple



Party In-charge Mandumula Parameshwar Reddy, along with Uppal Corporator Rajitha Parameshwar Reddy, offered special prayers to the Lord. The couple had the Uttara Dwara Darshan and conducted special rituals for the deity. Temple management members Motkuri Raghavadas Sharma, Motkuri Krishna Sharma, Motkuri Prasad, Motkuri Harish Vijayendra, Motkuri Akshay Sharma, Neeluri Mallikarjun Sharma, and Salla Prabhakar Reddy were present and participated in the program.

“(KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, December 30 (Indian Chronicle): “On the occasion of Vaikuntha Ekadashi, special prayers were performed at the Sri Sita Ramachandra Swamy Temple located in Sri Rama Colony, Uppal. Uppal Assembly Constituency Congress

Unidentified Dead Body Found Under Rail Overbridge in Kagaznagar

“(Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, December 30 (Indian Chronicle): “An unidentified dead body was found at around 7:00 a.m. on Wednesday in a municipal drain located beneath the Rail Overbridge in Kagaznagar. During preliminary investigation, it was revealed that the deceased had reportedly been wandering naked in the area for the past three days. Police suspect that the individual was mentally unstable. The deceased is believed to be approximately 65 to 70 years of age. The identity of the deceased is yet to be established. Police have appealed to the public to come forward with any information that may help identify the person. Those with relevant details may contact Kagaznagar Town Police Station at the following numbers: Rs 87126 70572 (Sub-Inspector, Kagaznagar) ?? 87126 70507 (Inspector, Kagaznagar). Further investigation is underway.

Golden Jubilee Service Initiative: Blankets Distributed to the Needy at Manthani



“(P.S. ASHOKAN KARIMNGAR BUREAU: “On the auspicious occasion of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations, the Gopa Gowda Seva Sangham, Manthani Division Committee, organized a humanitarian service programme at Sri Renuka Yellamma Temple and the Gowda Sangham, Manthani. “As part of this noble initiative, blankets were distributed to 50 underprivileged beneficiaries, reaffirming the spirit of compassion and social responsibility. The programme was conducted with the generous

financial support of Errabelli Venkateswara Rao, Member of the State Committee of the Indian Red Cross Society, and donor, along with Kaveti Rajagopal, Chairman of IRCS Peddapalli. “The organizers expressed heartfelt gratitude to the donors and all those who contributed to the success of the programme. The initiative stood as a meaningful reminder that service to humanity is service to the Divine. “Manava Sevayam Madhava Seva” — Compassion in action remains the highest form of devotion.

Underground drainage in Bhuvanagiri Housing Board Colony.

.. It is regrettable that the roads that were dug up are not being patched up with CC roads:

- Padamati Jagannath Reddy, State General Secretary, BJP Kisan Morcha



“(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... December 30): “Regarding the irregularities and public issues in Bhuvanagiri town, particularly in the Bhuvanagiri Housing Board Colony, people are facing many difficulties because the roads that were dug up for the underground drainage system are not being patched up with CC roads. A demand was made to resolve this issue immediately. Similarly, the open gym, which was established during our tenure in 2018 at a cost of 12 lakh rupees, has become dilapidated, and all the equipment is damaged. A request was made to repair them immediately. Also, a large park was established in the Sardar Patel Park Housing Board Colony. That park has completely dried up, and

the environment is no longer suitable for children to play in. A request was made to immediately plant trees and grass to make it beautiful again. It was warned that if these problems are not resolved immediately, the municipal office will be besieged by the public in the next two or three days. This program was organized under the leadership of Bhongir BJP town president Rathnapuram Balaram, and was attended by former councilor and BJP Kisan Morcha state general secretary Padamati Jagannath Reddy, BJP town general secretary Udutha Bhaskar, Nalla Maas Venkatesh, former councilor Narasimha Chary, Ashok, town Yuva Morcha president Kotesh, Rathnapuram Srisailam, Santhu, and other leaders.

Komatireddy Congratulates WJI Karimnagar District Executive Committee



“(P.S. ASHOKAN KARIMNGAR BUREAU: “The Chairman of the Satavahana Urban Development Authority (SUDA), Komatireddy Narendar Reddy, extended his heartfelt congratulations to the newly elected district executive committee of the Working Journalists of India (WJI), Karimnagar. “Led by WJI President Dharam Jagannath Reddy, the delegation comprising Secretary Gudala Srinivas, Treasurer Chitimala Mahender, Joint Secretaries D. S. Prasad and Ramesh, along with other members, paid a courtesy visit to Mr. Narendar Reddy at his residence on Tuesday. On the occasion, he was felicitated by the WJI representatives. “Speaking at the meeting, Mr. Narendar Reddy assured the journalists of his full cooperation in addressing issues related to the

media fraternity. He enquired in detail about the progress of pending journalists' housing plots in the town and emphasized that it is the government's intention to ensure that all eligible journalists receive due benefits. “He further stated that the WJI executive committee is welcome to bring any journalists' issues to his notice and assured that he would make every possible effort to resolve them. Expressing optimism, he said he hopes the newly formed WJI executive will not only work for the welfare of journalists but also actively participate in public welfare programmes. “District Union executive members Puli Santosh Goud, Ramakrishna, and leader Mailaram Tirupati were also present at the programme.

Stay Alert, Act Firmly: SP Nitika Pant After Surprise Inspections of Police Stations



“(Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, December 30 (Indian Chronicle): “District Superintendent of Police Nitika Pant, IPS, on Wednesday carried out surprise inspections of Easgaon, Penchikalpet and Dahegaon police stations, accompanied by Kagaznagar DSP Wahiduddin. The SP assessed station infrastructure, records, pending

case status, attendance registers and cleanliness. In meetings with SHOs and staff, she stressed heightened vigilance and accountability in maintaining law and order. “Directing police to crack down on anti-social activities, illegal transport and drug trafficking, SP Pant underlined the need for proactive policing at the village level. She instructed personnel to ensure respectful interaction with complainants and the public. “Special emphasis was laid on women's and girls' safety, with orders for strict night surveillance and uninterrupted patrolling. The SP made it clear that those disturbing public peace would be dealt with firmly under the law. — District Police Department, Kumram Bheem Asifabad

'Acting on BJP's instructions': TMC MP Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar slams EC after family members summoned for SIR hearing



GNS News Agency, Dec 30

Trinamool Congress MP Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar on Saturday hit out at the Election Commission (EC) and alleged that it was acting at the behest of the BJP after four members of her family, including her mother and sons, were summoned for a hearing following the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the state. Dastidar's 90-year-old mother, Ira Mitra, sons Biswanath and Baidyanath, and sister Piyali Mitra are among the 32 lakh voters who have been summoned by the EC across the state for the primary hearing. While her sons are voters of South Kolkata, her mother and sister are voters from Madhyamgram in the North 24 Parganas district.

"The EC is acting on the instructions of the BJP. My mother and sister have been voters in the same booth where I am registered. My sons are well-known doctors... their names have also been left out. My family members are genuine voters. They are Indian citizens and have been voting for many years now," Dastidar told the media. The SIR hearings to determine whether lakhs of voters will remain on the electoral rolls began across West Bengal on Saturday. Veteran BJP leader Rahul Sinha said the EC would have summoned them because of "some mismatch" in their documents. "They just have to attend the hearing and clarify why their names could not be mapped. There is no need to see conspiracy behind everything," Sinha said. TMC delegation meets election officials A Trinamool Congress delegation, including Chandrima Bhattacharya, Dr Manas Ranjan Bhunia, Moloy Ghatak,

Alert issued over leopard sighting in Panchkula; rescue teams deploy drones



GNS News Agency, Dec 30

A leopard was sighted in an upscale residential locality in Haryana's Panchkula on Saturday afternoon, prompting the authorities to issue an alert in the locality and its surrounding areas. The leopard was reportedly spotted around noon at an under-construction house in Sector 6, which also houses government offices, including the police headquarters. As sighting triggered panic among residents, teams from the forest department and Haryana Police arrived at the scene to capture the animal. A joint operation is currently underway and residents have been urged to stay indoors for their safety.

Officials have deployed a drone to track the leopard's exact position. "The use of the drone is expected to assist in monitoring the leopard's movements and facilitate a safer rescue operation," a police officer said. The incident occurred a day after a leopard had entered a house in Dabla village in the nearby Morni area. The house owners were awakened by the loud barking of a dog. Residents then raised an alarm, prompting the leopard to retreat into the jungle. leopard, Panchkula, Haryana, Sector 6, residential locality. As sighting triggered panic among residents, teams from the forest department and Haryana Police arrived at the scene to cap-

Mamata Banerjee 'strongly' condemns violence against Bengali migrant workers after 19-year-old lynched in Odisha



GNS News Agency, Dec 30

Reacting to the recent killing of a 19-year-old migrant worker from West Bengal in Odisha, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Saturday condemned violence against Bengali-speaking people in other states. "We strongly condemn the brutal oppression and persecution that has descended upon Bengali-speaking people in every BJP-ruled state. We stand by those oppressed, terrified, and tortured migrant Bengali-speaking families, and we will provide all kinds of support to those families," Banerjee wrote on X. Banerjee pledged financial compensation for the families of the deceased. "No value can compensate for human lives, but in cases where deaths have occurred, we remain committed to economic compensation," she said. While noting the lynching of Jewel Sheikh, 19, in Shantinagar, Odisha, Banerjee said migrant workers in Murshidabad are returning home, fearing persecution. "Very recently, various forms of oppression have descended upon some migrant workers from the Jangipur area in the BJP-ruled Odisha state. It is extremely unfortunate that a young migrant worker from the Suti area of Jangipur was beaten to death in Sambalpur on December 24th. Migrant workers in Murshidabad are returning home terrified from Odisha. In this heartbreaking incident, we stand with the families, and our financial assistance to the family of the deceased will also reach them," she said. Odisha has seen a large number of detentions and assaults against Bengali-speaking people during its drive against alleged illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, with more than 500 incidents recorded. On the evening of December 24, Sheikh, a migrant labourer from Murshidabad, was lynched in Sambalpur district of Odisha when he was returning from work.

"When a regime rules through fear and brute force,

According to one of the eight migrant workers from Murshidabad who was present during the attack, the altercation broke out at a tea stall. A group of people asked Jewel for a bidi. Then they started asking for Aadhaar cards and where we were from. We showed our Aadhaar cards. Suddenly, they came armed with bamboo sticks and started beating us. Jewel was hit on the head. Others were also injured." The attackers reportedly labelled Jewel a Bangladeshi. He was reportedly the only earning member of his family, earning a daily wage of Rs 600. He left home on December 20. His mortal remains reached Bahadurpur village on Friday, where thousands, including local leaders of the Trinamool Congress and Congress, were present. Six persons have been arrested in connection with the incident. "In all these incidents in BJP-ruled states, our condemnation of the perpetrators and our promise of all kinds of help for the oppressed remain. Speaking the Bengali language cannot be a crime. In the matter of the deceased young Jewel Rana,

A day after Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan raised allegations of "bulldozer raj" in Karnataka after around 300 families were evicted from Bengaluru's Faqir Colony and Waseem Layout, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar advised him against issuing statements without ascertaining facts. Speaking to reporters on Saturday, Shivakumar said that an eviction drive was carried out to remove people who had encroached on government land which was notified for solid waste management. "It is a quarry pit, a dangerous place with a lot of health hazards. They tried to occupy it illegally," the Congress leader said. On Friday, commenting on last week's eviction, Vijayan had posted on X: "The bulldozing of Faqir Colony and Waseem Layout in Bengaluru, uprooting Muslim families who have lived there for years, exposes the brutal normalisation of 'bulldozer raj'." Sadly, the Sangh Parivar's anti-minority politics is now being executed under a Congress Government in... "We are not into bulldozer (justice). We have not done anything using bulldozers. We tried to vacate (the encroachers) and protect the public place," Shivakumar said, adding that Vijayan should not comment about the matter "without knowing the facts... These are political gimmicks ahead of state elections (in Kerala)." Shivakumar stated that if the displaced individuals had valid documents, the government would sanction them houses. "If anyone wants houses, definitely we will give them. We have planned lakhs of houses. Talks are on to rehabilitate those who are genuinely affected, but not to those who just want to occupy gov-

Jadavpur University in Bengal faces heat over 'hijab check' on student during exam; 'Looking into matter,' says V-C



GNS News Agency, Dec 30

According to the TMC delegation, hearings were supposed to begin on December 17 and were then deferred to the 23rd because on both occasions, they alleged, the EC was not ready. "Now, finally, hearings have started today. But how will those who have to travel from outside the state make arrangements, or manage school or work commitments, and complete this process in just five days? The real aim appears to be the removal of voters. The true aim of democracy is inclusion, but in the name of intensive verification, the ethos of inclusivity is being destroyed," said Bhattacharya. "A private agency is conducting a KAP survey — knowledge, attitude and practice. What does this mean? Why should voters be subjected to this kind of scrutiny?" the delegation questioned. They also questioned how the elderly had to travel long distances for the hearings. "In these hearings, people are being asked to travel 30-40 km. How will elderly citizens manage this? By walking? If anyone wants to register as a new voter, how will they do so? To whom will they submit the form? Are booth level officers (BLOs) sitting at the booths? And the app that has been launched is full of errors. Creating such an app is effectively the same as doing nothing. Our duty is to protect the electorate and their right to vote — not to ensure that they vote for the Trinamool Congress. This is about their rights and their agency," Bhattacharya said. The TMC delegation also alleged that the list of the 55 lakh names removed should be made public and easily accessible. "Why is it being hidden? Hearings have begun, yet multiple living persons, even councillors, have been declared dead," the delegation said.

The complainant was then allegedly examined in a separate room in the presence of the Head of the Department and a woman research scholar, but no electronic devices were recovered. 'Accused of cheating as she wore a hijab' letter subsequently written by the students of the En-

glish Department to Vice-Chancellor Chiranjib Bhattacharjee on the same day, alleged that during the exam, one of the students was "singled out and accused of cheating because she was wearing a hijab and the student was asked to unpin her hijab in the examination room amidst the presence of other students." Speaking to The Indian Express on Saturday, Bhattacharjee termed the incident "extremely unfortunate". "I have received a complaint and will be looking into the matter. Since the university is closed now and the next working day is December 29, we will possibly set up a fact-finding committee to ascertain the actual sequence of events," he said. to a university official, at least four students had been caught cheating during the semester examinations this year using headphones, and none of them were from the minority community. On the day of the alleged incident involving the woman student, another student wearing a hoodie was caught cheating by research scholars who were on invigilation duty. According to officials, invigilators only checked those students who appeared to act suspiciously. "There was another student wearing a hijab, but she was not checked. A physically disabled student wearing a hijab was also taking the exam at the library, but she was also not checked," said an official. Meanwhile, the Jadavpur Trinamool Chhatra Parishad submitted a letter to the V-C demanding an investigation into the matter. "The Constitution of India provides every citizen the right to practice, profess and propagate any religion of their choice. Expression of any sort of disrespect or intentional humiliation towards clothing choices of any student belonging to any religious community is grave violation of basic constitutional right," it said. "Bengal continues to resist communal inclinations in social, political and academic spaces, ensuring equality and brotherhood. We strongly demand before university authority to ensure immediate investigation of the entire incident and ensure that the victim's individual respect is not violated in the process," it said, while extending "complete solidarity" to the student and promising to continue its "fight to ensure that secular academic environment is not violated by any stakeholder."

Convenient, time-saving: Pune-Mumbai private helicopter services on rise amid airline disruptions, rising road congestion

GNS News Agency, Dec 30

Chartered helicopter services between Pune and Mumbai are witnessing a steady rise in demand, driven by worsening road congestion, rising corporate travel and recent disruptions in the operations of IndiGo airlines. Aviation operators said the sector, though niche, has expanded over the past few years, with 10 to 15 charter helicopters currently available for commercial operations between the two cities. Unlike scheduled flights, helicopter services in this sector operate entirely on an on-demand charter basis, allowing clients to choose flight timings based on convenience. Permission is taken from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) before each flight, and operators estimate that over 60 flight movements take place every month on the Pune-Mumbai corridor, with aircraft typically flying five to six days a week. "There are two categories of helicopters operating here, single-engine and twin-engine," said Ishwarchandra Gulgule, director of Kagi Aviation. "Single-engine helicopters are mostly used by businessmen, while twin-engine helicopters are used by ministers and VIPs protected by security."

Highlighting the efficiency of using chartered helicopters, he said: "My client had a meeting in Mumbai at 10 am. He took off from Pune at 8 am and reached Juhu before 9 am. The meeting ended at 12.30 pm, and he was back in Pune by 2 pm." He added that after the IndiGo crisis, more people are opting for private services.

Round-trip costs over Rs 4.5 lakh. According to operators, a single-engine helicopter for a Pune-Mumbai-Pune journey costs around Rs 4.5 lakh plus GST and can accommodate four to five passengers. Twin-engine helicopters can cost over Rs 8 lakh plus GST per trip, depending on aircraft availability and operational requirements. Some companies also offer empty-leg options (flying without passengers), with prices starting at around Rs 25,000. Vishwaraj Chakote, founder of Vishwaraj Aviation, said helicopter charters typically operate around three round-trips per week and are largely driven by time-sensitive travel needs. "People choose helicopters to avoid traffic and reach meetings on time. It is a premium service, but for those who value time, the cost becomes secondary," he said. Referring to the recent IndiGo disruptions, Chakote added, "We saw a clear shift from scheduled airlines to private aviation. When nearly 150 to 200 aircraft were grounded at Mumbai airport, helicopter travel emerged as a reliable alternative, reinforcing how this sector is rapidly evolving." Recalling his experience as a regular user of the service, medical practitioner Dr Sabir Shaikh said, "It's a great and very time-efficient service. I have used it several times myself, which is why I recommended it to my mother-in-law and brother-in-law. Normally, the drive from Mira Road to Pune takes about four and a half hours, but they reached Pune in just 40 minutes and were home within an hour." Sharing his experience, actor and content creator Aaryak Pathak said, "I travelled from



Pune to Mumbai. It was a crazy experience! I was headed for a shoot in Juhu. I also wanted to share the unique experience with my audience. The journey that usually takes around four hours, we completed in just 40 minutes. It was a fun ride, and the real we made from it got almost a million views." Operators, however, noted that airline disruptions act as catalysts rather than long-term drivers of change. These services are typically used by politicians, celebrities and businessmen looking for premium and time-efficient travel options. Single-engine helicopters operating on this route include models such as Airbus H125, H130, AW119, Bell 407 and Bell 206 L4, while twin-engine models include Airbus H135, H145, H160, Bell 429 and Bell 412. Pune-based helicopter operations take place from helipads at Koregaon Park Annex and Viman Nagar, while Mumbai operations are mainly from Juhu Airport and the Mahalaxmi Racecourse helipad. Beyond the Pune-Mumbai route, helicopters are also chartered for destinations such as Shirdi, Nashik, Lonavala, Aamby Valley and Mahabaleshwar. The flight time between Pune and Mumbai generally ranges between 45 minutes and one hour.

Flyyo India, a Mumbai-based aviation company founded by Akash Nale, also launched an on-demand helicopter charter service on the Pune-Mumbai route in November, operating a single-engine helicopter Airbus H125 and promising travel times of 30 to 35 minutes. Speaking about the service, Nale said, "People frequently travel between the two cities and often spend hours on the road due to traffic. The idea was to provide a time-saving option for those with important meetings or corporate events." He recalled a last-minute booking for a wedding, adding, "The groom had to urgently travel from Mumbai to Pune for the wedding mohur. The helicopter took off at 10.30 am and reached the venue just before 11.10 am, allowing the ceremony to proceed exactly on time." Industry operators believe helicopter travel between Pune and Mumbai will continue to grow, with helicopters increasingly being viewed not just as a luxury but as a practical solution for time-sensitive travel, especially as peak-hour road journeys often stretch far beyond expected timelines.

'Only protected public land,' says DK Shivakumar as Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan slams 'bulldozer raj' in Karnataka



constitutional values and human dignity become the first casualties. All secular and democratic forces must rally together to resist and defeat this insidious trend," Vijayan added. The bulldozing of Faqir Colony and Waseem Layout in Bengaluru, uprooting Muslim families who have lived there for years, exposes the brutal normalisation of "bulldozer raj". Sadly, the Sangh Parivar's anti-minority politics is now being executed under a Congress Government in... "We are not into bulldozer (justice). We have not done anything using bulldozers. We tried to vacate (the encroachers) and protect the public place," Shivakumar said, adding that Vijayan should not comment about the matter "without knowing the facts... These are political gimmicks ahead of state elections (in Kerala)." Shivakumar stated that if the displaced individuals had valid documents, the government would sanction them houses. "If anyone wants houses, definitely we will give them. We have planned lakhs of houses. Talks are on to rehabilitate those who are genuinely affected, but not to those who just want to occupy gov-

ernment land," he said. The matter was first raised by BJP leader Bhaskar Rao who put up a social media post on Tuesday, alleging that bulldozers and the police flattened the houses without any notice. Gut wrenching and heartless demolition of 300 houses of poorest of poor Muslim brethren in our Bengaluru.

Heavy lifting for first NEP college batch, new school textbooks: Things to look forward to in 2026



GNS News Agency, Dec 30 The upcoming year will see significant changes in the education sector in Maharashtra. The first batch of students studying under the New Education Policy structure in autonomous colleges under the Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU) will complete their third-year in the academic year 2025-26, with options to exit or to continue for another year of research. In school education, the Maharashtra State Board is also scheduled to introduce new textbooks based on the NCERT curriculum for four school grades for the 2026-27 academic year. If these changes are to be rolled out as per schedule, the next few months will call for some heavy lifting.

Autonomous colleges awaiting guidelines for 4th yearUnder the NEP structure, three-year bachelor degree students are provided with an option to continue for a fourth year. The NEP structure was first implemented in autonomous colleges under SPPU in 2022 and a year later, in affiliated colleges. With just a few months remaining for the 2025-26 academic year, autonomous colleges in Pune are still awaiting guidelines regarding implementation of the fourth-year programme for students.

Professor Avinash Moharil, principal of the autonomous Sir Parashurambhai College (S.P. College), told The Indian Express that his institute is ready with the syllabus for many courses for the fourth year. However, guidelines from the government and SPPU about whether the course will be offered to the granted section of students and appointment of teachers for the same are still not clear. "One thing is quite clear that only the departments having a post-graduate department will offer this kind of course. We now need clarity from the government whether the course is to be offered to the granted section. Then will it be considered as a course in natural growth? Because in the government resolution itself is written that it will not be considered as a granted course or additional workload. We still need to appoint teachers for it. So whether we are going to at least get clockhour bases (CBH) teachers as we get for the graduate courses is yet to be clarified," said professor Moharil.

Inside 87-year-old Karfule, Mumbai's last Art Deco petrol pump in Ballard Estate



GNS News Agency, Dec 30

Walk through Ballard Estate in South Bombay, and it feels as if time has stopped. The quiet streets lined with stately buildings, the air of stillness — everything seems to belong to another era. Among its stone facades stands Karfule, Mumbai's last surviving Art Deco petrol pump, where you can fuel your car and, perhaps, your curiosity. Built in 1938, Karfule — a blend of car and fuel — is more than just a service station. It's a slice of Mumbai's architectural and cultural heritage, representing the city's Art Deco movement, which marks its centenary this year with exhibitions, heritage walks, and talks under the banner Art Deco Alive!

A stone's throw from the Enforcement Directorate office, the station has been run by three generations of the Sequeira family. Its founder, Gabriel Sequeira, a Goan who migrated to Bombay in the 1920s, began modestly with a kerbside petrol kiosk where he would manually fill cars with fuel. By 1932, he had partnered with Burmah Shell to open his first pump in Ballard Estate. A few years later, when American company Caltex entered India, he joined hands with them. "But he wasn't allowed to operate two stations for competing companies," recalled his son Kevin Sequeira, now 75. "So he sold his stake in the first and launched Karfule with Caltex on October 3, 1938, at 3 Sprott Road." Karfule, Art Deco petrol pump, Ballard Estate, Daniel (left) and his father Kevin at the 'Karfule' petrol pump in Mumbai. (Express Photo by Amit Chakravarty) The building, constructed in concrete and faced with stone to match the surrounding Edwardian neoclassical structures, was designed by Gajanan B. Mhatre (GB Mhatre) — one of Mumbai's most prolific Art Deco architects, known for designing Empress Court at Oval Maidan and residential landmarks such as Marble Arch, Shangri-La and Normandie at Cumballa Hill. The central kiosk, with its umbrella-like canopy and tower, is the heart of Karfule's design. The large octagonal canopy is supported by inverted beams in reinforced

concrete, while the tower above it — distinctly Deco — features an aerodynamic spine with a circular disc that once functioned as a clock. "The building had always been there, but we didn't know about its architectural significance until 2015," said Daniel Sequeira, Gabriel's grandson. "Someone mentioned that it had Art Deco elements and that's when I started researching and recognised them." Inside the kiosk, the original star-shaped terrazzo flooring still gleams, showing little sign of wear.

The kiosk, octagonal in plan, allows a 360-degree view of the station through its seven windows. Its lower walls are clad in red marble and black kadappa stone, and the exterior bears Deco lettering and grilles modelled after car headlamps and radiator grilles from the era. Horizontal red bands run along the service bays, completing the design's streamlined aesthetic. When Karfule turned 80 in 2018, Daniel marked the milestone with an exhibition on the premises, displaying memorabilia collected over eight decades. Among the treasures were original invoices and a hand-rendered drawing of the station's elevation, showing the central kiosk ringed by driveways and garages. Also preserved were a payment certificate showing a construction cost of Rs 34,000, a Rs 5,000 receipt from Simplex Concrete Works & Construction Co., and photographs from the inaugural day, when His Grace Dr Thomas D Roberts, Bishop of Bombay, blessed the station. Guests were served small cakes, cheese straws, and sausage rolls, a menu Daniel recreated for the 80th anniversary high tea. "The exhibition was so well received that it became a permanent fixture," he said, adding, "Architecture students and heritage enthusiasts often visit, and we guide them through the display." Daniel also conducts walks around Ballard Estate, narrating stories of its Art Deco past and leading visitors to Karfule, a living piece of that history. Over decades, the Sequeiras have worked to maintain Karfule's architectural character with minimal alterations. The edges of the canopy, once painted red, now wear HPCL's blue branding, but the original Deco lettering survives, as does one metal grille from the 1930s. "The others were stolen during the '70s and '80s, when Ballard Estate saw frequent petty thefts," shared Kevin. In 1995, when HP insisted that the facade be painted white, Kevin resisted, and the company stopped their petrol supply and they had to cave in. When they repainted the structure for the 80th anniversary, they retained the white but accenting it with red and dark blue, resulting in a facade that nods to classic Deco palettes. Inside, much of the original equipment still works, including two Marley hydraulic lifts, a Devilbiss compressor, and an analog air gauge, all from the 1930s, lovingly maintained by the father-son duo.

NIMS to launch three sub-specialty Urology clinics from January 1

GNS News Agency, Dec 30

Hyderabad: The Urology and Renal Transplantation wing of Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS) will soon launch three sub-specialty clinics, including Uro-Onco, Renal Transplantation, and Paediatric Urology.

Under the supervision of Dr Rahul Devar, Head, Urology, the specialised clinics will be operational starting January 1, Director, NIMS, Prof Nagari Beeraappa said. The services will be available every Friday from 10 am to 1 pm at the Urology department located on the 6th floor of the Specialty Block. Director Beeraappa stated that these clinics will provide advanced medical care for urological cancers, kidney transplants, and paediatric urological issues.



Vadodara man dies after falling into open drain; VMC to file FIR



GNS News Agency, Dec 30

On Saturday, VMC Corporator and Congress leader Ami Ravat wrote a letter to the VMC Commissioner seeking an FIR against the engineers and the contractor concerned for culpable homicide. On Saturday, VMC Corporator and Congress leader Ami Ravat wrote a letter to the VMC Commissioner seeking an FIR against the engineers and the contractor concerned for culpable homicide. The Vadodara city police Saturday began a probe into the death of a man, who fell to his death in a 15-foot deep water drainage chamber near the Manjalpur sports complex on Friday evening while on an outing with his family. Even as the Manjalpur police station said it has sought details from the Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC) regarding the work that had been undertaken in the area to require the manhole of the drainage chamber to be left open, allegedly without a warning, VMC Commissioner Arun Mahesh Babu told The Indian Express that the civic body has decided to lodge an FIR against the agency.

The incident occurred late on Friday evening when the deceased, identified as Vipulsinh Zala, 40, son of a retired Gujarat police officer, had stepped out with his family for dinner. According to Zala's relatives, he had decided to park his vehicle near the site of the accident and walk back to the eatery where the family was waiting. "When he did not return for a few minutes, we tried calling him but could not get through... Then we decided to go and look for him. We spotted the open drainage chamber and thought of checking. Our fears came true when we saw his shoes floating

on the water in the chamber; we immediately called the emergency services," Giriraj Chudasama, a relative of the deceased, said. Although the fire and emergency response team pulled out Zala within 10 minutes of the call, he was declared dead on arrival at the hospital. Primary probe, police officials said, has revealed that there was no warning sign near the open chamber, which had been left uncovered after the work had been completed.

Pranav Katariya, Assistant Commissioner of Police, F Division, told this newspaper, "We have registered a case of accidental death and initiated a probe into the possibility of negligence... We have communicated to the VMC to submit documents of the agreement with the agency, if they have hired one, as per their primary information. The terms of the agreement will be examined to see if the agency was asked to place warning signs and if failed to comply... Based on the probe and the decision of the family members of the deceased, we will proceed with an FIR if negligence is established." The police said the process to record statements of the locals is also underway to ascertain facts regarding the VMC work and the open manhole, as well as scanning of CCTV footage to determine how the incident happened on Friday evening. "The body of the deceased has been sent for post-mortem. Once the family has completed the last rites, we will call them to record their statements," Katariya said. The incident caused widespread outrage in the city. On Saturday,

VMC Corporator and Congress leader Ami Ravat wrote a letter to the VMC Commissioner seeking an FIR against the engineers and the contractor concerned for culpable homicide. Ravat said in her letter, "It is high time that the VMC takes up its responsibility for such accidents which occur due to dark spots, inadequate lighting on construction sites, potholes, open manholes... Several people have lost their lives due to such incidents in the past too. We demand that the Mayor and the ruling party accept the responsibility and issue a public apology... and (declare a) compensation for the family of the deceased." When contacted, VMC Commissioner Babu said, "I have ordered a preliminary inquiry with the water department, and we have fixed the responsibility of the contractor... The VMC will file an FIR against the contractor, and we are also blacklisting them..."

Nepalese national among 2 women killed in leopard attacks in UP's Balrampur



GNS News Agency, Dec 30

Two women, including a 28-year-old Nepalese national, were killed in suspected leopard attacks in Uttar Pradesh's Balrampur district. The incidents took place in a span of eight hours, in the Bhawar range of Suhelwa Wildlife Sanctuary, on Thursday. The victims have been identified as Urmila (28), a resident of Kapilyastu district in Nepal, and Kamla Devi (25). Officials said both women, who were alone, were attacked when they had gone to collect firewood from the forest. Officials suspect Urmila was on her way to her relative's house in Balrampur after collecting firewood when

the animal attacked her. Forest department officials are investigating the circumstances surrounding the incidents. Manoj Kumar, Sub-Divisional Officer of the Suhelwa Wildlife Sanctuary, said after the incident, some Nepalese residents who were present in the forest attempted to take Urmila's body. They had reached the no-man's land near the border when forest and police teams, alerted about the situation, rushed to the spot and stopped them. The body was subsequently taken into custody and sent for post-mortem examination, said Kumar. Urmila's family members later arrived in India to take custody of her body. Rakesh Kumar Jayant, Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Tulsipur, said the Nepal embassy has been informed about the death, adding that the body will be handed over to the family only after all mandatory legal and administrative formalities are completed. Officials said although the Indo-Nepal border in Balrampur is largely open and permits free movement of people from both countries, the death having occurred on Indian territory necessitates the completion of official procedures before the body can be released to the family. The animal had attacked and injured two people in Chanaini village of Nawabganj block, confirmed Dr Ram Singh Yadav, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Bahraich.

Confident that trial in Pune Porsche crash case will begin next year despite defence's 'tactics', says SPP



IT engineers Aneesh Awadhiya and Ashwini Koshta, 24, were killed on May 19, 2024, when a speeding Porsche Taycan, allegedly driven by a 17-year-old from a Pune realtor family, hit their motorcycle at Kalyani Nagar Junction.

GNS News Agency, Dec 30

As the calendar turns to 2026, the prosecution in the high-profile Porsche car crash in Pune is confident that trial in the case will finally get underway, marking a crucial step towards obtaining justice for two young IT professionals Aneesh Awadhiya and Ashwini Koshta — who were killed in the crash — and their families. Advocate Shishir Hiray, the Special Public Prosecutor (SPP) in the case, expressed confidence that in spite of the "delaying tactics" used by the defence lawyers, the trial will begin in the coming year.

The lives of young IT engineers Awadhiya and Koshta, both Madhya Pradesh natives aged 24, ended abruptly at 2.30 am on May 19 last year when a speeding Porsche Taycan allegedly driven by a 17-year-old from an influential Pune realtor family, rammed into their motorcycle at Kalyani Nagar Junction. The accident took place after the minor and his friends celebrated their Class 12 exam results at a pub. The luxury car allegedly driven by the minor did not have number plates. Speaking to The Indian Express, SPP Hiray said they filed the chargesheet against the accused in August 2024 and the draft charges in October 2024. "After that, the defence started using delaying tactics deliberately. In spite of this, the prosecution went on pressing for arguments on the draft charges," he said.

"When those arguments concluded, two of the accused in the case — those linked to the blood swapping of the minor co-passengers — filed an application seeking all the CCTV footage from Sarssoo General Hospital from the

time of the offence. Such a demand was made when even the prosecution had not relied on all the CCTV footage from Sarssoo Hospital. The defence took time arguing for this, but still got the ruling against them," Hiray added. The police investigation following the accident unravelled alleged cover-ups, bribery, abuse of power, and tampering of blood samples at the government-run Sarssoo General Hospital. Multiple arrests followed, including that of the minor's 50-year-old realtor father and 49-year-old mother; Dr Ajay Taware, then head of the Forensic Medicine Department at Sarssoo Hospital; Dr Shrihari Hainor, then casualty medical officer; Atul Ghatkamble, a staffer at the hospital's morgue; and Ashpak Makandar and Amar Gaikwad, who allegedly acted as middlemen between the minor's father and the doctors. The accused have been charged with tampering of evidence, forgery, criminal conspiracy and corruption. The then minor driver has been arraigned before the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) where he faces charges of culpable homicide, among others.

The Pune police have also arrested and charged a 37-year-old man who had given his blood to be swapped with that of a minor co-passenger, along with the father of that co-passenger. The 52-year-old father of another minor co-passenger was also arrested earlier for giving his own blood sample to be swapped with his son.

"When framing of charges was to begin, the defence obtained a stay on the process from the high court. And now the framing of charges is being delayed. At present, a hearing is scheduled in the high court on January 8. After we clear this hurdle, we can immediately move the lower court seeking framing of charges. And even after that, we cannot say for sure that the defence will not move the high court again. In spite of this, we are confident that the trial will begin in 2026," the SPP stated. Hiray said they are pressing for the trial to begin soon because it is the key to the process of obtaining justice for the victims and their families. "This was a case in which a fraud was committed with the judicial system by completely changing the evidence. And that is what we have brought out in our case," he said. "If we look at the witnesses, we can see that they belong to weaker sections of the society, as against the accused who belong to the higher strata of society. And it is very likely that the accused could influence the witnesses. Currently, of the total 10 accused in the case, nine are still behind bars, while the mother of the minor driver is out on bail. We will soon be moving court seeking cancellation of her bail," Hiray added. Recently, two officers — Police Inspector Rahul Jagdale and Assistant Police Inspector Vishwanath Todkari — who were suspended for dereliction of duty in connection with the initial response to the accident, were dismissed from service.

Myanmar goes to polls amid civil war and humanitarian crisis



the population below the poverty line.

More than 3.6 million people have been displaced from their homes, with over 6,800 civilians killed in the conflict triggered by the coup, according to UN estimates. With mounting violence forcing increasing numbers of people to flee, more than 12 million in Myanmar will face acute hunger next year, including 1 million who will need lifesaving support, according to the UN's World Food Programme. More than 16 million people across Myanmar are acutely food insecure, meaning that their lack of food threatens lives and livelihoods, WFP estimates. They are the fifth-largest group needing aid anywhere in the world, making Myanmar "a hunger hotspot of very high concern," the agency said. More than 540,000 children across the country are expected to suffer this year from acute malnutrition - life-threatening wasting that can have severe and lifelong effects - a 26% increase from last year, WFP said. One in three children under the age of five is already suffering from stunted growth, according to WFP. Myanmar's economy - once deemed as one of the region's most promising - has struggled in recent years, reeling from the civil war, natural disasters and mismanagement. But despite the challenges, Myanmar's economy is showing some signs of improvement and its GDP growth is estimated to rebound to 3% in the next fiscal year, the World Bank said this month. The projected growth is driven by post-earthquake reconstruction and continued targeted assistance for the hardest-hit areas, although inflation is expected to remain above 20%. With electricity supply deteriorating, exposing millions of people to chronic blackouts, households and businesses are increasingly embracing solar energy for reliable power. Russia, which has been building ties with the junta, signed an investment agreement with Myanmar in June that it said could open up new opportunities for Russian energy companies in the south Asian country.

Myanmar heads to the polls on Sunday (December 28, 2025) as it battles a civil war that has ravaged parts of the country as well as one of Asia's worst humanitarian crises. Already one of Southeast Asia's poorest countries, Myanmar has been hammered by a conflict triggered by a 2021 coup in which the military ousted an elected civilian government led by Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi.

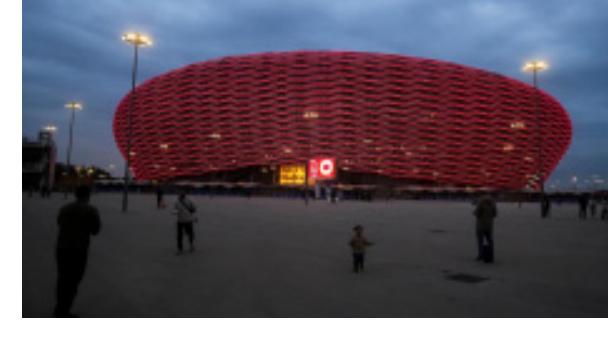
Myanmar's humanitarian crisis is one of the most severe in Asia, driven by the intensifying civil war and repeated natural disasters, including a massive earthquake in March. The ruling junta has previously suppressed information about a severe food crisis gripping the country by pressuring researchers not to collect data about hunger and aid workers not to publish it, Reuters has reported, besides cracking down on journalists since the coup. Myanmar is one of the world's most under-funded aid operations, with only 12% of required funds received, the United Nations says. U.S. cuts to humanitarian aid are having a crushing impact on people, the U.N. special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar has said. The UN estimates that 20 million of Myanmar's 51 million people need aid as soaring inflation and a plunging currency push about half

Cambodia-Thailand border dispute: Cambodia says Thailand escalated strikes during talks



acted in self-defence and accuse the other of attacking civilians. United States, China and Malaysia brokered a truce to end five days of deadly clashes in July, but the ceasefire was short-lived. Earlier Friday, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet said on Facebook that he had spoken by phone with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and the two discussed "ways to secure a ceasefire along the Cambodia-Thailand border". The conflict stems from a territorial dispute over the colonial-era demarcation of their 800-kilometre (500-mile) frontier and a collection of temple ruins situated there.

Moroccan fans cry foul amid empty seats at sold-out stadiums in Africa Cup



and said he paid 100 Moroccan dirhams (\$11) for his ticket to the game. Compared to nearby Europe, starting prices are far cheaper, while there's no comparison to the asking prices for 2026 World Cup games. On Wednesday, only 16,115 attended Algeria's game against Sudan in the 22,000-capacity Moulay El Hassan Stadium in Rabat, which had been sold-out long before. Some fans waited outside after hearing reports they'd be let in for free, then rushed the gates in an effort to get in once the game had started. Security at other stadiums has allowed free entrance after kickoff in order to increase attendance. "They won't open the gates for Morocco," Mazraoui said. The attendance at Congo's match against Benin in the 18,000-capacity Stade El Barid in Rabat was corrected from 6,000 to 13,000. Other games have seen little difference, with heavy rain also discouraging local fans from attending. The 68,000-capacity Grand Stade de Tanger in Tangier felt mostly empty on Tuesday for Senegal's match against Botswana despite 18,500 being in attendance.

One fan who gave his name only as Khalid was lucky

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UIDAI to expand full-service Aadhaar centres to 473 by September 2026: CEO



Mr. Kumar said UIDAI wants to ensure that there is at least one centre in two districts. The number of adult enrollees is likely a small percentage of Indians (the precise share cannot be calculated due to the lack of a nationwide Census since 2011), but even a small percentage could translate to lakhs of people due to India's population. "We are working with Google and we will soon have Google locations for Aadhaar centres," Mr. Kumar said.

Mr. Kumar said that due to concerns of illegal immigration, Aadhaar has been issued in recent months "only after field verification" by district administrations. Most adult applicants include non-resident Indians or overseas citizens of India, the latter being foreign nationals with ties to India either by marriage or parentage. Foreign nationals who live in India are permitted to have an Aadhaar as it is not proof of citizenship. UIDAI is working on the integrity of data by restricting changes in date of birth of Aadhaar holders. "If someone has two different dates of birth in two different documents, one is false," Mr. Kumar said. People who had to change the date of birth once will be allowed to do so after filing an affidavit admitting a clerical mistake but doing so twice will not be allowed, he said. Parents who falsified their children's date of birth during Aadhaar enrollment risk criminal action, Mr. Kumar said, referring to a case in which the Allahabad High Court ordered the filing of an FIR against a parent over irregularity surrounding a child's date of birth.

The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) will increase the number of full-fledged Aadhaar enrollment and update centres for adults to 473 from the current 88 by September 2026, UIDAI CEO Bhuvnesh Kumar told The Hindu. While children can be enrolled for Aadhaar at post offices, adult enrollees have fewer places to go. Since adult applicants may have to travel past multiple districts to reach a centre, the expansion will help them, Mr. Kumar said. Such centres offer all modification and enrollment services. Some Aadhaar details can be updated online, but changes in biometrics and updating one's name after a certain limit require visit to a centre.

Gates and windows: On the SIR and single-appeal window

The Election Commission of India (ECI)'s Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls has a reasonable aim: to prune the duplicates, outdated addresses and entries for people who have died or moved, which India's electoral rolls have a tendency to gather. But the ECI's design of the ongoing SIR, modelled on the one in Bihar, infuses systemic flaws in the process that the body seems unwilling to address or even acknowledge despite many of the same problems in Bihar reappearing in multiple States. The process is happening at great speed that, together with the burden of inclusion being shifted from the state to the voter, suggests that the ECI is treating the exclusion of eligible voters as an acceptable risk. The speed would be justifiable given the availability of digital technologies today but they have their own tendencies to exclude, exemplified by the fact that the 2002-2005 electoral rolls, details from which the ongoing SIR expects citizens to invoke, are not machine-readable and the ECI has treated even minor mismatches as cause for deletion. The scale of exclusions reported in the phase I draft rolls should thus be read as a warning sign. It is not obviously reasonable to expect that one round of appeals will fix this in the final rolls.

The claims and objections processes correct errors only to the extent that affected voters detect and pursue

them. That is, the appeals stage only adds a new filter, selecting for those with the time, literacy, connectivity, social support and confidence to deal with the state. If a person does not realise they have been deleted, cannot take time away from work, travel to an office, assemble documents or navigate forms and hearings, the error will become an official fact. Important information is not consistently available in a form that enables real-time public scrutiny, such as the precise reasons for deletions at granular levels and demographic breakdowns, including gender-wise patterns, preventing civil society, smaller political parties, journalists and voters from identifying where the process is failing while it can still be corrected. Finally, the SIR depends on house-to-house work, form distribution and collection, digitisation and repeated visits executed by State staff who simultaneously have other duties. When they are further constrained by tight deadlines, the risk of chasing targets instead of completing tasks becomes great. The current SIR in sum comes across as a form of administrative gatekeeping that stratifies the electorate into two tiers: those who can continuously re-prove themselves in the state's preferred format and those who cannot. That outcome will not be corrected by a single-appeal window because the window is itself part of the gate.

Fabiano Caruana: Very good sign when a player can actually win events, not just keep a high rating

Fabiano Caruana arrived in Mumbai just a few weeks after winning the United States Chess Championship. In a tournament that featured some of the world's top players, such as Wesley So and Levon Aronian, he came a clear first. A couple of months before that, he had won the Grand Chess Tour. Still, the World No. 3 isn't exactly pleased with his year. Caruana is also the third-highest-rated player in history, behind Magnus Carlsen and Garry Kasparov. He had challenged Carlsen for the World title in 2018 but lost out in the tie-breaks. He is now eyeing another crack at the World Championship: he will be playing the Candidates in March-April in Cyprus. Before that gruelling event, where he has been a regular since 2016, he played in the Tech Mahindra Global Chess League for the first time. And he led Alpine SG Pipers to the title at Mumbai's iconic Royal Opera House, with a commanding win in the final over Triveni Continental Kings, the champion in both previous editions. Excerpts from an exclusive interview Caruana gave The Hindu on a cool December morning, by the poolside of Trident Hotel, just a stone's throw away from the Arabian Sea:

Your thoughts on your maiden Global Chess League?

It was nice. I wanted to play previous years, but there were always some scheduling issues. So I was excited when I got contacted for this year's league. And actually, I didn't really expect it, because I knew all the teams had their players, but one spot opened up for this team. We have two of the best players in the world [Anish Giri and R. Pragganandhaa], along with many-time World champion for women [Hou Yifan] and one of the best junior players in the world [Leon Mendonca]. And Nino [Batsiashvili] is also a great player. I think the GCL is a very interesting tournament. It is nice to have so many strong players [14 of the world's top 15] in one place. It took a while to get used to the time control [increment of two seconds after the 40th move].

How do you look back at your wins at the Grand Chess Tour and the US national championship, which you won for the fourth year in a row?

Those two were my major successes this year. Besides that, it wasn't a great year, but of course that does brighten it quite a bit. The US championship is always very strong for a national tournament, similar to what the Soviet Union championship used to be. This year, it was very close.

Your compatriot Hikaru Nakamura says he has already started preparing for the Candidates. What about you?

Yeah, well, definitely thought has already gone into preparation for the tournament. The concrete preparation hasn't really started yet, but it will start pretty soon. How close do you think it is going to be in Cyprus? You must be an expert on the Candidates, having played in every edition since 2016. Every time it is close. The only question is how close. I think the only exception was in 2022, when Ian [Nepomniachtchi] was clearly first, but that was also a strange year because the runner-up [Ding Liren] ended up qualifying as well.

was speaking to So a few days ago, and he picked you as the favourite. Who do you think could be your toughest rivals?

Anyone potentially. By rating, it is clear: it is Hikaru and Pragganandhaa. And Anish, as well, is up there because he recently also gained a lot of rating. There are other players who can also be dangerous. Instant impact: Playing in the Global Chess League for the first time, Caruana led Alpine SG Pipers to the title. Instant impact: Playing in the Global Chess League for the first time, Caruana led Alpine SG Pipers to the title. | Photo Credit: Global Chess League



in the Candidates. He is a very capable player, for sure.

Talking of the Candidates, are you happy with the way the players are selected?

I think the only change I would really make is to change the qualification for the spot given to the highest-rated player. Let's say you have to play opponents that have an average rating of 2600 Elo rating, for example. But Hikaru has deserved his spot, for sure. Now Candidates slots are also going to be filled from the newly announced Total Chess World Championship...I generally don't like the name of that tournament. We already have the total World Championship, you know, the classical World Championship. That is the ultimate goal for a player. Then you have this new world championship and then the confusion.

A few years ago, you had made an interesting study of the young Indian players. Was Gukesh moving ahead of the pack and winning the World title a surprise for you?

Well, when I did this in 2022, Gukesh was still very young, clearly going to be very strong, but I think he was a little bit less known compared to Arjun [Erigaisi] or Pragganandhaa. I said Arjun would be the first to cross the 2800 rating, and it ended up being correct, but Gukesh has been the most successful, at least currently, of the bunch. It was hard to predict, and we didn't predict, of course, that he would be World champion.

Gukesh and Pragg have been the most accomplished. But Arjun is also very accomplished and has had the highest rating. In terms of his chess, I think what impresses most people is that it feels like he is kind of a very natural player. While Gukesh is a very prepared player, very focused, very professional. His mentality is his strongest suit.

Pragg is also very focused, very prepared. He works very hard, which is very good. It is going to take him far along with his talent. And this year, he's won a lot of tournaments. When a player can win tournaments, not just keep a high rating, but actually win — that is always a very good sign for them.

You are hugely popular here. Are you getting recognised in India more than back home?

Probably yes, I mean even at the airport I was getting recognised a few times. It happens in the US, but usually more in the major cities, like New York for example. Here you can see the interest in chess from the public.

Your earliest memories of chess?

I have some very early childhood memories from when I was five, playing my first tournament. I grew up in New York, where there was a vibrant chess scene then. That was where the main hub for chess in the US was and now it has changed a lot. It's gone to St. Louis. You know I also have some fond memories from my teenage years when we moved to Europe and I started to travel to get better and chase my norms.

Who is liable for nuclear incidents under the new law?



"Not a single clause or word which says anything about supplier liability," said Congress MP Manish Tewari in Lok Sabha. His peer Shashi Tharoor added, "A supplier, who has provided faulty equipment, walks away without any liability and Indian tax-payers are made to bear the brunt". The newly passed Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Act, 2025 has made drastic changes to liability laws in case of nuclear accident — exempting suppliers (foreign or domestic) from any statutory liability, while capping the liability of nuclear plant operators to ₹3,000 crores.

'SHANTI', which replaces the two existing laws governing India's nuclear sector — the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010, has now become an Act after President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent on December 21. The Bill was passed through both Houses on December 17, 18, after the Centre refused to refer the Bill to a Parliamentary Standing Committee for further scrutiny. Opposition MPs, lawyers, nuclear scientists have pointed out the pitfalls of the Act such as — single composite licence for several processes, statutory vacuum, absence of long-term radioactive waste management plan, restricted information and dilution of civil liability in case of nuclear incidents/malfunction.

What does SHANTI say on civil liability?

The Act holds the nuclear plant operator responsible for any incident that occurs during either installation, transport of material prior to installation and after. The operator is held responsible for any loss of life, work, injury, damages. However, the limit of liability on these operators is capped at ₹3,000 crore in case the installed capacity of the nuclear plant is above 3600 MW (mega-watts). For a nuclear plant with a capacity less than 150 MW, the liability is set at ₹100 crore. If the liability exceeds the upper limit, the Centre will bear the liable.

It also exempts the operator from any liability if the incident occurs due to a natural disaster, armed conflict, hostility, civil war, insurrection or terrorism. The operator is also not held liable if any damage is suffered by a person on account of his own negligence. In all such exemptions, the Centre will take upon the liability. Any plant can also be exempted from liability if the risk involved is deemed 'insignificant' by the Centre. There is no mention of supplier in the entire Act, exempting them from any liability or punitive action under this law. "The liability of the Fukushima disaster in Japan is about \$200 billion and it is likely to go up," said Dr. E.A.S Sharma, former Principal Adviser (Energy), while speaking to The Hindu. He adds, "Imagine if your actual liability is about three lakh crores, and then what is the use of having a cap of three thousand?"

Defending the graded liability in Parliament, Union MoS Jitendra Singh said that it gives a level-playing field so that 'participation is possible at every scale'. He claimed that by putting higher liability on large reactors and lower on small reactors, SHANTI ensures fair risk-sharing, responsible participation and a safety-first approach. "Irrespective of this (lower installed capacity), when an accident takes place, it

can be like an atom bomb. Almost up to 30, 40 miles, you know, it can affect people's health and there will be radioactive contamination," counters Dr. Sharma. He says use of substandard material in nuclear reactors and design defects are very common in the global nuclear industry.

Bumper cars in abandoned Pripyat, Ukraine in the largest city in the exclusion zone surrounding the Chernobyl reactor, April 9, 2016. Thirty years later, there are signs of commercial clear-cutting in supposedly off-limits forests around the site of the nuclear disaster in Ukraine. Photo: The New York Times Bumper cars in abandoned Pripyat, Ukraine in the largest city in the exclusion zone surrounding the Chernobyl reactor, April 9, 2016. Thirty years later, there are signs of commercial clear-cutting in supposedly off-limits forests around the site of the nuclear disaster in Ukraine. Photo: The New York Times Senior advocate Prashant Bhushan warns that such a low liability cap can create an incentive to suppliers and operators to cut corners. "The Supreme Court has laid down a principle that if you are operating a hazardous industry, then you are absolutely liable to the full extent of the damage. When your liability is capped at such a ridiculously low amount, it contravenes Article 21 — the Right to Life. You are endangering the life of the people, and you are virtually exempting the supplier and the operator," says Mr. Bhushan. Highlighting the strain the additional liability will place on Centre's budget, Dr. Sharma adds, "Previously, NPCIL was the only operator and now private players will be there. One nuclear accident like Fukushima, can take away 1/3rd of the budget expenditure for a year. You will not have any money for your social justice schemes, education, health, infrastructure, crippling India's finances".

Who holds the operator liable? "When Fukushima took place in 2011, under public pressure, the Department of Atomic Energy introduced a bill to constitute an independent nuclear regulatory authority. This Bill went to the Parliament Committee which made some very far-reaching suggestions to strengthen the autonomy of the regulator. Surprisingly, after that, Department of Atomic Energy just remained silent. Now after 13 years, SHANTI has constituted the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB), but does not make it independent," explains Dr. Sharma.

Under SHANTI, the AERB is a seven-member board with all appointees made by the Centre, sapping any semblance of independence from the body. This Board sets limits of radiation exposure to the workers and the public, limits for radioactive releases and discharges to environment, sets safety standards in all aspects of operation, working conditions, transport, waste disposal etc. It also grants safety authorisation, regulates nuclear facilities, advises the Centre on safety, radiological surveillance and preparedness in response to nuclear emergencies. In case of a nuclear incident, the AERB will provide its recommendations within fifteen days from the date of occurrence of such nuclear incidents for notifications. The Board can exempt any radioactive material or any radiation generating plant from the requirement of safety authorisation. "It (AERB) is subordinate to Department of Atomic Energy and they are supposed to regulate the department's nuclear facilities?" questions Dr. Sharma. While the Act does not allow any civil court to entertain any suit which falls under the AERB, Centre and Appellate tribunals' jurisdiction, the High Court and Supreme Court can intervene, clarifies Mr. Bhushan. "The Act compromises Make in India and gives access to foreign players to all this nuclear and fissionable material. Suppose there is some negligence and it (nuclear material) gets into terrorists' hands or it happens deliberately, a nuclear disaster can happen. This Act is a complete sell-out to foreign companies and to Adani, compromising the country's safety, security and sovereignty," concludes Mr. Bhushan.

IIT-Kanpur survey to assess extent of sand mining was illegal: Tamil Nadu government



The Tamil Nadu government has alleged that a survey, purportedly conducted by scientists of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Kanpur at the behest of the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) was "illegal", contending that the institute lacked jurisdiction and had no locus standi to operate in the State. According to official sources, the State government wrote to IIT-Kanpur seeking details of the survey, including the scientists involved and the basis on which the assessment of sand mining along riverbeds in Tamil Nadu was carried out. The ED had engaged IIT-Kanpur as part of its probe into alleged large-scale irregularities in sand mining and resultant loss to the State exchequer. The institute was tasked with assessing the quantum of sand mined at 28 permitted sites during October-November 2023.

Based on the survey report, the ED alleged that illegal mining beyond permissible limits had taken place and estimated the value of excess sand mining over the past several years at ₹24,730 crore, as against the recorded revenue of ₹36.45 crore earned by the State government. Seeking to refute the allegations, the Additional Chief Secretary to Government, Water Resources Department, wrote to the Director of IIT-Kanpur seeking clarifications, including whether Professor Rajiv Sinha, who led the survey, was authorised to undertake it, sources said. In his reply, the IIT-Kanpur Director stated that Prof. Sinha, who authored and certified the report, had not been granted leave by the institute for the period during which the survey was reportedly conducted — from October 7 to November 5, 2023. The communication said under the Conduct Rules of IIT-Kanpur, an employee was not permitted to leave the station without prior approval of the department, even while on leave.

'Report legally invalid' In a status report filed before the Madras High Court, the State government cited these communications and asserted that it was evident that "the said Professor never ever visited the State of Tamil Nadu for the alleged survey and that he had only prepared the report on paper," rendering the survey report "legally invalid". The State further alleged that the survey was actually conducted by Terraqua Private Limited, a company founded by Prof. Sinha and incubated at IIT-Kanpur.

Pointing out that the IIT-Madras was available within Tamil Nadu, the State government questioned why the ED had chosen a private company incubated under IIT-Kanpur instead. The government also contended that IIT-Kanpur had no jurisdiction to operate in Tamil Nadu, citing Section 6(1)(A) of the Indian Institutes of Technology Act, 1961. The provision states that each IIT shall assist States and Union Territories within its designated zone in enhancing quality and capacity, and may advise on technical and technological matters referred to it within that zone. "In view of this statutory provision, an IIT-Kanpur incubated entity should not have ventured outside its zone under the guise of conducting a survey, that too without any intimation to the State authorities concerned," sources said, quoting the report. The State government maintained that the ED and

the IIT-Kanpur incubated company had exceeded their jurisdiction and authority, and that the survey report therefore lacked any legal basis. The report also alleged violations of the Drone Rules, 2021, stating that drones were flown without adhering to the prescribed Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). As per the SOP issued under the Mineral Conservation and Development Rules, 2017, and guidelines of the Ministry of Civil Aviation, prior permission is mandatory before operating an unmanned aircraft system. In the present case, no prior permission was obtained from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, the Collector, or the Superintendent of Police of the jurisdiction concerned for conducting the drone survey, the sources said.

Titan to enter lab-grown diamond with brand name 'beYon'

New Delhi: Titan Co, the country's leading jewellery maker, on Friday announced its entry into the lab-grown diamond segment, under the brand name of 'beYon'. Focusing on the emerging segment of affordable lab-grown diamonds in the country, the company will open a store in Mumbai on December 29, according to a regulatory filing from a Tata group-managed firm.

"Titan will launch the brand name 'beYon' — from the House of Titan' with an exclusive retail store in Mumbai on 29th December 2025 to cater to the adornment needs of women in lifestyle categories beyond watches, perfumes, sarees and handbags," it said. The brand 'beYon' will offer a curated range of Lab Grown Diamond (LGD) jewellery, making a start in this emerging category with plans to add a couple of more stores in Mumbai and Delhi in the immediate near future, Titan said. Over the last 2-3 years, the lab-grown diamond market in India has experienced rapid growth, driven by consumer demand for affordable, sustainable, and ethically sourced alternatives to natural diamonds. According to consulting firm Wazir Advisors, the share of diamonds in the Indian jewellery market is still below 10 per cent and has a large opportunity for upside growth.



This hidden addiction keeps us glued to smartphones. Here's how to fix it



Letting apps, but by renegotiating my relationship with the device itself. The first rule was to break my "all-day available" habit. This was making me slave to the machine and keeping me on an 'always ready' mode to respond to an incoming text. Once I broke this habit by enforcing a time-in and a time-out period, I noticed that my nerves felt cooler. This also made me stop nursing the idea of someone waiting for my response. Then, I stopped carrying the phone around everywhere I go. For instance, when I go for a walk or jog, I don't take the phone with me anymore. That gives me roughly forty-fifty minutes of no-device time. This phone-free time has clearly helped me connect deeply with my inner thoughts.

Thirdly, I started batching my replies. Instead of responding in real-time, I handle messages in bulk, in focused intervals. At first it felt rude. But the truth surprised me; most people didn't notice, and the ones who did, adapted quickly. Just as we learn a doctor's availability without resenting it, people learn ours as soon as we consistently signal it. To make this batching work, I had to change how I replied. Rather than firing off short, back-and-forth exchanges, I started sending messages that answered the next two or three likely questions. Fewer loose ends means fewer reasons for both parties to reopen the conversation an hour later.

And for genuine emergencies, I set up narrow avenues for instant reachability: specific contacts who can get through Do Not Disturb, or a simple rule that if something is urgent, they should call, not text. These three simple rules have helped me be more focused and provide. And most importantly, what surprised me most wasn't the practical change, but the emotional one. When I reduced the constant trickle of digital chatter, my communications were fully developed. Today, with texting via WhatsApp, we have created this illusion of connection that lacks substance. Texting may be the most invisible driver of our smartphone dependency, but once we see it clearly, we can choose a different relationship with it, and with our own minds.

I've been thinking deeply about the forces that keep us glued to our phones. Why do we pick up the phone and become oblivious to time, watching endless streams of reels or doomsrolling down X feeds? I noticed that the real culprit isn't just the algorithmic fine-tuning of social media applications. It's texting. Yes, that quiet, polite, seemingly harmless act we do everyday on our smartphones. Texting via WhatsApp is clearly the hidden engine of our smartphone fixation. It is the thing that keeps the device within arm's reach even when no notification pops up.

We often talk about social media addiction as if the platforms themselves are pulling every string, but when I'm honest with myself, the behaviour that most reliably brings my phone to my hand is the arrival of a text on WhatsApp. Deep down, my brain responds to the text the way it would to someone tapping me on the shoulder. It feels like a social cue that signals me to reply. And because ignoring a cue like that creates friction, I find myself checking more often than I ever intended to. That stress becomes the gateway to all other distractions. I'll respond to the message, yes, but then I'll check one more thing, then another, and before long the entire digital carnival has unfurled itself in front of me. So, here's how I decided to tackle my own dependency at its root, not by fighting dopamine loops or de-

How the Mahad satyagraha(s) shaped constitutional discourse



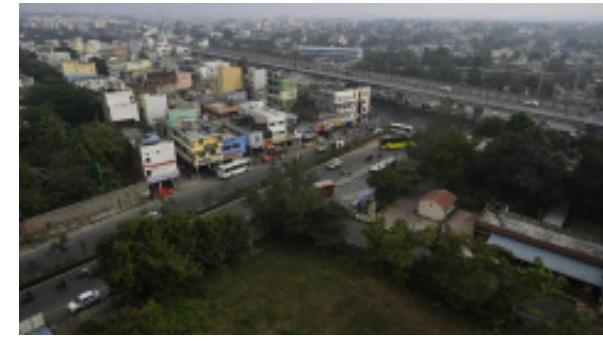
The Mahad tehsil, in pre-Independent India, was a part of the Bombay Province and a significant economic centre, providing labour to the industrial sector of the Bombay Presidency. In Mahad, imitation of caste norms led to widespread acceptance of caste discrimination, with high-caste individuals treating Dalits with contempt. Untouchability, a result of casteism, represents systemic social exclusion that reinforces the hierarchical nature of the caste system. In Mahad, the exclusion of Dalits was evident in their denial of access to drinking water from public tanks, such as the Chavadar Tank. Mahad was a key site for one of India's first rights movements, which paved the way for human rights discourse and its lessons absorbed in constitutional ethics. Understanding the legacy

Dr. Ambedkar stated that the Mahad 1.0 and Mahad 2.0 satyagrahas embodied the zeitgeist of the French Revolution. In Dr. Ambedkar's speeches during the Mahad satyagraha, he promotes an enlightened ethos of dignity and self-respect. In Mahad 2.0, Dr. Ambedkar discusses the French National Assembly of 1798. These two historical events, which defined the two eras, Mahad 1.0 and 2.0, were instrumental in shaping the idea of India and the ethics of its Constitution.

However, the French Revolution didn't encompass women in its idea of rights. So, neither their National Assembly nor further developments base their substantive egalitarianism by including the living bodies and souls of women. It was Mary Wollstonecraft's intervention via her pamphlet "A Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Citizen" that questioned the exclusion and the place of women in the French Revolution. Dr. Ambedkar, in his 1916 paper, had proposed a novel gendered understanding of caste(s), questioning the approach of Indian sociologists to understand the making-remaking-unmaking of women to grasp the issue of caste, as well as the non-workability of the silos approach to annihilate it. The end can be achieved through gendered means only. The speeches and actions at Mahad 1.0 have the partnership of women and men, irrespective of their gender, geography, class, and caste(s). They gathered there as the National Assembly to break free from the imposed Brahmanical hegemony and chart their own course, just as the Third Estate did during their Tennis Court Oath after being denied permission by King Louis XVI. In Mahad 2.0, although preliminary, the resolution passed appears to be influenced primarily because it inflicts injustice on Shudras. However, even an initial understanding of dogmas, as well as the period of the Manusmriti, suggests that it treated women as Shudras. Contemporary literary and historical texts provide ample evidence to support this. Dr. Ambedkar's actions in Mahad 2.0,

especially the burning of the Manusmriti and addressing the gathering of women, try to foreground a new discourse on human rights whose liberty, equality, and fraternity principles are derived from non-violent Buddhism. Dr. Ambedkar introduced a new concept of a gendered nation whose enlightened nationalism was based not on essentialism but on existentialism, rooted in the body of the people and their natural, legal human rights. Thus, December 25 is also celebrated in India as Indian Women's Liberation Day. The only essentialism it strives to seek is the Manusmriti, based on Maitri, which is a true democracy lived rather than a mere idea of governmentality. This reflects the foundations of constitutional morality derived from the ethics learned during the Mahad Satyagraha, institutionalised in the Constitution of India.

Telangana's 5 lakh crore land gamble: growth or giveaway?



reflecting the same tendencies of former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao (of BRS) during his nine-year tenure," Kishan Reddy says.

Government's defense The government contends the policy is long overdue. According to its order, decades-old industrial estates now sit inside the city's dense core, creating environmental and socio-economic pressures. What were once peripheral clusters have, over the decades, been absorbed into Greater Hyderabad's urban fabric. Industrial hubs established in the 1970s — Uppal, Sanathnagar, Kukatpally, Nacharam, Hayatnagar and others — now lie at the heart of a rapidly expanding metropolitan region, a shift accelerated by the recent merger of 27 surrounding urban local bodies. Land values have surged accordingly, as industrial estates that once sat outside the city limits now fall within a high-demand zone for commercial real estate and large-format infrastructure.

Sanathnagar and Kukatpally are today central nodes with prices nearing 9100 crore an acre. Hayatnagar, near the Ramoji Film City, and Uppal, just a few kilometres from the city centre, have seen prices rise beyond the reach of lower and middle-income families. Medchal's merger into GHMC has only intensified this trend, where even the rates fixed by the TGIIC are lower than prevailing market prices.

The proposed conversion of these lands into mixed-use zones, ranging from residential, commercial and institutional to recreational, is expected to push growth in these belts to a new trajectory. With locations such as Sanathnagar, Balanagar, Kukatpally and Hayatnagar falling within accessible range of the metro rail network, rentals are likely to rise sharply, while land prices may surge, making it difficult for lower-income and middle-income families to afford even small plots for housing. Real estate developers and commercial operators are already positioning themselves for first-mover advantage as demand for premium parcels accelerates. Neighbouring localities abutting these industrial belts, including Moula Ali, Miyapur and Vanasthalipuram, offer early evidence of this shift, having rapidly evolved into self-contained mini-cities with full amenities driven by housing demand and retail expansion.

The boom in commercial activity is expected to create opportunities for daily wage earners and former industrial workers who are currently relying on odd jobs to survive, but the stability of this transition remains uncertain. While the service-sector surge may offer short-term relief, it is unclear whether these new jobs can match the earnings, security and dignity that factory-floor employment provided for decades, raising important questions for policymakers about the future of low-income households in Hyderabad's changing economic landscape. Public policy expert D. Narasimha Reddy says the government's order appears more like an administrative directive than a holistic, inclusive instrument. Three glaring gaps — no safety net for workers' livelihoods, environmental protections and absence of a road map for relocation of current industries — are evident from the present policy, he points out.

'Repurposing unviable land' Against this backdrop, the government says the land faces two problems. Many industrial units have become unviable because of outdated technology, disrupted supply chains and rising compliance costs in dense urban settings. Many have already shut, leaving prime land underutilised and unproductive. It argues that relocation of these industries is not new, citing G.O. 20 (2013) in undivided Andhra Pradesh, which mandated strategic shifting of polluting industries outside the ORR. For its part, the TGIIC is already developing modern, eco-friendly industrial parks to support the move. "The proposed HILTP is the logical and strategic next step to repurpose vacated underutilised lands within ORR, transforming them into productive and integrated urban spaces," the government states in the policy. Under the policy, all TGIIC industrial estates, parks, auto-nagars and standalone industrial units within and near ORR are eligible for conversion, paving the way for apartments, integrated townships, offices, retail centres, hotels, schools, hospitals, research centres, parks, sports facilities and cultural centres apart from technology campuses in alignment with the State's GRID (Growth in Dispersion) policy. As criticism by the Opposition mounted, the government sought to defend its stand, claiming the proposal to relocate industries within ORR limits was not new and that the issue was mooted by the governments of the erstwhile united Andhra Pradesh as part of efforts to make the city pollution-free. Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka and Ministers N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, D. Sridhar Babu and Jupalli Krishna Rao called the BRS' charges "baseless" and accused it of mudslinging. "Rama Rao himself proposed shifting of 200 industrial parks from the ORR limits when he was minister between 2017 and 2022. Of those, 42 acres were converted from industrial to residential use during the BRS regime," Uttam Reddy had pointed out. They stress the land is not government-owned and was purchased by industrialists decades ago, and the change of land use formalises its new potential.

Beyond the political battle, officials are stunned by how the policy details leaked ahead of its formal announcement. Rama Rao's early disclosure of SRO values and finer points has triggered an internal inquiry. The government is reportedly preparing to release details of land deals during the previous regime, claiming that several were executed without any policy framework or Cabinet consent.

Economic offenders who fled the country owe 39000 crores to Indian banks

Just nine Fugitive Economic Offenders (FEOs) owed Indian banks over 58,000 crore in principal and interest. Despite having arrest warrants issued against them, these FEOs have left India and refuse to return to avoid criminal prosecution. Of this, the principal amount owed is 22,645 crore, while interest accounts for 31,437 crore. To date, banks have recovered just over 19,000 crore — roughly 33% of the total dues. Earlier this week, the Ministry of Finance informed Parliament that 15 individuals had been declared FEOs as of October 31. Nine of them are involved in large-scale financial fraud, and the amounts they owe have been made public. State Bank of India (SBI) is owed over 22,000 crore, followed by Punjab National Bank and Bank of India. The chart below shows the amount owed to the banks and the amount recovered. Notably, the SBI has achieved the highest recovery rate among these lenders, retrieving close to 52%. This is largely attributed to effective recovery measures, including liquidation, in Vijay Mallya's account. In contrast, the recovery rate for other banks remains below 40%. In terms of total dues owed initially (principal plus interest), businessman Mallya tops the list with nearly 27,000 crore. The chart below shows the amount owed by the offenders and the amount recovered. He is followed by the Sandesara family (Sterling Group) and Nirav Modi. Over 56% of amount owed by Mallya has been recovered till date, while for others, the rate is much



lower at 17% for the Sandesara family and 7% in the case of Modi. The charts below detail the loan exposure and recovered amount for the top offenders. SBI led in exposure to Mallya, whereas PNB bore the brunt of Modi's defaults. For the Sandesara family, the exposure was shared among multiple banks. The chart below details the loan exposure of various banks and the recovered amount in accounts related to Vijay Mallya. The chart below details loan exposure and the recovered amount in accounts related to the Sandesara family. The chart below details loan exposure and the recovered amount in accounts related to Nirav Modi. The data for the charts were sourced from Parliament Questions and Answers.

Ahead of 2026-27 Budget: MSMEs seek better credit access, safeguards against exchange rate risks, tariff shocks



today are operating under extraordinary stress — not due to inefficiency, but due to policy asymmetry, external shocks, and structural neglect. While India aspires to become a global manufacturing and export hub, the smallest units that feed the supply chain are being systematically weakened. Unless decisive, budget-backed interventions are announced in Union Budget 2026-27, a large section of micro enterprises will silently exit, causing irreversible damage to employment and domestic manufacturing capacity," KE Raghunathan, Founder Chairman, AIE, said in the letter.

The MSMEs are seeking simplified compliance norms from the government in the form of higher exemption thresholds and a single simplified GST return for micro units. They have also sought time-bound GST refunds within 15 days with statutory interest for government delays. "Complete decriminalisation of procedural lapses — no prosecution for minor errors. Unified Annual Compliance Return replacing multiple filings under GST, labour, and local laws," the letter stated. Given the global tariff war, the AIE has also sought coverage from exchange rate shocks, recommending a forex fluctuation protection scheme for micro enterprises with limited hedging capacity. The MSMEs have also suggested that the Reserve Bank of India could consider simplified hedging instruments with subsidised cost for micro units. Micro enterprises are the first to be hit and last to be supported during global disruptions, Raghunathan said, adding that there should be an 'Emergency Working Capital Window' when wars disrupt raw materials, fuel, and shipping routes. The Association has also suggested a freight equalisation subsidy for micro exporters during abnormal container shortage and freight volatility along with priority access to containers for micro exporters through public sector shipping companies and ports.

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'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.

Alleging environmental damage, Dutch nonprofit files 1.4-billion-euro claim against Tata Steel Netherlands

Tata Steel added that while TSN is yet to receive material from SFW on which the nonprofit intends to rely in the case, it has "already identified substantial grounds for defence".

The TSN plant in IJmuiden in the province of North Holland spans 750 hectares, and is spread over three municipalities — Velsen, Beverwijk, and Heemskerk. The plant produces 7 million tonnes of high-quality steel every year, and employs over 9,200 people, according to the TSN website. The plant came into the Tata Steel fold when the Indian company acquired British-Dutch steelmaker Corus Group plc in 2007.

The proceedings initiated by SFW concern a collective action under the Dutch Act on Collective Settlement of Mass Claims (WAMCA), Tata Steel said. WAMCA is the legal framework in the Netherlands for class action lawsuits in that country. A class action suit is a case where typically a few people or entities sue a large company or organisation on behalf of a large group of people who claim to have suffered similar harm from that defendant company or organisation. Such lawsuits allow individuals with small claims to pool resources and share legal costs of the case. According to TSN, SFW has provided no supporting evidence for the claim, making it unsubstantiated and speculative. TSN rejects their claims being without any basis," Tata Steel said.

TSN, which includes Tata Steel Nederland BV and Tata Steel IJmuiden BV, is "fully prepared" to defend against the claim that has been filed in the District Court North Holland, and believes that SFW faces "considerable challenges regarding both admissibility and the merits of its case", the parent company said in a stock exchange filing in India.

This is what happens when you meditate for just 5 minutes daily before sleeping



It sounds almost too simple: five quiet minutes, a slow breath, eyes shut, and the day finally loosening its grip. But according to neurologists and sleep specialists, this tiny nightly ritual may be one of the most powerful ways to reset your brain before bed — and its long-term impact is far from small.

A Powerful Shift in Just 5 Minutes Many people assume short meditations don't "count," but experts say the brain responds surprisingly quickly. "Even a five-minute meditation before sleeping can be quite impressive," says Dr Keni Ravish Rajiv, Senior Consultant — Neurology and Head of Epilepsy Services, Aster Whitefield Hospital. "It helps the brain switch from an active and alert state to a calmer parasympathetic mode." This shift isn't abstract — the body follows instantly. According to Dr Keni, those five minutes can slow the heart rate, reduce stress hormones, and quiet the mental noise collected through the day. Over time, he says, the brain begins to associate this short ritual with winding down, "creating a habituation effect that makes it easier to disengage at night mentally." The long-term effects? As he puts it: "Five minutes every night can still lead to lots of positive changes — better emotional regulation, reduced anxiety, fewer rumination loops, and greater stress resilience." Sleep specialist Dr Pujan Parikh, Consultant —

Ed Sheeran opens up about his fitness routine and giving up daily drinking: 'It was quite important for fitness'



In the latest instalment of Men's Health Magazine's Icebreakers series, Ed Sheeran jumped into an ice bath and answered some rapid-fire questions. When asked if he was feeling good (in the bath), the British pop star jokingly replied, "No." Talking about a typical day of his training, Sheeran said that he likes to build it up with arm and leg days. "Some days will be running, or reformer Pilates, yoga or swimming." He also revealed that giving up drinking daily was not as complicated as he thought it would be. "It was quite important for fitness, and learning moderation is key."

What is an ice bath?

An ice bath is essentially immersing yourself up to the neck or shoulders and staying in cold water for a specified duration. Monitoring time spent in the tub is essential, since overdoing it can lead to adverse effects such as frostbite or increased cardiovascular stress. According to fitness expert Garima Goyal, this constriction helps alleviate inflammation by limiting the influx of immune cells and reducing the production of inflammatory substances. Athletes and fitness enthusiasts often turn to ice baths as a post-exercise recovery strategy, aiming to minimise muscle damage and inflammation induced by intense physical activity and to improve nerve function. "Exposure to cold triggers the body's stress response, prompting the release of stress hormones like adrenaline. This physiological reaction may help improve circulation, increase alertness, and stimulate the production of endorphins — neurotransmitters associated with pain relief and feelings of well-being. Consequently, individuals who incorporate ice baths into their routine might experience a mood lift and a heightened sense of recovery," she told indianexpress.com.

Is it suitable for all?

While these proposed benefits are promising, it's essential to consider individual variations in response to cold exposure. Goyal believes factors such as age, fitness level, and overall health can influence how someone's body reacts to an 8-minute ice bath. In fact, people with certain medical conditions, such as cardiovascular issues or Raynaud's disease, should be careful as the extreme cold could exacerbate their conditions. Alternatives such as con-

trast baths, which involve alternating between cold and warm water, are also explored by those seeking recovery benefits without the intensity of a full ice bath. Goyal also added that the duration of an ice bath is a critical factor in balancing potential benefits with associated risks. According to her, an optimal duration is around 10 to 15 minutes, as exceeding this timeframe may lead to concerns such as increased cardiovascular risk, frostbite, adverse effects on recovery, etc. Here are some quick guidelines to follow: Adhere to recommended guidelines, which typically suggest 10 to 15 minutes for an ice bath. Monitor physical responses and pay attention to how your body responds during the ice bath. If you experience severe discomfort, numbness, or unusual sensations, it's crucial to exit the cold water immediately. Try to acclimatise your body gradually. If you are new to ice baths, start with shorter durations and increase them gradually as your body becomes accustomed to cold exposure.

Recognise that there is no one-size-fits-all approach, and individual tolerance levels should be taken into account. While ice baths can offer benefits when done in moderation, exceeding recommended durations may pose risks to cardiovascular health and increase the likelihood of adverse effects. "Striking a balance and being mindful of individual factors is key to optimising the efficacy and safety of ice bath practices," said Goyal.

'Sabko lagta hai weightlifters zyada khaate hongey': Mirabai Chanu reveals her simple diet of boiled chana and mushrooms



"Sabko lagta hai ki weightlifters hain, toh bahut zyada khaate hongey, par hum itna nahi khaate... kyunki weight control karke rakhna padta hai," said champion weightlifter Mirabai Chanu in an interview. Speaking to The Lallantop, the 2020 Tokyo Olympics silver medalist shed light on weightlifters' diet plans and the myth that athletes tend to eat a lot. On the contrary, athletes have a strict diet plan to ensure they don't gain unnecessary weight. "Sab players ka alag diet hota hai, boxers ka, athletes ka..." Chanu pointed out during the interview.

But why are athletes required to eat less?

"Well, that's not exactly true," nutritionist and personal trainer Deepika Sharma told indianexpress.com. She stressed that not all athletes eat less. Endurance athletes (like marathon runners) often eat more because they burn massive amounts of energy over long periods. Their diets are high in carbohydrates to keep their muscles supplied with glycogen. However, for weight-class athletes (like Chanu) who need maximum strength at minimal body weight, eating less means keeping calories tightly controlled so they don't move up to a heavier category. It's not starvation but precision, elaborated Sharma. "If we talk about

weightlifters, specifically Chanu, being just 1 kg heavier could push her into a different weight class, so food intake has to be monitored almost gram by gram. For under 50 kg, staying at 49kg is the maximum leverage," added Sharma.

Is less more?

Sharing her diet chart, the weightlifter emphasised that weightlifters must maintain their weight. And to do that, a nutrition-rich diet of vegetables and proteins is what they need. Here's what Chanu's health-oriented diet plan looks like: "Mai breakfast mei leti hu, boiled egg, boiled chana, boiled mushroom... hum bread bhi nahi le sakte, hum doodh bhi nahi le sakte, kyunki weight maintain karna hota hai," she revealed. Seconding this, nutritionist Sharma said a weightlifter's ideal diet includes the right amount of protein and carbohydrates. She shared: "A weightlifter can have peanut butter or oats + milk for breakfast. Post-training, they can have protein or paneer along with fruits. For lunch, rice/ chapati in small portions with any meat, such as chicken/ fish/lentils and vegetables, should be doable. Even for Chanu, lunch is all about less-is-more. "...lunch mei zyada se zyada salad or seafood hi khaati hun... kyunki training karna hai, digest karna hai..." The nutritionist further recommended a combination of yoghurt and fruits for evening snacks and a simple meal comprising dal/tofu/eggs, and veggies, along with light carbs for dinner. Bread as a deal breaker?

If you are an aspiring athlete, make a note that breads and rice are seemingly out of sight. And as Chanu said, "bread aur rice nahi khaa sakte..." However, the nutritionist believes that context matters. "For the Tarahumara tribes who run almost 50-100 km every day, their diets are primarily copious amounts of carbs and nothing much. For runners or endurance sports, bread means carbs and carbs mean fuel for long distances."



Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and now Shubman Gill: How Gautam Gambhir and Ajit Agarkar consistently rejected star-culture



GNS News Agency, Dec 30

The year in which the world took fat jabs and got thinner, Indian cricket also took the revolutionary step of discarding its heavyweights. 2025 will be remembered for Indian cricket taking some very un-Indian cricketing decisions. First, Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma were told they wouldn't be needed for Tests. And by the year's end, just about a month before the T20 World Cup at home; Shubman Gill – the Test, ODI captain, and T20I vice-captain – was dropped.

Be it the Kings or the Prince, no one was extended extra-ordinary privileges. Never-ever in India had cricketing royalty been unilaterally treated as commoners. These bolts from the blue were a blow to cricket's deep-rooted cult of personality. Gill Shubman Gill walks off the field after bowled out by South Africa's Marco Jansen during the third T20I cricket match between India and South Africa in Dharamshala. (AP Photo/Ashwini Bhatia) a nation deeply ingrained in VIP culture – where rush-hour traffic stills for cars with beacons, hospitals have dedicated counters and queues for the privileged and highway toll booths exempt the elite – cricket challenged this entrenched ethos of entitlement. There can be an argument about these big selection decisions. Without doubt, they qualify to be called contentious. The chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar and coach Gautam Gambhir can be hauled over the coals and even motives be ascribed to their selection choices. But as the year winds down and the focus shifts from the many tiny pixels that hit the eyes in these past 12 months, a clearer bigger picture emerges. What had seemed like a storm might well be the refreshing winds of change. When Virat and Rohit were left out of the Test squad for the England tour, tongues wagged. This was seen as a Gambhir-orchestrated coup that was fully supported by Agarkar. There was a ring of believability to the grand conspiracy theories that floated around. When Virat and Rohit were left out of the Test squad for the England tour, tongues wagged. When Virat and Rohit were left out of the Test squad for the England tour, tongues wagged. Gambhir and Virat had a past, there were visuals to back the alleged acrimony between them. The new coach was getting rid of seniors to command a

dressing room that had a young captain in Gill – it was a popular assumption, even if false, and didn't sound outlandish. During that time of upheaval and outrage, few spoke about Virat and Rohit's long Test slump. Their numbers were dismal but when are facts allowed to spoil a great cricket story with intrigue? Now when Gill, the new superstar, too missed the World T20 because of an extended run-drought, Agarkar and Gambhir can charge their critics, saying that they use the same yardstick while picking players or stars for the Indian cricket teams. In the early days of the Agarkar-Gambhir partnership, many predicted fireworks. In Mumbai, they call Agarkar "Tiger." First as a player and later as state selector, he wasn't known to suffer fools or players with starry-tantrums. He has had a long association with the great Sachin Tendulkar. Agarkar also hangs out with Indian cricket's coolest crowd – Zaheer Khan and Yuvraj Singh being his close friends.

Gambhir too played his cricket in the Fab Four era. He has been the miraculously gifted Virender Sehwag's long-time opening partner. A passionate player, Gambhir hasn't just seen greatness from such close quarters but has also witnessed the vulnerability of greats in crunch games. A two-time ICC tournament winner, Gambhir had top-scored in both the finals that India won. He had taken on the opposition when the big guns failed. Besides, Gambhir's life-long obsession to dismantle Indian cricket's star culture is too well-known.

With such back stories, it was unlikely that Agarkar and Gambhir would have got overwhelmed by the presence of Rohit, Virat or Gill during team meetings. Both had seen enough legends elder to them from up-close to get dazed by younger stars. One bowler, another batsman, one from Mumbai, another from Delhi, the contrasting characters had one common ground – they weren't the kind who would get star-struck. In the recent past, India hasn't had such strong decision-makers. They were light-weights happy to indulge the stars. That was the reason, the stars of the team had a free run. Captains, read Virat Kohli, were allowed to pick the team's coach, as in Ravi Shastri replacing Anil Kumble. MS Dhoni avoided the sack as Test captain despite his team's horrific record. Selector Mohinder Amarnath tried but he couldn't put his foot down. He was over-ruled by the then BCCI president N Srinivasan.

From Kapil Dev to Virat Kohli, stars got a long rope since selectors were not bold enough to take unpopular decisions. Agarkar and Gambhir, despite living in times of brutal social media trolling and traumatic personal attacks, have taken those tough calls. A selector and coach can never be flawless in the decision-making but they have shown two rare qualities – conviction and consistency. And this has helped them to look fair: the prime virtue of any decision-maker. So is this the beginning of the end of cricket's star-culture? That's wishful thinking. If not 2026, 2027 will decide that. It's the year of the ODI World Cup and time to take the final call on the international careers of Rohit and Virat.

Aakash Chopra on Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli playing Vijay Hazare Trophy: 'The level gets elevated'

GNS News Agency, Dec 30

Indian veterans Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli have opted to play the Vijay Hazare Trophy this season. The former blitzed with a century in the opening game for Mumbai in Jaipur against Sikkim, and later scored a ton at the Centre of Excellence against Andhra Pradesh in the first round and scored 61-ball 77 against Gujarat in the 2nd. Former Indian opener Aakash Chopra, on his YouTube channel, said the presence of Rohit and Kohli has elevated the playing levels of the competition. "Rohit and Kohli have scored runs, and they had to score runs. One scored in Jaipur and the other in the COE (Centre of Excellence). One demolished Sikkim and the other made Andhra's rail, which was nice to see. Suddenly, domestic cricket became a part of the conversation," Chopra said on his YouTube channel.

"If Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma go, they are going to score a lot of runs. It's not like they were going to struggle, and it's not like they won't be selected if they don't score runs here, but the moment they go, the level gets elevated. You suddenly become a point of discussion in mainstream news, and that's what you want," he added. However, Chopra also questioned the value of runs that are being scored at the domestic level. "Everyone is scoring hun-



dreds. 400 is being chased somewhere and 560-plus is being scored somewhere else. It's a serious question. What about the standard? So many runs have been scored. Do you actually value the runs then? If 550-plus runs are being scored and 300 runs are being chased in 30 overs, that's not good," he said. "Actually, it's a poor reflection. It happened after the Lodha committee, when so many states were added. Teams were added, but the infrastructure and the road from bottom to top weren't prepared. It was a flawed system. The gap is phenomenal," Chopra observed.

Diogo Jota's son will join mascots as his former clubs Liverpool and Wolves face each other



GNS News Agency, Dec 30

Both sons of late Liverpool footballer Diogo Jota will join the mascots at Anfield when Liverpool will face Wolverhampton Wanderers in Premier League on Saturday, the club confirmed. Portuguese forward Jota, who played for both Premier League clubs, died in a car crash alongside his younger brother in July in northwestern Spain. He was 28. Jota made his entry to the English Premier League through Wolves when he joined them from Atletico Madrid in 2017 on a loan. Later, he made the move permanent. In three years with Wolves, Jota scored 44 goals and gave 13 assists across all competitions playing in 131 games. He then signed a five-year deal in 2020 with Liverpool, where he won the league title earlier this year. In five years at Liverpool, Jota scored 65 goals and gave 22 assists in 182 games.

His best season came in 2021-22 when he scored 21 goals and provided six assists in 55 games. Saturday's match marks the first time Liverpool and Wolves have met since Jota's death. Jota's wife Rute Cardoso and her two sons, Dinis and Duarte, were present for the Premier League home openers for both Liverpool and Wolves in August. Both

teams are having a poor season at the moment in respect to their previous seasons performance. Defending champions Liverpool are placed sixth in the league table with 29 points and are ten points behind the leaders Arsenal. They have won three out of their last five games. The club also saw a brief fall-off between coach Arne Slot and talisman Mo Salah before normalcy was restored. While on the other hand, Wolves are reeling in the last place of the league with 0 wins from 17 games. The club has been on a horrific run and have lost all their last five games.

India Women clinch T20I series as Shafali shines in Thiruvananthapuram

Thiruvananthapuram: In-form opener Shafali Verma smashed an unbeaten 79 off 42 balls to power India Women to an eight-wicket victory over Sri Lanka Women in the third T20I of the five-match series, securing an unassailable 3-0 lead at the Greenfield International Stadium on Friday.

After Renuka Singh Thakur's 4-21 and Deepti Sharma's 3-18 restricted Sri Lanka to 112/7, Shafali tore apart the bowling attack with a splendid display of strokeplay – smashing 11 fours and three sixes in a blistering knock that guided India home with 6.4 overs to spare. Despite losing her opening partner Smriti Mandhana and Jemimah Rodrigues to Kavisha Dilhari, Shafali dominated from the outset to ensure India's convincing win. Captain Harmanpreet Kaur contributed with a composed 21 not out, as India sealed their fourth consecutive T20I series win over Sri Lanka.

On this day: Ajinkya Rahane's masterful century at MCG in early chapters of India's stunning 2020/21 BGT win



England finally won a Test match in Australia on Saturday for the first time in 15 years, but not before they had already conceded a series defeat in the Ashes, hardly able to compete in the previous three matches of the series. Similarly, India struggled to compete in Australia last year in the 3-1 defeat in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Both of these are indicators of just how difficult it is to beat Australia Down Under, which only makes India's back-to-back series win there in 2018/19 and 2020/21 look steadily more remarkable with each passing year.

Among the two, it would be the 2020/21 series that looks more unbelievable by some distance. India started by being blown out for 36 in the second innings of the first Test and being absolutely hammered after that to go 1-0 down. Moreover, their captain and best batter Virat Kohli went back home after that, and they kept losing key players to injury over the course of the series, including Jasprit Bumrah, Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja. Despite all that, they went and won it 2-1, sealing it all off by inflicting Australia's first Test defeat at the Gabba since Viv Richards' all-conquering West Indies side did so in November 1988.

A number of key players stood up with brilliant individual performances for India over the course of the series and in the first Test after that blow out in Adelaide, which was the Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), it was the captain himself. Ajinkya Rahane had spent many a year deputising for Virat Kohli and had never lost the handful of Tests he had led in that point against opposition India are almost always expected to defeat. But here, he truly stepped out of the shadows and claimed his

own legacy. One could argue that India's comeback in the series really began with the clinical bowling performance on Day 1 led by Jasprit Bumrah (4/56) and Ravichandran Ashwin (3/35). An extremely confident Australia were all out for 195, with Steve Smith in particular failing to Ashwin for a duck. However, India needed a considerable lead to stand a chance at truly getting their noses in front in the Test and for that, they needed at least one big score. It had looked like the debutant Shubman Gill had the bit between his teeth when he fluently went about making 45 in 65 balls but his fall was followed soon by the sturdy Cheteshwar Pujara's dismissal. Rahane then anchored the Indian middle order, putting up partnerships of 52 with Hanuma Vihari and 57 with Rishabh Pant. Finally, though, it is with Ravindra Jadeja that he managed to hammer India's advantage home. He got to his 12th Test century in 197 balls by cutting Pat Cummins's fourth ball in the 88th over fiercely to the backward point area for a four.

Rahane did ride his luck a bit though, something that one could argue will be seen in almost every Test innings. He was dropped by Smith of all people at second slip third ball of the 81st over off the bowling of Mitchell Starc while he was on 73. It was Starc who was the bowler once again in the 92nd over, this time with Rahane on 104 as Travis Head put him down at gully. That was a snorter of a delivery and it had hit Rahane on the glove, he needed some treatment, in which time a drizzle came in and the umpires led the players off the field. The sun broke through eventually and Rahane continued sturdily, only to fall while the batters attempted a rather suicidal run. Rahane was at the non-striker's end and he responded to Jadeja's call, who had dropped it to short cover and taken off almost instinctively. Labuschagne fired in the throw, it didn't even take a direct hit for Rahane to be run out on 112 off 223 balls. India went on to be all out for 326 after which Mohammed Siraj, who like Gill was making his Test debut, led the way with incredible figures of 3/37 in 21.3 overs. It was a team performance from the bowlers though, with Australia finding no respite whatsoever – Bumrah, Ashwin and Jadeja all took two wickets each while Umesh Yadav struck with one. Australia were all out for 200, giving India target of 70 to win. Rahane had to walk out to bat once again, with Mayank Agarwal and Pujara falling inside the first six overs, but saw India over the line with Gill at the other end.

Faf du Plessis says he is 'fortunate' to play under MS Dhoni and Stephen Fleming

GNS News Agency, Dec 30

Faf du Plessis' Joburg Super Kings will take on Keshav Maharia's Pretoria Capitals in game two of the ongoing SA20. Ahead of the high-octane clash, Du Plessis lauded Super Kings management and said how players feel encouraged while playing in franchises where they feel backed. He also said that he is fortunate that he has played under the great names like MS Dhoni and Stephen Fleming at the Chennai Super Kings. "I've been very fortunate to play under some great names like MS [Dhoni] and [Stephen] Fleming has been there from the beginning. So, that consistency is great to be a part of and one that I'm really still enjoying," Joburg Super Kings Captain Faf du Plessis addresses media on JioStar Press Room ahead of SA20 Season 4.

"I think if you look, any player organisation would say that a team that they like to play for is a team that they feel backed. So, if you look at the general Super Kings way of players that they've backed over the years, you can definitely see that consistency," he added. "For someone like myself, you know, 10 years with them in the IPL and our three years at JSK and also Texas Super King. It's a great franchise to be a part of. Graeme Smith, the SA20 Commissioner, said the league has ticked several boxes in its

four-year existence, working as a fine feeder line for the national team. "I think credit needs to go to the players and the national team for their performance over the last couple of years." "I think our role at SA20 from the beginning, we've always said that we want to put 50, 60 players on the global map every year, expose them to the best possible cricket and help develop the player pool around the national teams." "And I think over the last couple of years, we've certainly seen a lot of players develop their game, go from talented youngsters to great international cricketers," said Smith.

World Rapid Championship 2025: With a defensive masterclass Arjun Erigaisi keeps Magnus Carlsen at bay



GNS News Agency, Dec 30

"Attack is the best defence." While this maxim may hold true in many chess games against most opponents, when facing Magnus Carlsen, defence truly becomes the best defence. On Friday, the top-ranked Indian, Arjun Erigaisi, deployed a defensive shield so formidable that even the endgame monster Carlsen could not break through. In the fifth and final round of the opening day of the Rapid portion at the World Rapid & Blitz Championship in Doha, Arjun's 101-move marathon defensive masterclass, marked by an extraordinary 98 percent accuracy in a shortened time control, halted Carlsen's juggernaut, which had been rolling at full force until then.

Entering the round as the only two players with perfect 4/4 scores, Arjun and Carlsen were playing to break into the sole lead at the conclusion of Day 1. Described by Carlsen himself as a "Mad Man of the chessboard" for his extreme ambition and desire "to kill you in every game," Arjun revealed an entirely different dimension of his play against the very same opponent. While holding onto his natural instinct to fight for a win, he tempered his aggressive style and unveiled a solid, resilient version of his game. "Arjun is just a complete mad man at the board. He wants to kill you in every single game. Has crazy preparation and plays extremely ambitiously and that's what makes him very dangerous," Carlsen had earlier told The Indian Express. Playing against Carlsen is never easy. Facing an on-song Carlsen with the black pieces in a rapid format makes the contest even more lopsided, where holding the

five-time World Rapid Champion to a draw can feel as good as a win. And when your opponent is rated 2,824, a full 110 Elo points above you, the task becomes anything but straightforward. Patience and precision the game, Arjun displayed extraordinary patience and precision. He consistently found the right moves, forcing Carlsen to burn precious seconds on the clock early on. Gradually, the Indian appeared to be pushing the prime title contender to the wall, yet it was the Norwegian's mastery that still managed to steer the game toward an equal endgame with level material. By only move No.17, the pair had already reached a queen-and-rook endgame, and it was time for Arjun to summon his best defensive play.

In the endgame, Carlsen, arguably the finest endgame tactician in the world, still managed to squeeze every drop of advantage from the position, first winning a pawn and soon going two pawns up. Suddenly, Arjun was facing the heat. By this stage, over 50 moves had been played. Carlsen's pawns advanced on the kingside, marshalled by his king and rook, while Arjun had only a rook to defend his lone king. Then came a magnificent defensive stand from Arjun. Move after move, he kept Carlsen's pawns under constant threat, preventing their promotion and blocking any mating attack. Carlsen prolonged the struggle until the 101st move before finally conceding that Arjun would not be broken today and settled for a draw, his first shared result of the event. As for Arjun, that draw likely tasted even sweeter than his four wins. For Arjun, who has missed out on the ultimate glory on frustratingly numerous occasions, this event carries an added layer of motivation with a chance to prove his worth and finally take the great leap that has eluded him for so long. Having notched up four wins in the first five rounds, Arjun now sits as a joint-leader of the event with 4.5 points, alongside Carlsen, D. Gukesh, Maxime-Vachier Lagrave and Vladislav Artemiev.

Earlier in the day, Arjun was expected to cruise through the initial rounds with relative ease and sped off the blocks with a win over 132nd-ranked International Master Marco Matera. The 16-year-old Frenchman impressed in the opening and middlegame, denying Arjun any clear positional advantage with the white pieces. However, inexperience soon showed when, in just two poor moves, Matera was left defending a nearly lost position.

Imran Khan rejected a gold iPhone for a hot shower; recalls when he was paid Rs 12 cr for a film: 'Aamir Khan's money is not coming to me'



When Imran Khan made his debut in 2008, he was often introduced as Aamir Khan's nephew, which led to the perception that he was a classic "born with a silver spoon" star kid. However, Imran has now clarified that while he may have appeared privileged, his financial reality was far more nuanced. Speaking on the podcast Unfiltered by Samdish, Imran explained that although he came from a well-known film family, Aamir Khan's success never translated into money for him. "He is my mom's cousin brother. That's not my money. That's not coming to me," Imran said.

Imran Khan's salary increased from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 crore. He shared that he grew up with his mother and stepfather, actor Raj Zutshi. His grandfather Nasir Hussain was a successful producer in the 1960s and 70s, but by the time Imran was growing up in the 80s and 90s, the family was "asset rich but cash poor." While they lived in a large house in Mumbai's Pali Hill, his pocket money was less than the kids he was growing up with. "By no means deprived," he clarified, "but I was not rolling in money." Imran spoke candidly about how overnight fame after *Jaane Tu... Ya Jaane Na* left him confused about his worth. "When my first film released and became a hit, I went from being paid almost nothing to being paid multiple crores. At 25, suddenly you're being paid Rs 7-10 crore," he said. The jump felt illogical to him, especially since his earlier films hadn't reflected any drastic improvement in his acting. He recalled being paid just Rs 5 lakh for *Kidnap* because the makers

initially didn't even want him. "By the time *Jaane Tu* released, I had already done three films. I suddenly thought to myself, 'did my acting grow so much from my previous film?'"

Imran Khan and Kareena Kapoor in *Ek Mai Aur Ek Tu*. (Photo: Imran Khan/Instagram) Imran Khan and Kareena Kapoor in *Ek Mai Aur Ek Tu*. (Photo: Imran Khan/Instagram) He also shared a telling anecdote from a promotional trip to Dubai. He shared that he was offered a gold iPhone for the opening of a jewellery store, but he rejected it. "This one time I was in Dubai for a promotional event. I kept on doing interviews the whole time. By evening, I was extremely tired. And the next day, I am supposed to catch a flight to London. I was preparing to sleep is when my manager came to me and said, 'Sir, in this mall there is an opening of a jewellery shop, if you will do the ribbon cutting ceremony, they will give you gold iPhone.' I said, 'No, thank you. You keep the gold iPhone, I need a hot shower, I want a drink and a good night sleep.' He recalled, adding that another, far richer actor happily attended the event to get the phone. Imran revealed that the highest paycheque of his career was Rs 12 crore for a film he didn't name. However, by the final schedule, he felt the money wasn't worth the personal cost. "I remember thinking, 'Take this Rs 12 crore and give me my six months of life back,'" he said. Reflecting on his current situation, Imran admitted that his net worth today is significantly lower than it was a decade ago. After stepping away from the industry, not working for nearly 10 years, and going through a divorce, his finances were split. "Even today, I am at a place where I haven't worked for 10 years and I am still not stressed about paying my bills," he said, pointing out the irony that people far wealthier than him still chase superficial perks. He also recalled co-hosting the Filmfare Awards with Ranbir Kapoor, describing the grueling schedule that stretched from morning rehearsals to late-night performances. For all that work, he estimated they were paid around Rs 50 lakh. "I don't remember exactly, but speculatively I can say maybe around Rs 50 lakh. It's not bad money. If you really consider a scale at which a leading actor earns in comparison to all other actors and all the other non-actors on set with all the recent films, there will come a moment where they will all sit and say 'Hang on! They will then analyse the whole thing, and somewhere in the mathematics and algebra, they will say, 'This is not making sense.' It doesn't make sense to pay one person so much." Speaking about current A-list actor fees, Imran was blunt. "If you're an A-lister in theatrical films today, you're not earning less than Rs 30 crore per film," he said. "Any-one my age—Ranbir Kapoor, Ranveer Singh, Shahid Kapoor—I would be surprised if any of them are earning less than that."

Bigg Boss fame Malti Chahar recalls when parents hit her after fighting with each other: 'They fought constantly'



me or my pain even in the Bigg Boss house. The problem is that it is extremely difficult to explain to people with the attitude: 'Sabko hota hai, iska kya hai itna?'"

Malti further revealed that health struggles were accompanied by other familial issues. "There was a lot of tension between my parents. They fought constantly, and being the elder sibling, I had to witness all of it. My brother had started playing cricket, which kept him away from these fights." She shared that these were not the only hardships she faced. Another deeply troubling phase of her life was when her father boycotted her until she completed her 12th grade. "I had told my father that I wanted to participate in the Miss India beauty pageant and pursue a career in the entertainment industry. However, he wanted me to become an IPS officer. He believed that by keeping me away from these ambitions, I would focus on my studies. I was forced to keep short hair until the 11th grade and was given no freedom. It affected me deeply," she said.

Malti also recalled facing eve-teasing during her childhood. "My father was posted in Suratgarh, a small town. I was frequently eve-teased there, but I couldn't complain to my parents because I knew they would impose even more restrictions on me. All of this makes me feel that I didn't have a good life after seventh grade." Clarifying her perspective, she added, "My father didn't have bad intentions, but I couldn't do anything I wanted." Speaking about the impact of domestic conflicts, Malti said, "We lived in a 1BHK house, where do you go when your parents are fighting? Many times, my mother would hit me after arguing with my father, and at times, my father did the same. They never realised the impact it had on me. They had compatibility issues and have been living separately for the past 13 years."

Battle of Galwan teaser: Wounded Salman Khan roars 'Jai Bajrang Bali' as he fights Chinese troops.



soldiers.

The teaser begins with a visual of a valley, featuring snow-capped mountains and a river flowing through the tough terrain. Salman's voiceover breaks the silence as he addresses his soldiers, saying, "Jawano yaad rahe, zakhm lage toh medial samajhna aur mat dikhe toh salam karna aur kehna 'ajai nahi fir kabhi' (Soldiers remember, if you get scars think of them as a medal and if you see death while fighting, tell it 'not today, come some other time.')." Salman also raises slogans like "Jai Bajrang Bali" and "Bharat Mata Ki Jai."

The visuals show a wounded Salman standing in front of his soldiers, holding nothing but a thick wooden lathi. Behind him, a handful of soldiers are seen standing tall with wooden lathis to defend the nation from the Chinese troops. Salman smiles as he prepares to confront the enemy and says, "Maut se kya darna, usse toh aana hai (Why fear death, it has to come someday?)."

Battle of Galwan is based on the clash between Indian and Chinese troops in the Galwan region in June 2020. As per reports, it saw 200 Indian soldiers bravely defending their territory against a force of 1,200 Chinese Liberation Army soldiers.

Battle of Galwan teaser: After facing disappointment at the box office with his last release *Sikandar*, Salman Khan is set to return to theatres with Apoorva Lakhia's directorial *Battle of Galwan*. The makers unveiled the film's teaser on the actor's 60th birthday. The teaser shows Salman's Colonel B Santosh Babu motivating 200 Indian soldiers as they prepare to battle against 1,200 Chinese Liberation Army

Akshaye Khanna exits Drishyam 3: What was he doing in Drishyam 2, and how will this affect the third film?



Akshaye Khanna, who has emerged as an unlikely social media heartthrob in recent weeks following the success of Aditya Dhar's *Drishyam* 3. The film is currently being shot and is scheduled for an October 2 release in 2026. Multiple reasons are said to be doing the rounds regarding Akshaye's exit, the most prominent being remuneration issues. According to industry chatter, the actor sought a fee hike after the commercial success of *Drishyam*. However, the producer of *Drishyam* 3, Kumar Mangat Pathak, painted a far less diplomatic picture as claimed that "fame has gone to Akshaye Khanna's head" and went on to add that his films on his own "can't even collect Rs 50 crore in India." Pathak also revealed that he had sent a legal notice to the actor for unprofessional behaviour, alleging that Akshaye walked out just ten days before the shoot, despite having accepted an advance payment. Regardless of the exact reason behind Akshaye's exit or the reported creative differences with the producers, a larger question remains: how indispensable was Akshaye Khanna to the *Drishyam* universe in the first place? What did his role truly contribute to the franchise, and what does his departure mean for the film's financial prospects?

Akshaye Khanna's entry into the *Drishyam* universe was not part of Nishikant Kamat's *Drishyam* (2015), the official Hindi remake of the 2013 Malayalam film. He joined the franchise only with *Drishyam* 2 in 2022, playing IG Tarun Ahlawat. His character was introduced largely for narrative convenience. By the end of the first film, Tabu's character, IG Meera Deshmukh, leaves Goa and settles in London after failing to bring Vijay Salgaonkar (Ajay Devgn) to justice for the murder of her son, Sameer. Tarun Ahlawat, a close friend of Meera, effectively joins her in the sequel, reopening the case and attempting to extract a confession from Vijay and his family, solely to deliver the justice Meera never received. In practical terms, Tarun Ahlawat enters *Drishyam* 2 roughly midway through the film. Much of his screen time is devoted to conventional investigative tropes: mind games, intimidation tactics, and calculated pressure on Vijay's family. There are familiar scenes meant to establish his intelligence, in-

cluding moments where he is shown playing chess with himself, as well as visits to the Salgaonkar household in Vijay's absence, where he attempts to unsettle Nandini Salgaonkar (Shriya Saran), Anju Salgaonkar (Ishita Dutta), and Anu (Mrunal Jadhav). To the character's credit, Tarun does manage to extract a confession from Vijay during interrogation. But, as is customary in the *Drishyam* films, the last laugh rests with Vijay. In the closing stretch, he once again outsmarts both Tarun and Meera, reinforcing the franchise's core dynamic. As a result, Tarun Ahlawat never quite attains the dramatic weight nor the narrative dominance that Tabu's Meera Deshmukh enjoyed in the first film. Compared to Akshaye's recent turn in *Drishyam*, where he was given far greater scope to explore layered emotions and moral ambiguity with the crime kingpin Rehman Dakait, *Drishyam* 2 offered him a comparatively restrained role with almost zero arc. Whether the third film intended to significantly expand his character remains unknown, but it is hardly surprising that an actor coming off more "meaty" role may have grown hesitant about reprising a part unless his expectations were met. Akshaye Khanna Only time will tell if Akshaye Khanna's decision to step down from a blockbuster franchise like *Drishyam* was a wise move.

What does Akshaye Khanna's exit mean for *Drishyam* 3?

The impact of Akshaye's exit is difficult to quantify, but there is precedent to consider. In the Malayalam *Drishyam* franchise, the third installment has already completed shooting, as confirmed earlier this month by filmmaker Jeethu Joseph on Instagram. In that version, the role corresponding to Tarun Ahlawat continues to be played by Murali Gopy, who also appeared in the second film. In the Hindi adaptation, however, Kumar Mangat Pathak has confirmed that Jaideep Ahlawat will replace Akshaye Khanna. Pathak has also maintained that Akshaye's presence or absence does not materially affect the franchise, arguing that *Drishyam* is a bigger brand than any individual actor. There is some merit to this claim. The *Drishyam* franchise indeed enjoys an enormous mass following. The fact that *Drishyam* 2, released just after the pandemic in 2022, went on to become the second-highest-grossing Hindi film of the year, only solidifies the same. And, in fact, this was achieved despite the film being a remake of an already successful Malayalam original and despite comparisons with *Mohanlal's* widely acclaimed version. That said, Akshaye Khanna is undeniably experiencing a renewed wave of popularity following *Drishyam*. Whether this resurgence is driven more by the film itself or by audience interest in him as a marquee draw remains to be seen. Bollywood has witnessed similar moments in recent times, most notably with Bobby Deol's much-celebrated comeback in *Animal*, which was followed by a gradual cooling of the surrounding hype. Only time will tell whether Akshaye's decision to walk away from the *Drishyam* franchise proves to be a calculated career move or a missed opportunity.

'Directors are scared after *Dhurandhar*': Ram Gopal Varma says film industry ignored Ranveer Singh film's success



Director Ram Gopal Varma has been singing praises of Aditya Dhar's *Dhurandhar* for a few days now. In a recent interaction, the filmmaker compared the film to *Mahabharata* and claimed that other filmmakers and producers are "scared" after *Dhurandhar's* success as it has forced them to rethink how action sequences are presented in their films. The action scenes of *Dhurandhar* were widely appreciated by fans.

'Directors are scared after *Dhurandhar*' Speaking to NDTV, he said, "I'm not trying to demean any film, but the type of action in which people are thrown in the air.... The audience is used to seeing that kind of action in big films which have been released in the last 7-10 years. In *Dhurandhar*, the action seems real, it is how it will happen and that is being liked so much more by the same crowd who watches over-the-top action." He added, "I think makers will have a wake-up call now. They will be scared on whether that kind (over-the-top) of action will work now after this film. It is a film that made everyone rethink, go back to the scripts that are under production, I know 3-4 director friends of mine who are scared about what is going to work, whether what they are making will work? That is the effect of this film. This is why I think it is far more than just a film. This is the reason I called it a quantum leap."

RGV also claimed that many in the film industry initially ignored the success of Ranveer Singh-starrer *Dhurandhar*. He said, "I believe it is a horror film because it is scaring everyone. Do you have the capacity to imitate this film? If some films would have released after *Dhurandhar*, I'm not sure how they would have done. Most of them would have been laughed out of the theatres. Now the films that are in production have to go back and revisit how they are planning their action sequences. Most of the time the film industry wants to ignore something that becomes highly successful because they don't know what to do." Comparing *Dhurandhar* to *Mahabharata*, RGV said, "I think it's (*Dhurandhar*) somewhere between the characters of real life and *Mahabharata*, you know, because if you look at it, when a guy like Babu Dakait is introduced, in big font coming with the background score, it already psychological-

ally kind of hyped up the man, even without you knowing what he does, which is pretty much what they've done with every character. So that is what I meant by psychological play of violence—the very word *Dakait* itself." He continued, "And I don't know if it's a surname or whatever the hell it is, but the moment that name came, that guy got etched in my mind. He was hardly there for probably 20 minutes. But I can't forget the face of Babu Dakait. That is what I mean by *Mahabharata*. Very realistic *Mahabharata*, for me. That was what *Dhurandhar* was about." RGV compared Ranveer Singh's portrayal of Hamza in *Dhurandhar* to Sunny Deol's performance in *Gadar*, stating that the latter looks "unreal" in comparison. He said, "He (Sunny Deol) says 'Dhai kilo ka haath', then he starts shouting and all that in the most unreal manner. And here, Hamza (Ranveer Singh) doesn't even speak most of the time. I mean, you don't even know what he's thinking or what he's up to and all that."

That is a height, because a spy is not supposed to make his presence felt all the time—he's disappearing into the story. That's [the] hero, whereas in all the other films, the stories constantly keep elevating, pushing him up and things like that. That's the exact opposite of what's happening in *Dhurandhar*," added RGV.

Bhumi Pednekar says fashion is her 'Quiet Rebellion'

Mumbai: Actress Bhumi Pednekar used social media to open up about the special place fashion holds in her life.

'Dum Laga Ke Haisha' actress shared that she uses fashion to express herself. She added that through everything life throws at her, fashion is something that has helped her stay rooted. Sharing an album of some of her high-fashion moments, Bhumi wrote on her Instagram handle, "Fashion has been my quiet rebellion, my armor, my joy. Through love, hate, and every narrative formed around me, it's helped me stay rooted in who I am. (sic)"

Expressing her gratitude to all the designers and stylists who have helped create her own style, the 'Shubh Mangal Savdhan' actress added, "Grateful beyond words to the designers, to all the incredible stylists that worked with me, all makeup and hair artists, photographers, all assistants, master ji, dress dada and all magazine editors who shaped these moments." Bhumi is known to share such glimpses from her personal and professional journey with her Instagram family. Recently, Bhumi posted a sneak peek of her quality time with her loved ones, which also included savoring some pizza. Taking to her official Instagram account, Bhumi uploaded a set of photos from her latest getaway with her family members. "No greater joy than spending time with the ones you love and pizza... #latergram."