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Telangana: Couple from Mancherial killed in road accident while returning from Sabarimala

A couple tragically lost their lives in an accident while returning from a pilgrimage to Sabarimala, having witnessed the Makara Jyothi. The incident took place near Kanyakumari. Palakurthi Satyanarayana, 63, and his wife, Rama, 59, were residents of Luxettipet town in the Mancherial district, where they operated a general store for their livelihood. On 8 January, the couple, who were observing the Ayyappa vow, travelled by private vehicle to Sabarimala for darshan. On 15 January, coinciding with Makar Sankranti, after successfully completing their pilgrimage, the couple visited Kanyakumari. Following a ceremonial bath in the sea and visits to local temples, they were struck by a vehicle while attempting to cross the road to board their tourist bus. Both sustained serious injuries and were pronounced dead at the scene.

Supreme Court hears Telangana MLA disqualification case, adjourns for two weeks

New Delhi, Jan 16

In a significant hearing, the Supreme Court addressed the disqualification of Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in Telangana, with a bench led by Justice Sanjay Karol and Justice Masih.

During the proceedings, Abhishek Singhvi, representing the Telangana Speaker, reported that inquiries had been conducted and judgments issued against seven MLAs to date. However, lawyers for the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) party raised concerns regarding the Speaker's alleged non-compliance with previous Supreme Court orders.

In response, the Supreme Court has set a four-week deadline for the inquiry into the remaining MLAs and scheduled the next hearing for two weeks hence.



Special Traffic Measures in Nalgonda for Sankranthi Return Journey

Hyderabad, Jan 16

Nalgonda district police have implemented special traffic management measures under District Superintendent of Police Sharat Chandra Pawar to facilitate the return journey of travellers heading back to Hyderabad after the Sankranthi festival. With heavy vehicle congestion expected, especially along National Highway 65, authorities have decided to divert traffic to alleviate potential jams around ongoing flyover construction sites known as black spots at Chityal and Peddakaparthi.

SP Pawar emphasised that these actions are designed to ensure a safe and smooth journey for passengers returning to the city from their hometowns.

The following alternative routes have been recommended for motorists:

- From Guntur: Guntur – Miryalaguda – Haliya – Chintapalli – Mal to Hyderabad
- From Macherla: Macherla – Nagarjuna Sagar – Peddaura – Chintapalli – Mal to Hyderabad
- From Nalgonda: Nalgonda – Mariguda Bypass – Munugodu – Narayanapur – Choutuppal (NH-65) to Hyderabad
- From Vijayawada: Kodad – Huzurnagar –



Miryalaguda – Haliya – Chintapalli – Mal to Hyderabad

In the event of traffic congestion, vehicles will be redirected from Chityal via Bhongir. During the Sankranthi festivities, an influx of people returning to Hyderabad has led to significant traffic congestion at toll plazas, particularly at the Pantangi toll plaza on the Hyderabad-Vijayawada National Highway. Over the past five days, more than 300,000 vehicles have navigated this route, with approximately 204,000 travelling from Hyderabad towards Vijayawada. On Saturday alone, over 71,000 vehicles were recorded. Despite long queues at the Pantangi toll plaza, traffic continued to flow smoothly, thanks to expedited FASTag scanning and additional service counters.

SC junks Justice Varma's plea against probe panel

New Delhi, Jan 16

In a setback to Justice Yashwant Varma of the Allahabad High Court, the Supreme Court on Friday refused to interfere with the inquiry initiated by the Lok Sabha Speaker under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968 for his removal over alleged misconduct.

"The extraordinary remedy under Article 32 is confined to enforcement of fundamental rights and doesn't extend to issuing advisory or corrective directions in relation to internal statutory mechanisms of Parliament, where no present or inevitable infraction of any fundamental right is evinced. The petitioner is, thus, not entitled to any relief," a Bench of Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice Satish Chandra Sharma said, dismissing Justice Varma's petition.

Justice Varma was transferred from the Delhi High Court to the Allahabad High Court after burnt wads of currency notes were found at his official residence in New Delhi on March 14, 2025. Following his indictment by an in-house committee, the then CJI Sanjiv Khanna had recommended his removal to the government last year.

Now, there's no legal hurdle before the three-member committee headed by Justice Aravind Kumar set up by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to probe Justice Varma's alleged misbehaviour.

Justice Varma had relied on the proviso to Section 3(2) of the Act that mandates a joint committee of both Houses where notices of a motion for removal of a judge are given on the same day in both Houses and such motion has been admitted in both Houses. He had contended that where notices of motion have been given in both Houses on the same day, the rejection of a notice in one House (Rajya Sabha) would automatically result in the failing of the notice in the other House (Lok Sabha).

However, the Bench rejected his argument, saying, "The proviso cannot be allowed to be used as a weapon for scuttling proceedings or giving a veto to the Houses of Parliament."

The first proviso to Section 3(2) of the Judges (Inquiry) Act applies only when motions given on the same day are admitted in both Houses. The proviso does not apply where a motion is admitted in one House but not in the other, it said.

"To interpret the said proviso in the manner sug-

gested by senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi (for Varma) would require us to read into it a disabling consequence, namely, that the motion pending in the other House must also necessarily fail. Such an interpretation would amount to judicial legislation, a course we are neither empowered nor inclined to undertake," the Bench said.

The first proviso must, therefore, be construed to balance prescribed protection with the effective functioning of the mechanism for removal of a judge from office triggered by the people's representatives and not to frustrate it altogether, it said.

"Constitutional safeguards for judges cannot come at the cost of paralysing the removal process itself," it said, adding there is nothing in the Inquiry Act to suggest that rejection of a motion in one House would render the other House incompetent to proceed in accordance with law.

"Had the Parliament intended such far-reaching consequences, it would have articulated the first proviso in clear and unambiguous terms. The absence of any express provision to that effect is, in our opinion, determinative," it said, adding that taking away the autonomy of one of the two Houses of the Parliament could not have been the intent behind the first proviso (of the Inquiry Act).

It said, "Therefore, in a case where notices of motion were given in both Houses on the same day, the fact that a notice is not admitted in one House will not necessitate constitution of a joint committee and the Speaker or the Chairman, as the case may be, can independently proceed to constitute a Committee."

The Bench rejected Justice Varma's argument that the deputy chairman of the Rajya Sabha, acting as the chairman, was not even empowered to consider the question of admission of the motion, far less refusing to admit it.

SC slams role played by RS Secy General

The top court, however, criticised the procedure adopted by the Secretary General of Rajya Sabha, which was the basis on which the Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha rejected the motion for removal of Justice Varma. "The material placed by the Secretary General before the Deputy Chairman raises certain concerns. First, there appears to be an insistence on the use of 'proper terms' for the notice, a requirement which does not find express recognition in law. Secondly, a requirement seems to

Minister Seethakka Highlights Development of Vemulawada Rajanna Temple

In a recent statement, Minister Seethakka announced that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has commenced the development of the Vemulawada Rajanna temple. The minister, accompanied by her family, visited the Bhimeshwara temple, which is associated with Rajanna, on Friday to offer special prayers and fulfil her vows. Following her visit, Seethakka addressed the media alongside Government Whip Adi Srinivas. She emphasised the need for enhanced facilities for devotees at Vemulawada, stating, "Temple development is intertwined with emotions and traditions."

BJP sweeps Maha MC polls, ends 25-yr rule of Thackerays in Mumbai

Mumbai, Jan 16

Continuing its winning streak in Maharashtra, the BJP on Friday emerged as the single largest party in the country's richest civic body Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and decimated the Pawars in the Pune Municipal Corporation.

Dominating 25 of the state's 29 municipal corporations in the elections held on Thursday, the BJP-led Mahayuti crossed the halfway mark in the BMC, ending a near 25-year control of the Thackeray cousins.

Even in Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad where Ajit Pawar's NCP (part of Mahayuti in the state government) and Sharad Pawar's NCP-SP (part of the Congress-led INDIA bloc nationally) contested together, the BJP-Shiv Sena combine emerged victorious.

As Maharashtra's urban landscape came under a saffron spell, trouncing the identity politics narrative of Shiv Sena UBT's Uddhav Thackeray and his cousin Raj Thackeray of the MNS, Prime Minister Narendra Modi described the vote as an endorsement of development politics.

"Thank you Maharashtra! The dynamic people of the state bless the NDA's agenda of pro-people good governance! The results of various municipal corporation elections indicate that the NDA's bond with the people of Maharashtra has further deepened. Our track record and vision for development have struck a chord. My gratitude to the people across Maharashtra. This is a vote to add momentum to progress and celebrate the glorious culture the state is associated with," said Modi.

In Mumbai, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who was the chief BJP campaigner for the MC polls, said the Mahayuti alliance was set to come to power in 25 of the 29 municipal corporations, including Mumbai, where elections were held on January 15. "We will have our mayors in 25 MCs," said Fadnavis, who termed the wins as "Maha Vijay (grand victories)".

The most significant takeaway from the Maharashtra MC polls was BJP's emergence in the BMC.

Mahayuti crossed the halfway 114-seat majority mark in the 227-member BMC on Friday evening with leads consolidating through later hours. The BMC is India's richest civic body. Its 2025-26 budget is Rs 74,427 crore.

The fall of Thackerays and their "Marathi asmita" pitch was another story surfacing from Maharashtra where the BJP had fielded former Tamil Nadu unit chief K Annamalai to campaign.

Today's BMC results humbled Raj Thackeray, who



had mocked Annamalai as "Rasmalai" after the latter said that Mumbai was an international city and did not belong to anyone.

Outside Mumbai, the BJP retained dominance of Nagpur MC and was headed to cross its previous best 2017 tally of 108 seats in the 151-member civic body.

For the larger opposition, the results presented a mixed bag. Uddhav's Shiv Sena UBT posted decent performances in central Mumbai and parts of Konkan while the Congress and the NCP-SP were confined to wins in Latur and Kolhapur.

The elections were held amid opposition concerns over indelible ink and alleged EVM irregularities, but the Maharashtra State Election Commission dismissed these fears.

The elections for Maharashtra's 29 municipal corporations witnessed a 53 per cent turnout, which the state poll body described as a record.

The elections were held for the MCs of Mumbai, Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar, Navi Mumbai, Vasai-Virar, Kalyan-Dombivli, Kolhapur, Nagpur, Nanded-Waghala, Panvel, Bhiwandi-Nizampur, Latur, Malegaon, Sangli-Miraj-Kupwad, Jalgaon, Ahilyanagar, Dhule, Jalna, Ichalkaranji, Solapur, Amravati, Akola, Nashik, Pimpri-Chinchwad, Pune, Ulhasnagar, Thane, Chandrapur, Parbhani and Mira-Bhayandar.

Asaduddin Owaisi's All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) made major gains in Muslim-dominated wards of Maharashtra. AIMIM's ex-MP Imtiaz Jaleel said the party would win in 100 seats across the state.

The AIMIM registered a strong presence in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Dhule, Amravati, Jalna, Malegaon, Parbhani and bagged some seats in Mumbai.



Defence Procurement Board okays proposal to acquire 114 Rafale jets from Dassault

New Delhi, Jan 16

In a significant development to secure next-generation fighter jets, the Defence Procurement Board, headed by Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, on Friday okayed the proposal to acquire 114 Rafale fighter jets from French plane-maker Dassault.

Sources said the purchase proposal will now be taken up for clearance at the level of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, when he chairs the next Defence Acquisition Council, the apex decision-making body of the Ministry of Defence. The Cabinet Committee on Security, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is expected to give the final nod.

India and France are looking to seal the deal for the jets in February when a meeting is scheduled between Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron.

The Rafale deal will not impact India's plans to make the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) and the Light Combat Aircraft Tejas Mark-2, said sources. The AMCA is a fifth-generation plane. The Tejas Mark-2 is planned to be multi-system upgrade over the existing order of 180 Tejas Mark-1A jets the Ministry of Defence has placed with the public sector plane-maker, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. All indigenous jets, their timeline and budgeting have been planned separately from the 114 Rafales. In September last year, the Indian Air Force had moved a formal proposal to the Ministry of Defence seeking 114 more Rafale fighter jets as part of its multi-pronged plan to add more number of jets. The IAF based its choice on multiple reasons. First, it already flies 36 Rafale jets, while the Navy has ordered 26 marine-variants of the same jet. Increasing numbers would reduce maintenance costs.

It said, "Therefore, in a case where notices of motion were given in both Houses on the same day, the fact that a notice is not admitted in one House will not necessitate constitution of a joint committee and the Speaker or the Chairman, as the case may be, can independently proceed to constitute a Committee."

have been read into the law for furnishing authenticated documents in support of the material facts, which, particularly in view of documents already in the public domain, may not have been necessary at that stage," the top court noted.

The 1968 Act does not ask for a substantive assessment of the merits of the allegations by the Secretary of a House. Therefore, the Secretary General's scrutiny was confined to administrative issues such as whether the motion is accompanied by enough signatures, etc., the top court said.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Bonhomie with Berlin— Merz's India visit signals deeper India-Germany ties

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz's recent visit to India highlighted the growing convergence of interests between the two countries as they grapple with a volatile and unpredictable global geopolitical environment. The changing realities are impacting both countries in different ways. While India is navigating choppy trade waters following a steep rise in American tariffs and continuing challenges from China and the immediate neighbourhood, Germany too is struggling to keep pace with geopolitical shifts in the wake of the United States distancing itself from Europe on security matters, the growing complexities in Ukraine and tensions with China. One of the most important outcomes of his meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the announcement of visa-free transit for Indian passport holders passing through Germany. This people-centric decision will resonate far beyond geopolitical and diplomatic domains. For Indian students, professionals and business travellers, this step sends a clear signal that Germany values India as an all-weather friend. Both Merz and Modi have acknowledged that close people-to-people links remain a key pillar of the India-Germany strategic partnership. The focus on higher education and skilling reinforces this message. Germany's growing demand for skilled workers, particularly in the healthcare sector, dovetails with India's demographic strengths. Inviting German universities to open campuses in India can help address skill gaps. The Joint Declaration of Intent on the Global Skills Partnership is a welcome development. At a time when the US is increasingly tightening even legal pathways for skilled immigration, Germany — along with other EU countries — offers an attractive alternative.

The husbands of two councilors are grabbing government lands, swindling lakhs of rupees, and now eyeing private lands, creating disputes for the landowners.

Officials are turning a blind eye...?

Like giving away someone else's money as charity, these councilors' husbands are engaging in fraudulent activities...

The public is expressing their anguish...?

“(Mandava Srisailam, Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau, Indian Chronicle, January 16):- The behavior of these councilors' husbands in Bhuvanagiri town is like "giving away someone else's money as charity." They sold government land and pocketed the money. One councilor's husband, not satisfied with that, is now acting innocently while targeting private lands. He is creating false documents, making it seem like land exists where it doesn't, and vice versa. He is taking money from landless farmers promising to get them land, and then approaching the actual landowners, threatening them and instigating disputes. He is threatening them by claiming that a particular landowner's land is within their property, causing them trouble. This incident in Hussainabad, Bhuvanagiri town, has recently come to light. Due to the actions of the husbands of two councilors in Hussainabad, Bhuvanagiri town (Bhuvanagiri mandal), a situation where farmers are constantly fighting has arisen. One councilor's husband is nowhere to be seen, while the other councilor's husband is getting lands registered in the names of landowners even though those lands don't exist, and has been troubling farmers for the past two months by promising to get the lands surveyed. This entire affair has recently come to light. In Survey Number 208/A of the Husainabad village, Ward 14, Bhongir town, the original pattadars (landowners) are facing a shortage of land. It is a known fact that the pattadars of Survey Number 207, located elsewhere, are being brought in and causing problems for the original landowners. While the original pattadars are suffering due to lack of land, bringing in the pattadars from Survey Number 207, claiming they have land in Survey Number 208, and collecting lakhs of rupees from them is highly unjust, expressed the landowners of Survey Number 208/A, including Manduva Srisailam and others, Allam Mahesh and others, and Niranjan Reddy and others. Several victims are expressing their anguish, stating that while they themselves have insufficient land and are facing difficulties, these councilors' husbands have managed to carry out 6 or 7 registrations in just two months and ten days by bringing in pattadars from other survey numbers. It is learned that these councilors' husbands, along with two other land grabbers, are running this operation by bribing government officials. People are alleging that these councilors' husbands are experts in betraying those who trust them. People are also expressing concerns that if their atrocities are not stopped, they will even seize and sell off the Bhongir hill. It has come to light that in this fraudulent land scheme, Nayem's associates, former Naxalites, land grabbers, and land brokers have entered the scene and are causing trouble for the landowners. The affected farmers have requested that the concerned District Collector, revenue officials, and police officials keep a close watch on these land grabbers, conduct an inquiry, and provide due justice to the farmers. Regarding this matter, the husbands of the concerned corporators are passing the buck, saying "I don't know, I don't know," and wasting time.

Sankranti Celebrations Held Grandly in Ramanthapur

Former MLA N.V.S.S. Prabhakar Participates in Kite Festival



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 16 (Indian Chronicle).”“On the occasion of the Sankranti festival, a grand kite-flying event was organized in Ramanthapur under the leadership of senior BJP leader Bandaru Venkata Rao. The program was held on the Mini Tank Bund along the Cheruvu Katta on the main road of Ramanthapur. Former Uppal MLA N.V.S.S. Prabhakar attended the event as the chief guest and took part in the Sankranti celebrations by flying kites. Addressing the gathering, he said that Sankranti is a festival that reflects Indian traditions and culture, and such programs help in strengthening social unity. Several BJP leaders and activists participated in the event, including Muttineni

Jagadish, Veerelli Ravinder Reddy, Vemula Somashekar Goud, Raghupathi Goud, Sankuri Kumaraswamy, Kandakattla Dayanand Reddy, Shakha Ravi, Vangala Santosh Gupta, Thalla Balakrishna Goud, Padigam Nagesh, Kalma Kalla Lingam, Upender Yadav, Vemula Tirupathaiah, Chelloju Ella Chari, Chintakindi Praveen, Illatham Narasimha Reddy, Pentam Shailender, Tammali Ravi, Palugula Anjaiah Patel, Jakka Parvathalu, Alladi Nirjan Goud, Ramesh Naik, Darshanala Sudhakar, Swarna Shinde, Murali, Ram Brahman, Suresh, Boddapalli Anand, Vemula Venkanna Goud, Poojari Somaiah, and others, who contributed to the success of the program.

Telangana to redefine Global AI Innovation at Davos 2026 with launch of India's first 'Global AI Proving Ground'

“Hyderabad, India - January 16, 2026“As global leaders gather for the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting to navigate the future of the digital economy, the Government of Telangana is preparing to unveil a game-changing asset for the global technology ecosystem. On January 20, 2026, in a landmark step toward positioning Telangana as a global leader in Artificial Intelligence (AI), the state will formally launch Telangana AI Innovation Hub (TAIH). A purpose-built, autonomous institution designed to build and accelerate AI adoption, innovation and impact, TAIH will serve as the world's first "Global AI Proving Ground" for enterprise and population-scale solutions.”“Telangana has successfully evolved from India's technology hub to world's innovation capital” said Sri A. Revanth Reddy, Honorable Chief Minister of Telangana. “At Davos, we are not just asking for investments; we are offering collaboration. We are inviting the world to build the future of AI in Telangana, where innovation meets talent.”“A sandbox for the world”“While much of the AI discourse is focused on theoretical potential, TAIH is designed as a catalyst for innovation across deep tech domains like AI, quantum computing, chip design, and other frontier technologies. Anchored in Telangana's progressive AI strategy, TAIH marks a decisive shift from policy intent to large-scale execution. TAIH functions as a unified execution engine - it is first in the country to bring together talent, infrastructure, datasets, acceleration, startups, enterprise innovation, capital, applied research, product design and testing and other capacity-building initiatives within a single, unified platform.”“The world does not need another incubator; it needs an innovation sandbox,” explained Sri D. Sridhar Babu, Honorable Minister for ITC&C, and Industries. “With the launch of TAIH, we are providing a live, cutting-edge innovation platform across deep-tech domains, supported by world-class infrastructure. With the launch of TAIH, we are positioning Telangana as a global innovation engine where the world's safest, enterprise-grade products are engineered for the world.”“Where innovation meets global scale”“TAIH represents a new institutional

model built to match the speed of innovation while operating at scale with trust and global collaboration. By reimagining how public institutions are designed and governed, TAIH enables rapid experimentation, accelerated execution, and deeper private-sector collaboration.”“Highlighting the institutional vision, Sri Sanjay Kumar, IAS, Special Chief Secretary, ITC&C Department, said, “TAIH's distinct strength lies in its design - an institution engineered for speed, scale and impact. By blending startup agility, enterprise capability, and government credibility and” “scale, it enables rapid innovation, accelerates product-market fit, attracts venture capital and ensures solutions and products move beyond pilots into large-scale commercial deployments across sectors.”“The new era of innovation”“The launch event will showcase Telangana's innovation-first approach to shaping the future of deep-tech through a real-world governance model designed to evolve with rapidly advancing technologies.”“We are entering the next era of innovation defined by disruptive AI models, autonomous agents, quantum technologies, advanced sensor platforms and superhuman intelligence. We are launching TAIH at this pivotal moment to drive Telangana's economic transformation and position Telangana as one of the top 20 global innovation hubs.” said Mr. Phani Nagarjuna, CEO of TAIH.”“Event Details”The official launch of the Telangana AI Innovation Hub will take place on January 20, 2026, from 7PM-8:30PM at the Mountain Plaza Hotel, Davos, attended by global policymakers, dignitaries, tech ethicists, and industry titans.”“About Telangana AI Innovation Hub (TAIH)“TAIH is an autonomous entity established by the Government of Telangana to foster innovation, research, and deployment of Artificial Intelligence. It serves as a bridge between government, industry, and academia to solve global challenges at population scale. TAIH operates across four strategic pillars - Talent Foundry, Innovation Engine, Capital Flywheel and Impact Labs ensuring a seamless journey from skills and research to startups, capital and real-world deployment.

Strict adherence to road safety norms is essential



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, January 16, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“As part of the ten-day Arrive Alive Campaign-2026, launched by the Telangana Government to prevent road accidents, a special programme was held on the second day at the Medchal-Malkajgiri District Collectorate premises. Addressing the gathering, District Additional Collector Vijayender Reddy stressed the need for strict compliance with road safety norms. He said every vehicle owner must carry valid driving licence, fitness certificate, permit, pollution under control certificate, and insurance documents.

He participated in the programme along with DRVO, ACPs, and traffic police officials. Speaking on the occasion, ACP Venkat Reddy stated that citizen behaviour and public awareness play a crucial

role in road safety. He pointed out that in the year 2025 alone, more than five lakh road accidents occurred across India, resulting in nearly two lakh deaths. He clarified doubts raised by employees regarding traffic rules and administered the Road Safety Pledge to them.

Shamirpet CI Srinath said that small acts of negligence, such as not fastening helmet straps or not wearing seat belts, can cause irreparable loss to families. He explained the dangers of mobile phone usage while driving, drunk and drive, and wrong-lane driving. Traffic SI Naveen Reddy said that understanding speed regulations and safety norms and spreading awareness among others is the responsibility of government employees. Officials from various departments and staff of the District Collectorate participated in the programme.

Municipal reservation notification issued

“Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, January 16 (Indian Chronicle)“Reservation of Municipal Wards, Mayor and Chairperson Posts Notified”The Telangana government on Monday issued a notification detailing the reservation of wards and offices of Chairpersons and Mayors in Municipalities and Municipal Corporations across the State ahead of the proposed municipal elections.“According to the notification issued by the Municipal Administration and



Urban Development (MA&UD) Department, reservations have been finalized for Scheduled Tribes (STs), Scheduled Castes (SCs), Backward Classes (BCs) and Women categories in 121 Municipalities and 10 Municipal Corporations in Telangana.“The government stated that the reservations were drawn up based on reports submitted by the Dedicated Commission and the Commissioner and Director of Municipal Administration, Hyderabad. The exercise was carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Telangana Municipalities Act, 2019.“As per the notification, separate annexures have been issued detailing the category-wise reservation of municipal wards, as well as the offices of Chairpersons and Mayors. The reservation applies to wards in all 121 Municipalities and to Mayor posts in 10 Municipal Corporations, ensuring representation for STs, SCs, BCs and Women as mandated under law.“The notification will be published in the Extraordinary Issue of the Telangana Gazette dated January 13, 2026. The government has directed the Printing and Stationery Department to print and circulate copies of the notification to all concerned authorities.“This notification is a key procedural step towards conducting municipal elections in the State.

Power Officials Educate Gruha Jyothi Beneficiaries on Electrical Safety in Sirpur

“Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, January 16 (Indian Chronicle)“Electricity department officials conducted an awareness programme for Gruha Jyothi electricity beneficiaries under the limits of the Sirpur Gram Panchayat, located in Sirpur Mandal of Komaram Bheem Asifabad district, on Thursday.“As part of the initiative, officials



extended Sankranti greetings to electricity consumers by distributing greeting cards and simultaneously educated them on electrical safety measures, precautionary guidelines, and rules to be followed to prevent electrical accidents.“Consumers were advised to immediately approach the concerned Assistant Engineer (AE) for prompt resolution in case of any electricity-related issues. Necessary instructions were also issued to field-level staff to ensure timely grievance redressal.“The programme was attended by Nagaraju, Division Engineer; Jaganmohan, Assistant Engineer; G. Ashok, Line Inspector, along with departmental staff and local villagers.“The initiative aimed at strengthening public awareness on safe electricity usage while reinforcing coordination between consumers and the power department.

Sarpanch Chandana Srinivas congratulated the people of Eddulapalli village on Makar Sankranti festival

“Jan 15, (ind chronicle) medak cente.”“Chandana Srinivas, Sarpanch of Eddulapalli village in Veldurthi



mandal center of Medak district, wished the people of the village on Makar Sankranti. She informed that we will fully fulfill the trust of the people that we will work towards the development of the village by providing pensions to those who do not get pensions and also providing water facility, good drainage system, double bed room houses, good road transport system, good lighting in the village.

Sustainable Development on Wheels as Part of Swachh Bharat Yatra – Switcheko



at the Medchal–Malkajgiri District Collectorate premises. District Collector Manu Choudhary, along with District Revenue Officer Haripriya, examined the functioning of the mobile unit. The vehicle is equipped with creative and sustainable waste management technologies, including a plastic bottle baling machine, a sanitary pads incinerator, and bio-waste composting systems. Members of the Switcheko team explained the features, working process, and environmental benefits of these systems to district officials and collectorate staff. As part of the programme, employees also took a Swachhata Pledge, reaffirming their commitment to cleanliness and sustainable practices. The Switcheko team stated that during the Swachh Bharat Yatra, they travel nearly 40 kilometers every day while collecting plastic waste. They also informed that this innovative mobile waste processing vehicle will be showcased at the 12th International Plastics Exhibition, Conference and Convention – PLAST INDIA 2026. The initiative aims to promote decentralized waste management, reduce plastic pollution, and create awareness about sustainable development practices among the public.

“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal – Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, January 16, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“As part of the “Swachh Bharat Yatra” being conducted by Switcheko with the support of the Telangana Government, from January 11 to February 15, 2026, a mobile vehicle showcasing decentralized waste management and innovative waste processing solutions was inspected

Strict Adherence to Road Safety Rules Is Essential to Ensure Every Journey Ends Safely: Peddapalli DCP B. Ram Reddy.



“P. S. ASHOKAN “KARIMNAGAR BUREAU, ““As part of the prestigious Arrive Alive road safety initiative launched by the Government with the objective of ensuring that every commuter reaches their destination safely and returns home unharmed, an extensive road safety awareness programme was organised for the employees of the Peddapalli Municipality. “The programme was conducted under the directions of the Hon’ble Amber Kishore Jha, Commissioner of Police, Ramagundam, and under the supervision of B. Ram Reddy, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Peddapalli. “Addressing the gathering, the DCP stated that the primary cause of the alarming rise in road accidents is the blatant violation of traffic rules. He emphasised that two-wheeler riders must compulsorily wear helmets, while occupants of cars and other four-wheeled vehicles must mandatorily use seat belts. Though these safety measures may appear minor, he

explained, they play a crucial role in saving lives during accidents.”“The DCP further cautioned against dangerous practices such as overspeeding, driving under the influence of alcohol, and using mobile phones while driving, and urged motorists to avoid such life-threatening habits entirely. He highlighted that strict compliance with traffic signals and road signs can significantly reduce road accidents and ensure safer roads for all.”“Explaining the core objective of the Arrive Alive programme, the DCP stated that every individual must reach their destination safely. He called upon government employees to lead by example by strictly following road safety norms, thereby inspiring the general public to do the same.”“The awareness programme was attended by G. Krishna, Akula Venkatesh, K. Praveen Kumar, B. Anil Kumar, J. Lakshman Rao, along with municipal officials and staff members.

Bannala Praveen Mudiraj Extends Sankranti Greetings to Former Minister Harish Rao



“KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 16 (Indian Chronicle):“On the occasion of the Sankranti festival, BRS state leader Bannala Praveen Mudiraj, along with senior leader Yedula Kondal Reddy, paid a courtesy visit to former Minister Tanneer Harish Rao. They felicitated him with a shawl and extended Sankranti greetings. “Speaking on the occasion, Harish Rao advised Praveen to undertake necessary initiatives to ensure that the pink flag flies high in the upcoming GHMC elections. He emphasized the importance of uniting party leaders and cadre and preparing them effectively for the Greater Hyderabad elections.



If revenue officials collude with land grabbers, how can they survey the farmers' crop fields?

How fair is this? Are these measurements being taken due to pressure from the husbands of two corporators? Collector sir, please look into our grievances... the anguish of several farmers.

What connection do landless land grabbers, Nayem's men, and former Naxalites have with these lands? Intimidating the farmers is not right the anguish of several farmers.

Revenue officials, please postpone the land measurements scheduled for today. Measure the lands after the crops are harvested. A request from the farmers to the officials

One lakh rupees for surveying the land...?

Did the brokers who collected the money at the survey site give it to the officials... or did they pocket it themselves?



“(Mandava Srisailam, Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau, Indian Chronicle, January 16): Farmers are expressing their anguish, stating that if officials and land grabbers collude, they will not hesitate to hand over the landowners' lands to the land grabbers, and that this is evident from the actions of the husbands of two councilors in Hussainabad. Several farmers are expressing their distress, questioning how the officials can measure the lands when they are still being cultivated. The concerned revenue officials are colluding with land grabbers... They are creating land for landless people by comparing survey numbers located elsewhere with adjacent survey numbers, and even without any proper documents, they created five or six registrations in just ten days two months ago, causing trouble for the original landowners. The landowners, Mandava Srisailam and others, including Nirjan Reddy and Allam Mallesh, are expressing their anguish, questioning how it is justifiable that realtors, land grabbers, associates of Nayem, and former Naxalites have been trying to occupy the landowners' lands for the past two months. Despite the presence of cultivated fields on the landowners' lands, the local landowners are alleging that there is an ulterior motive behind the concerned revenue officials issuing notices to the landowners stating that they will survey the lands in survey numbers 205, 207, and 208 today (Saturday). They also questioned how it is justifiable that similar notices were issued two or three times in the past, even though there were cultivated fields on the land. Dandeboini Satyanarayana, a landowner in survey number 207, has been living and

cultivating his land for 30 years, with his boundaries clearly defined, having dug borewells and obtained electricity connections. The farmers expressed their anguish, stating that during the land registration process, a mistake occurred with survey number 208. They allege that this individual corrected the survey number for his own land, then registered it in his sons' names. They further claim that he is now causing trouble for the genuine landowners by siding with land grabbers from Bhongir, creating difficulties for the rightful owners. They allege that he registered land in survey number 207 in the name of another land grabber, then transferred it to his sons' names. He then registered the land with the incorrect survey number (originally registered in his name) in the name of the same land grabber, who then registered it in the names of two other individuals. One of these individuals then carried out another registration last month. The farmers questioned the fairness of this situation, where he is colluding with revenue officials to conduct a survey today, threatening the farmers and causing them distress by claiming ownership of land in the aforementioned survey numbers. They questioned how this landowner could have land in two different survey numbers when the one acre and 29 guntas he purchased should be in a single survey number. This affair is continuing in a manner where the money belongs to one person, but the show is put on by another. The husbands of two councilors are colluding with him, exchanging large sums of money and pocketing lakhs of rupees. For the past two months, they have been holding panchayat meetings with the farmers, keeping them silent, and carrying out their own agenda, wielding power and threatening the farmers, claiming everything belongs to them. The farmers are expressing their anguish, questioning the fairness of preventing the land from being surveyed, causing difficulties for many farmers, and involving land grabbers, land mafia, Nayem's associates, and former Naxalites. They are appealing to the concerned District Collector, Revenue and Additional Collector, RDO, and police officials to take the initiative and keep a close watch on these land grabbers. When questioned about this matter, one councilor's husband said they had no connection to it, while another councilor's husband stated that he did everything as instructed by his wife, the councilor, and that he was merely a figurehead. He added that he would go wherever he was called and that some people had deliberately used him.

Arrive Alive Road Safety Campaign: Awareness Meeting at Kushaiguda

“(NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal – Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, January 16, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“As part of the Arrive Alive road safety campaign, a road safety awareness meeting was conducted today within the Kushaiguda Police Station jurisdiction. The programme was organised by the Malkajgiri Commissionerate Road Safety wing and saw the active participation of Road Safety DCP K. Manohar, ACP Venkat Reddy, Kushaiguda Inspector Bhaskar Reddy, Kushaiguda Traffic Inspector Ramalakshman Raju, Sub-Inspectors N. Venkanna and Ch. Sailu, along with other police staff. Officials and staff from the GHMC Kapra Division, employees of the Kushaiguda RTC Bus Depot, and personnel from the Kapra Mandal Tahsildar Office also participated in the programme. During the meeting, participants were given practical guidance on road safety measures and precautions to be followed while travelling and driving. The discussions focused on strict adherence to traffic rules, avoiding distractions while driving, compulsory use of helmets and seatbelts, and responsible driving behaviour to reduce road accidents. To strengthen commitment towards road safety, all participants were administered a road safety pledge, affirming their responsibility to follow safety norms in their daily duties and to create awareness among the public. The programme aimed to promote safer roads through awareness, collective responsibility, and consistent adherence to traffic regulations.



Rs 1.80-Crore Drain Project Announced for Kapuwada, Says Sirpur MLA



“(Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, January 16 (Indian Chronicle):“Residents of Kapuwada locality in Kaghaznagar have been facing persistent drainage issues, causing inconvenience in daily life. On Tuesday morning, Sirpur MLA Dr. Palvai Harish Babu, along with Municipal Commissioner Rajender, inspected the affected areas to assess the problem. Addressing local residents, the MLA said a major drainage canal would

be constructed at an estimated cost of ₹1.80 crore, with the objective of diverting Kapuwada's entire drainage flow to the Masala Mori channel. He added that the tendering process was currently underway and that construction work would commence shortly. “Later, the MLA visited the site of the Railway Under Bridge (RUB) under construction in Kapuwada along with local residents. Based on representations from ward residents, he issued several instructions to the contractor to address local concerns. He assured that civic issues in the ward would be resolved in a phased manner.

Director Trinadha Rao Nakkina Witnesses Cockfights During Sankranti Celebrations



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 16 (Indian Chronicle).""As part of the grand Sankranti celebrations held with much pomp and splendor in the East Godavari district, traditional cockfights were organized, which were witnessed by star director Trinadha Rao Nakkina and State Congress Youth leader Gaddam Ravi. Several prominent personalities including writer Vikranth Srinivas, actor Manik Reddy, Rajesh, Venkat Reddy, and others participated in the Bhogi, Sankranti, and Kanuma festivities and explained the cultural significance of the festival to the public. Speaking on the occasion, director Trinadha Rao Nakkina said that watching the traditional

cockfights was a joyful and memorable experience. He noted that celebrating festivals along with the people, blending culture, tradition, and enthusiasm, was truly unforgettable. He emphasized that it is everyone's responsibility to preserve Telugu traditions and celebrate festivals with unity. He extended his heartfelt Bhogi greetings to all. Congress Youth leader Gaddam Ravi stated that coming from Telangana and celebrating the three-day Sankranti festival in Andhra Pradesh was a delightful experience. He added that Sankranti reflects unity, tradition, and cultural values, reminding people of the richness of Telugu heritage.

Comprehensive Arrangements in Place to Ensure a Hassle-Free Experience for Devotees Attending the Jatara: MLA Raj Thakur



"P. S. ASHOKAN. "KARIMNAGAR BUREAU. Emphasising the need to ensure smooth and inconvenience-free arrangements for devotees, Raj Thakur, MLA of Ramagundam, on Friday personally inspected the ongoing arrangements for the Sammakka-Saralamma Jatara along with G. M. Lalith Kumar. During the inspection, the MLA directed the concerned officials to ensure that all essential amenities are provided adequately so that devotees visiting the Jatara do not face any difficulties. He stressed the importance of proper sanitation, drinking water facilities, orderly movement of devotees, and overall coordination among departments to facilitate a safe and comfortable pilgrimage experience. Subsequently, in connection with the Sankranti festival celebrations, the MLA participated in the festive atmosphere by flying kites, symbolising the spirit and joy of the season. He interacted warmly with party leaders and workers, actively taking part in the celebrations and extending heartfelt festive greetings to the public. The programme witnessed the participation of Congress Party leaders, party workers, local public representatives, officials, and residents, who joined in both the inspection and the festive celebrations.

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Jana Sena Plans to Contest All Wards in Kagaznagar Civic Polls



"Taj Khan, Kaghaznagar, January 16 (Indian Chronicle). A key meeting of the Jana Sena Party was held in Kagaznagar town of Sirpur Assembly constituency under the party's local leadership as part of efforts to strengthen the organisation in Komaram Bheem Asifabad district. Addressing the meeting, Manthena Sampath Kumar, joint Adilabad district coordinator, along with party leader Maya Ramesh, stated that the Jana Sena Party would contest the upcoming municipal elections from every ward in Kagaznagar. As part of the programme, several youths from different wards, including Gajjela Laxman and Thouti Akhil, were formally inducted into the party by presenting them with party scarves. Party leaders said the induction of young members would strengthen the organisation at the grassroots level and help expand the party's presence in urban areas.

Burglars Target Locked Homes in Chengicherla, Eight Houses Looted

"NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, January 16, (INDIAN CHRONICLE). Burglars created panic in Chengicherla under the limits of Medipally Police Station in the Malkajgiri Commissionerate. The incidents took place during the festival season in Kanakadurga Nagar Colony and Anushakti Nagar Colony, where thieves targeted houses that were locked as families had gone out of town to celebrate the festival. According to police, three unidentified burglars broke into around eight locked houses in the two colonies on Thursday night. The miscreants allegedly decamped with a large quantity of gold, silver, and cash. Preliminary information suggests that about 30 tolas of gold, nearly 8 kilograms of silver, and cash amounting to approximately Rs 2 lakh were stolen in the series of burglaries. On receiving information, Uppal Zone DCP Suresh Kumar, along with Malkajgiri ACP Chakrapani and Medipally CI Govinda Reddy, rushed to the spot. The officers inspected the affected houses and gathered details from the victims, their relatives, local residents, and police personnel. Speaking to the media, DCP Suresh Kumar said that the burglars specifically targeted houses that were locked due to residents leaving the city for festival celebrations. He added that a forensic team has been deployed at the scene to collect clues and that technical investigation is underway. We are examining CCTV footage and other technical evidence. Complete details will be shared once the investigation progresses, he said. Meanwhile, residents of the affected colonies have expressed concern over the incidents and urged the police to intensify patrolling in the area and take stringent measures to prevent the recurrence of such crimes.

Gangireddula Performances and Godadevi Kalyanam Dance Drama Enthrall Visitors at Uppal Mini Shilparamam



"KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, January 16 (Indian Chronicle). On the occasion of the Kanuma festival, Uppal Mini Shilparamam witnessed vibrant celebrations on Friday. Traditional Gangireddula (decorated bull) performances, along with the colorful appearances of Haridasus, Budabukkalas, Jangam Devarulu, Pittala Dora

and other folk artists, captivated the visitors. As part of the cultural programs, the dance drama "Goda Kalyanam" presented by Sri Chandrasekhar's troupe enthralled the audience. The Shilparamam premises were abuzz with festive cheer as large numbers of visitors thronged the venue to witness the cultural extravaganza.

Doctors and staff must act responsibly in providing quality medical care to patients at the government hospital:

- Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumantha Rao



"(Mandava Srisailam... Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... January 17)- Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Collector Hanumantha Rao said that doctors and staff should perform their duties responsibly in providing quality medical care to patients at the government hospital. On Friday, the District Collector made a surprise inspection of the Community Health Center in

Aleru town. On this occasion, the District Collector inspected the medical services being provided at the hospital, the staff attendance register, and the availability of medicines, among other things. He inquired about the number of patients visiting the OPD department every day. He also asked how many pregnant women were coming for check-ups and how many deliveries were taking place every month, and said that the number of normal deliveries in the government hospital should increase. He instructed the ASHA workers to regularly contact pregnant women over the phone, inquire about their health, inform them that all tests are available at the government hospital, and advise them to come on time for all the necessary tests. The Collector spoke directly to the patients receiving treatment at the hospital and inquired about their opinions on the medical services they were receiving. He asked whether the doctors were coming on time for check-ups. He also inquired whether lunch was being provided at the hospital and whether the food was tasty. He instructed that there should be no shortage of medicines in the hospital and that the hospital premises should be kept clean. Hospital staff and others participated in this program.

Secunderabad Zone Police Bust Chinese Manja Racket

12 Arrested, 162 Bobbins Worth Rs 1.88 Lakh Seized

"Indian Chronicle, Secunderabad, January 16: In a major crackdown on the illegal sale of banned Chinese manja, the Secunderabad Zone Police arrested 12 persons and seized 162 bobbins valued at approximately ?1.88 lakh in separate operations carried out across the Chikkadpally, Gandhi Nagar and Osmania University divisions. Cases were registered under Sections 223 and 125 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and Sections 5 and 15 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. Chikkadpally Division (Kachiguda Police Station): Based on credible information, Kachiguda Police apprehended five persons involved in the illegal possession and sale of Chinese manja. During the operation, police seized 106 bobbins worth ?1.06 lakh and three mobile phones. Investigation revealed that the banned manja had been procured earlier from Lal Kuan, Old Delhi. One of the accused was identified as a repeat offender with previous cases registered under the NDPS Act. One accused in this case is absconding. Gandhi Nagar Division (Domalguda Police Station): During routine patrolling near NTR Stadium, Domalguda Police arrested four persons, including students, who were selling Chinese manja for commission and easy money. Eight bobbins valued at ?10,000 were seized during the operation. One accused is absconding. Osmania University Division (Amberpet Police Station): Amberpet Police arrested one person for illegal possession of Chinese manja and seized 48 bobbins worth ?72,000. Two ac-



cused connected with the case are absconding. Police officials stated that possession, stocking, sale and use of Chinese manja is a punishable offence under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The Telangana State Government has imposed a complete ban on nylon and other synthetic, non-biodegradable threads coated with glass or harmful substances, commonly known as Chinese dor, under G.O. Ms. No. 6 dated January 17, 2018, as they pose a serious threat to human life, birds and animals. The operations were carried out under the supervision of J. Narsaiah, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police, Secunderabad Zone, along with the concerned ACPs and SHOs. Police officials stated that the officers and staff involved in the successful operations will be rewarded suitably.

Fugitive Arsalan Chaudhary arrested at scene of crime in Canada's biggest gold heist case



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Fugitive Arsalan Chaudhary arrested at scene of crime in Canada's biggest gold heist case. The theft took place on April 17, 2023, when an Air Canada flight from Zurich landed at Pearson carrying 400 kg of .9999-pure gold, amounting to about 6,600 bars, along with \$2.5 million in foreign currency. (file) In a dramatic turn in Canada's biggest gold heist investigation, the Peel Regional Police Monday arrested fugitive Arsalan Chaudhary, 43, at Toronto Pearson International Airport, moments after he arrived on a flight from Dubai. The arrest is the latest breakthrough in Project 24K, the ongoing probe into the April 2023 theft of more than \$20 million in gold bars from Pearson Airport.

Chaudhary, listed as having no fixed address and previously residing in Mississauga, has been charged with theft over \$5,000, two counts of possession of property obtained by crime, and conspiracy to commit an indictable offence. He was held in custody for a bail hearing at the Ontario Court of Justice in Brampton. The theft took place on April 17, 2023, when an Air Canada flight from Zurich landed at Pearson carrying 400 kg of .9999-pure gold, amounting to about 6,600 bars, along with \$2.5 million in foreign currency.

328 missing Saroops: Spotlight back on ex-SGPC chief secretary against whom panel recommended criminal case

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

The recent developments in the case of the 328 missing Saroops (copies) of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib have brought renewed focus on a former top Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) official, allegedly spared action despite being named in the Ishar Singh Commission report. Roop Singh, former SGPC chief secretary, was accused of serious negligence in performing his duties by the Akal Takht's three-member inquiry panel headed by Ishar Singh. Acting on the panel's report, the Punjab Police had registered a case in connection with the missing Saroops. Submitted to the Sri Akal Takht Sahib, the report highlights alleged failures by Roop Singh at multiple levels and recommends that a criminal case be pursued against him, along with departmental action. However, Singh did not face any consequences. "The SGPC had dismissed a few employees who used to work under Roop Singh. Their funds were also confiscated. However, he was allowed to resign and withdraw his funds (usually released at the end of service). He faced no heat," alleged Sarabjit Singh Verka, a lawyer whose complaint led to the formation of the Ishar Singh Commission in 2020. After then acting Jathedar Giani Harpreet Singh ordered an inquiry on July 17, 2020, advocate Ishar Singh and assistants Harpreet Kaur and CA Harleen Kaur scrutinised records from April 1, 2013, to May 31, 2020. The report was submitted in August 2020. Asked how Roop Singh escaped action, SGPC president Harjinder Singh Dhami said, "He had resigned. His service was still pending. It was also a kind of punishment."

Last month, the Punjab Police booked 16 people, including Roop Singh, in the missing Saroops case. He is reportedly staying abroad. The Commission report accused Roop Singh of overpaying chartered accountant Satinder Singh Kohli, who is in police custody, for partial work, such as stalled online accounting, which could have helped curb embezzlement. "Satinder Singh Kohli, chartered accountant, had performed only one out of the four tasks assigned to him. Yet, he continued to receive fees for all four tasks. One of these tasks involved the online computerisation of money accounts as well. If the online computerisation had been done on time, this embezzlement would not have occurred. It was Dr Roop Singh's responsibility as principal secretary to ensure complete work from the chartered accountant," the report stated.

"The money given to the chartered accountant had been offered to Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji by the congregations with folded hands. Dr Roop Singh irresponsibly handed over this money to Satinder Singh Kohli. The principal secretary of the Shiromani committee is the main culprit in providing excess money to S. Satinder Singh Kohli. Therefore, departmental and criminal proceedings should be initiated

Australia's top-ranked UNSW coming to Bengaluru: Campus at Manyata Tech Park to start this August

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Karnataka minister M B Patil said UNSW's academic council will directly oversee the Bengaluru campus, ensuring students gain industry exposure and skill-focused learning at Manyata Tech Park.

unsw Professor Attila Brungs, UNSW Vice-Chancellor, and S Selvakumar, Principal Secretary, Karnataka Industries Department, exchanged a memorandum of understanding (MoU) during a programme held at the Vidhana Soudha on Monday. The University of New South Wales (UNSW), one of Australia's leading universities, is set to open its Bengaluru campus at Manyata Tech Park in August, offering the same curriculum as the parent institution.

"Initially, the university will offer undergraduate programmes in commerce, media, computer science and data science, along with a postgraduate programme in cyber security," according to a statement issued on Monday. Professor Attila Brungs, UNSW Vice-Chancellor, and S Selvakumar, Principal Secretary, Karnataka Industries Department, exchanged a memorandum of understanding (MoU) during a programme held at the Vidhana Soudha on Monday. Large and Medium Industries Minister M B Patil and Higher Education Minister Dr M C Sudhakar were also present.

Sudhakar said UNSW is widely recognised across the Asia-Pacific region for its strong employability outcomes, with graduates actively sought after by leading employers. The opening of its Bengaluru campus will further strengthen the city's innovation ecosystem and encourage more international universities to establish a presence here, he added.

Several Australian universities have expressed interest in opening campuses in Bengaluru. While La Trobe University recently received approval, Western Sydney University has also confirmed it will open a campus in the city, focusing on agriculture.

After interacting with the delegation, Patil said the academic council of UNSW would directly oversee the Bengaluru campus. With several leading companies located at Manyata Tech Park, students are expected to benefit from strong industry exposure and skill-oriented learning. UNSW will establish a campus at the upcoming KWIN City in the near future, Patil added. He further said that an education and research cooperation programme between India and Australia for 2025-30 was currently in force, adding that UNSW already has close academic and institutional links with organisations such as IIM Bengaluru, IISc, the National Law University, the Union Ministries of Highways and Steel, and the State Renewable Energy Development Corporation.

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Top court upholds Gujarat HC judgment quashing FIR under Disturbed Areas Act



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

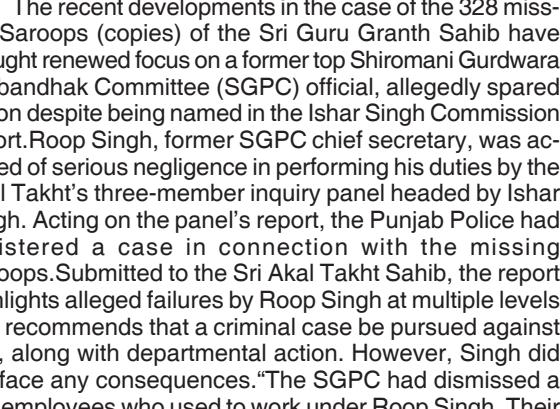
Supreme Court upholds Gujarat High Court order quashing FIR against Ahmedabad businessman under Disturbed Areas Act over Sarkhej land dispute. Supreme Court upholds Gujarat High Court order quashing FIR against Ahmedabad businessman under Disturbed Areas Act over Sarkhej land dispute. The Supreme Court recently upheld the August 2025 Gujarat High Court order quashing an FIR lodged against an Ahmedabad-based businessman, Ahmad Alarakha Patel, under the Gujarat Disturbed Areas Act (The Gujarat Prohibition of Transfer of Immovable Property and Provision for Protection of Tenants from Eviction from Premises in Disturbed Areas Act, 1991). Patel was accused of grabbing a land parcel of the complainant in Sarkhej area of Ahmedabad and had been first booked in 2020 under the Gujarat Land Grabbing (Prohibition) Act, 2020.

The case pertains to an FIR lodged at Sarkhej police station on November 29, 2021 under the Disturbed Areas Act, based on the complaint filed by Pranav Harish Sheth, who had contended that Patel was "in illegal possession" of the land that originally belonged to his father, Harish Sheth. He further contended that Patel had indulged in "illegal construction of godowns and a mosque" on the land, located in a residential zone, which was resulting in "financial gain without mandatory permissions" required from the District Collector under the Disturbed Areas Act. The complainant had contended that after the death of his father in January 2006, his name had been entered into the revenue records in June 2007, making him the "legal owner of this land". Sheth had moved a Special Leave Petition in the Supreme Court

against an August 21, 2025, order of the Gujarat High Court quashing the FIR lodged on November 29, 2021, at Sarkhej police station against Patel. On January 9, Supreme Court Bench comprising Justice Pamidighantam Sri Narasimha and Justice Alok Adarsh dismissed Sheth's petition, by an order that stated, "We are not inclined to interfere with the impugned judgment and order passed by the (Gujarat) High Court."

Sheth had first filed a complaint with the District Collector of Ahmedabad under the Land Grabbing (Prohibition) Act and based on the order of the "Member Secretary, District Land Grabbing (Prohibition) Committee and Resident Additional Collector, Ahmedabad, of January 2021, the police had lodged an FIR at Sarkhej police station. The Gujarat High Court in its judgement of August 2025 had noted that the complainant had later "come to know that the disputed land falls under the Disturbed Area" and contended that Patel had "without obtaining the prior permission from the District Collector... illegally executed rental and other agreements concerning the disputed land." Patel's advocates, while arguing the case in the Gujarat HC had submitted that the order of the City Deputy Collector of October 2019 to restore the possession of the disputed land to the complainant and register an FIR had been stayed by a Coordinate Bench of the Gujarat HC and the stay was confirmed by a Division Bench of the Gujarat HC. The Gujarat HC had considered the submissions that the transfer of the land had occurred in 1984 and 1987, when the disputed land was "not covered" under the provisions of the Disturbed Areas Act, and therefore the provisions of the Act could not be applicable to the transaction "retrospectively". Therefore, the order of the Deputy Collector could not be "used as a foundation for the FIR". The August 2025 judgement of the HC had noted, "Therefore, the FIR, which is led on the basis of order dated 21.10.2019 appears to be vexatious proceeding calling it abuse of process of law. The Coordinate Bench of this Court is seized with the issue. Filing of FIR therefore, indicates that the complainant has attempted to shadow the order passed by the Coordinate Bench of this Court staying the implementation, operation and execution of the order dated 21.10.2019. This attempt is found to be malicious. Filing of the FIR is therefore, not less than legal abuse."

Haryana gets four weeks to reply in PIL against retired DGP heading police complaints authority



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Punjab and Haryana High Court raps Haryana for 'unfair labour practice', orders regularisation of long-term daily wagers. Punjab and Haryana High Court seeks Haryana reply in four weeks on plea against appointment of retired DGP as police complaints body chairperson. (file) The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Monday gave the Haryana government four weeks to file its reply in a public interest litigation challenging the appointment of a retired Director General of Police as chairperson of the State Police Complaints Authority, cautioning that any further delay would cost the State its right to respond. In an interim order, the Division Bench of Chief Justice Sheel Nagu and Justice Neerja Kulwant Kalsan noted that despite notice having been issued on August 29, 2025, the State had not filed its reply so far. The Bench directed that if the reply was not filed within four weeks, the State's right to do so would stand forfeited. The matter has been listed for February 26, 2026. The PIL, argued by senior advocate Rajesh Garg, raises questions over the legality of appointing a retired senior police officer to head the Police Complaints Authority, a body mandated by the Supreme Court in its 2006 judgment in the Prakash Singh case.

Garg told the court that the Supreme Court had clearly directed that Police Complaints Authorities across the country should be headed by retired High Court judges. He said that while Haryana enacted a law in 2007 allowing the post to be held by either a retired High Court judge or a retired civil servant, the provision was diluted a year later to permit appointment of any "person of eminence" with experience in administration or law. It was under this diluted provision that a retired Haryana DGP was appointed as chairperson, he argued. Referring to a 2015 Division Bench judgment of the High Court in a similar case concerning Chandigarh, Garg pointed out that the court had quashed the appointment of a retired Indian Economic Service officer as chair-

person of the authority, holding it to be contrary to the Supreme Court's directions. That judgment, he said, was never challenged before the Supreme Court and had therefore attained finality. Following the ruling, Chandigarh appointed a retired High Court judge to head the authority.

Responding to the State's contention that the Prakash Singh matter was still pending before the Supreme Court, Garg clarified that the pending issue related only to the fixed tenure of Directors General of Police and not to the composition of Police Complaints Authorities. He also cited a subsequent Supreme Court order stating that any state law running contrary to its 2006 directions would be kept in abeyance. During the hearing, the Bench expressed concern over the State's continued failure to file a reply. Chief Justice Nagu observed that while one of the respondents had filed a response, the State had not done so despite ample opportunity. When the petitioner sought interim relief, the court indicated that granting such relief would amount to final relief at this stage. However, the Bench made it clear that the issue would be taken up after pleadings were complete, stressing that the State could not be allowed to delay the proceedings any further. "This is why a peremptory order is being passed," the Chief Justice observed, while fixing the matter for hearing in the last week of February.

Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conference Invest in R&D for full self-reliance, defence ministry urges industry

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

While he agreed that this reassured the Indian defence manufacturing market, he said it was not enough to achieve "full self-reliance or Aatmanirbhartha." Defence production secretary Sanjeev Kumar speaks at Vibrant Gujarat meet in Rajkot on push for fully indigenous design and manufacturing in defence sector (X/DefProdnIndia) Defence production secretary Sanjeev Kumar speaks at Vibrant Gujarat meet in Rajkot on push for fully indigenous design and manufacturing in defence sector (X/DefProdnIndia) AFTER THE rise of domestic defence manufacturing in the private sector, the defence ministry is now emphasising the need not only for components used by the armed forces to be manufactured within the country, but that they also be designed and developed in-house instead of foreign countries. This line of thinking was made clear at the Vibrant Gujarat Regional Conference (VGRC) in Rajkot, where Sanjeev Kumar, Union Secretary at the Department for Defence Production (DDP) told industrialists from Saurashtra, "Even in defence acquisition from indigenous companies, first priority is given to those products which are designed, developed and manufactured all in India." The 1993-batch IAS officer of the Maharashtra cadre, who earlier served as chairman of the Airports Authority of India (AAI) and was involved in the setting up of the Hira Sarai International Airport in Rajkot, said, "The prime minister started allocating large amounts from the defence acquisition budget, for indigenous sources – which now stands at 75 per cent of total defence acquisition budget. But, it doesn't mean that all 75% of products have been developed and designed in India. It only means that it is finally supplied by companies that are stationed in India."

While he agreed that this reassured the Indian defence manufacturing market, he said it was not enough to achieve "full self-reliance or Aatmanirbhartha." Sanjeev Kumar said, "Even in defence acquisition from indigenous companies, first priority is given to those products which are designed, developed and manufactured all

in India. We are giving such products first priority because self-reliance will not be good enough unless we have control over design. Full control means that whatever we want to do in future with that design, either further integrate are indigenous arms or other payloads without being dependent on foreign original equipment manufacturers (OEMs). Or when we want to integrate one platform with another platform, we don't have to be dependent on foreign OEMs and we can do it by ourselves which is the fundamental requirement of being self-reliant." The union secretary clarified that he did not mean IPR in the sense of the legal document but the actual Research and Development (R&D). He said that he did not mean that Indian companies had to hold the legal IPR that they had purchased from a foreign company. "I mean IPR of products that have been designed and developed by our own scientists and engineers. This would be complete self-reliance with complete control over the supply chain. That means whenever we want we can scale it up, we can diversify, and the supply chain should be resilient. Only then can we say that we have become self-reliant," he said.

He added, "The (manufacturing) journey has started but we still have a long way to go. We have started production in India either with our own designs or designs taken from other countries, we are exporting to other countries but we have to start designing our own platform level machines which are required during adverse situations on the borders." On the quality of indigenously developed products, the Union Secretary said, "We need accuracy and quality, which are the things on which the armed forces will never compromise on. If a Jawan takes out his gun after 4 or 5 years, it should still perform at the same level that it would have performed on the day of testing, without deterioration. It is not unsurmountable. It is 100% achievable and many of us have already done so. What it requires is a different mindset, one of being in the game for the long term because you don't just have to supply it today, but have to vouch for its quality in the years and decades to come."

Indian-origin woman restaurateur detained by ICE



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Babbiejit "Bubbly" Kaur, a 60-year-old Indian-origin woman and a well-known figure in the Long Beach restaurant community, was detained by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement on December 1 while attending what her family believed was a routine biometrics appointment linked to her pending green card application. Kaur, a former co-owner of Natraj Cuisine of India and Nepal in Belmont Shore, was taken into custody at a US Citizenship and Immigration Services facility, shocking her family and members of the local community where she has lived for more than three decades. She has been in the United States since 1994 and has no criminal record.

According to her daughter, Joti Kaur, the appointment was expected to be the final administrative step in her adjustment of status to permanent residency. Kaur's green card petition had already been approved through sponsorship by her US citizen daughter and son-in-law. Speaking to local media, Joti said that after her mother entered the interview room, she was told she was under arrest. She was allowed a brief phone call to her lawyer before being

taken away. "She was really scared," Joti said, recounting that her mother was placed in a van with other detainees, with her hands and feet shackled. For several hours, the family was unsure where Kaur had been taken, with officials giving only vague information. They later traced her through the ICE detainee locator system to Los Angeles, from where she was transferred to the Adelanto ICE Processing Center near Victorville, a remote facility in California's High Desert.

"It's been a nightmare," Joti said, adding that while the family has since been able to speak to Kaur by phone and visit her, the detention has taken a heavy emotional toll. Originally from India, the family settled in California in the mid-1990s. Kaur and her husband ran the Belmont Shore restaurant for over two decades before it shut during the Covid-19 pandemic. They have three children, including two US citizens, while Joti holds legal status under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals programme. Friends and neighbouring business owners have described Kaur as a deeply rooted and generous member of the Long Beach community. No official reason has been provided by ICE or the Department of Homeland Security for her detention, despite media queries. People close to the family believe it may be linked to past immigration status issues that can arise in long-term cases. Local Congressman Robert Garcia, whose district includes Long Beach, said he is in contact with the family and described the detention as "horrible", calling for greater oversight of immigration enforcement practices. Kaur's case comes amid reports of a rise in ICE detentions at USCIS offices across the United States, including during green card interviews and biometrics appointments. Immigration lawyers say individuals with approved petitions and no criminal history are increasingly being taken into custody over old visa or status violations.

Minor raped with 'iron rod': Aim to file chargesheet against accused within 2 weeks, say Gujarat Police

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

EVEN AS the 31-year-old man accused of sexually assaulting a minor girl with an iron rod was sent to judicial custody after being discharged from a Rajkot hospital following treatment of two gunshot wounds he sustained in an alleged attack on a police team, officers told The Indian Express on Monday that they aimed at filing a chargesheet in the case in a fortnight — before the year-end. Sources in the Rajkot Rural Police said that since medical and forensic reports had been fast-tracked in this case owing to the nature of the crime, they hoped to finish collating all evidence and file the chargesheet within a fortnight — by New Year's Eve or earlier.

Asked about this, Rajkot Rural Superintendent of Police Vijay Singh Gurjar said, "We want to file the chargesheet as soon as possible but also make sure there is no compromise with the quality of the investigation." Till date, a total of three FIRs have been filed in this case in the same police station within six days. One pertaining to the rape, the second regarding the shootout and the third against a local politician for allegedly revealing the identity and residence of the victim on social media. This case dates back to December 4, when the accused, a farm labourer, after finding the child alone in a field, took her behind a water tank and attempted to rape her. "When the accused failed in his attempt to rape the child, he inserted a metal rod, causing internal bleeding and trauma to the girl," SP Gurjar said earlier. The police had compiled a list of 100 suspects and whittled it down to 10 suspects. When their photos were shown to the minor survivor, she had pointed out the accused, who later admitted to the crime, police claimed. The FIR was registered on December 8 after the police received results of the medical examination of the child. The accused was arrested on December 9 and a local court granted the police five-day remand on December 10. On the day they received remand, the police took the accused to the scene of the crime for panchama reconstruction and recovery of



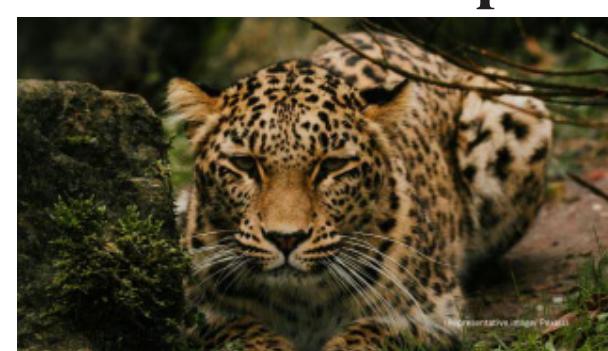
the iron rod that had been used in committing the offence. While they were returning, the accused allegedly picked up a dhaariyu (scythe) and attacked the police team, leading to him being "shot twice, once each in both legs." A second FIR was filed against him, this time for attempted murder of a head constable, on the basis of a complaint by a sub-inspector of the Local Crime Branch (LCB). The operative part of the FIR read, "When the panchama and seizure was completed at 9 pm and the accused was being taken to be seated in the vehicle, he suddenly picked up a metal-handled scythe and attacked a police, injuring him on the hand and chest and shouted 'Chala jaav... Maar dunga (Go away... I'll kill you).' The FIR, filed at 11:35 pm on December 10, said that the accused then swung the scythe again at which point two policemen drew their service weapons and fired one round each at the accused, hitting him in both legs below the knees. They then called for an ambulance. Meanwhile, on December 13, a third FIR was filed in connection with this case, this time booking a Congress politician for allegedly revealing the identity of the minor survivor and her parents on social media. The woman leader was booked under BNS section 72 (disclosure of identity of victim of serious offences), under sections 23 and 23(4) of the POCSO Act, and section 74(3) of the Juvenile Justice Act, in the FIR filed at the same police station.

After third child killed in two months, Forest Dept seeks nod to eliminate leopard

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

IN THE third death of a child amid escalating human-leopard conflicts in Junnar forest division in Pune district, an eight-year-old boy from a farm labourer family was killed in a leopard attack in Mangrul Pargaon village in Junnar taluka on Monday morning. The Forest Department said that a permission has been sought to eliminate the leopard involved in the attack. Junnar Forest Division has seen a sharp rise in human-leopard conflict in recent weeks, with three people — including two children — being killed between October 12 and November 1 and several more injured in leopard attacks. "An eight year old boy Rohit Babu Kapare was killed by a leopard in Mangrul Pargaon village of Junnar taluka on Monday morning around 11.30 am. Multiple teams from the Forest Department were deployed at the location and in the surrounding areas. Camera traps and trap cages were deployed in the area," said a Forest Department officer from Junnar Division.

Deputy Conservator of Forest Prashant Khade said, "We have sought the permission of the concerned authorities to eliminate the leopard involved in the attack. Attempts will be made to tranquillise and capture the leopard. If these attempts fail, the leopard will be eliminated as a last resort. Over the last few weeks we have captured over two dozen leopards from this area and these efforts will continue." Police teams were also deployed in the area. In the villages of Pimparkhed and Jambut of Shirur taluka, three deaths occurred due to leopard attacks between October 12 and November 1. Shivanya Bombe (5) on October 12, Bhagubai Jadhav (70) on October 22 and Rohan Bombe (13) on November 1 lost their lives. These incidents triggered massive public outrage. To protest against increasing leopard attacks in Junnar, Shirur, Ambegaon, and Khed talukas, villagers staged agitations blocking the Belhe-Jejur Road on October 12 and 22 and the Pune Nashik Highway at Manchar on November 3. On November 2, following the death of 13-year-old Rohan, an angry mob set fire to a Forest Department patrol vehicle and the local base camp building, resulting in significant damages. The Mangrul Pargaon village in Junnar where the Monday morning attack took place is around six kilometres away from Pimparkhed village in Shirur which witnessed deaths of two children in October-November. To capture or eliminate the man-eating leopard from the Pimparkhed area, Pune Forest Conservator Ashish Thakre obtained immediate permission



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from the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests to capture or shoot dead the man-eating leopard after the November 1 incident. On November 5, the suspected man-eating leopard was shot dead.

In a separate incident in Ahilyanagar district's Sangamner taluka, a four-year-old boy was killed in a leopard attack on Saturday evening. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, after reviewing the state's escalating human-leopard conflict in a meeting with top officials on November 18 directed that a proposal to declare the crisis a state disaster be placed before the Cabinet. He has also sought a proposal to shift the leopard from Schedule I to Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act. The CM has also directed setting up two more rescue centres for leopards in Pune district. Last year, as many as eight human deaths were reported and this year five more have been reported in incidents of human-leopard conflict. After the back-to-back incidents last year, the forest department had issued a Red Alert for 13 villages in a five square kilometer area in Junnar taluka. People in these villages were asked not to step out before 9 am and after 5 pm. In June this year, Pune District Collector had notified over 230 villages from four talukas of Pune district — Junnar, Ambegaon, Shirur and Khed — as prone to disaster due to repeated incidents of human-leopard conflicts in which multiple deaths and several serious injuries were reported.

GMADA to construct three roundabouts, including one dumbbell-shaped, on Airport road to ease congestion



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

The Greater Mohali Area Development Authority (GMADA) has decided to construct three roundabouts, including one dumbbell-shaped, on the Airport road to improve traffic flow, reduce accidents and provide some relief to

commuters troubled by frequent traffic jams during office hours and morning and evening peak periods. MLA Kulwant Singh will inaugurate the much-awaited project on Tuesday. According to GMADA officials, the only dumbbell-shaped roundabout will be constructed near Gurdwara Singh Shaheedan, Sohana, which is considered the most critical point due to heavy traffic pressure. The second roundabout will come up at the light point connecting Sectors 68, 69, 78 and 79 — an area notorious for long jams during peak hours. And, the third roundabout is proposed at the major junction linking Sectors 68, 67, 79 and 80. GMADA Executive Engineer Sukhwinder Singh Matharu told The Indian Express, "The construction work will be executed in four phases. The project will be completed in three months, but the vehicular movement is expected to resume within one or one and a half months." "Traffic has already been diverted as per a proper diversion route plan to ensure minimal inconvenience to the public. Vehicles coming from Kharar will be routed via the Purva Apartments road, which will lead directly to the airport," Matharu added.

'School shut till Class 5... can't teach them online': Pollution curbs trigger uneven response in Noida

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Around noon on Monday, two teenage girls, dressed in brown salwar and maroon sweater, discussed Mathematics homework as they walked along the road in Noida's Sector 50. "Our school is open. All the students from our class were present," one of them said. Two days after GRAP-IV restrictions — strictest anti-pollution measures imposed by the Centre — were invoked across Delhi-NCR, issuing directives for schools to hold hybrid or online classes, schools in Noida saw mixed scenes on Monday. The girls are from Uttar Pradesh Board-affiliated Apna School, run by an NGO. Located in one of the lanes in Sector 50, the school operates from a building taken on rent, for students residing in the nearby slums. Principal Malvika Singh, said that they switched to a new schedule and classes on Monday began at 10 am for students of Class 6 and onwards. "We have completely shut the school for children up to Class 5. We cannot teach them online," Singh said. She said that most parents are daily-wage earners. "Their parents are labourers or work in flats nearby. They do not have mobile phones. None of them knew about the circular. So, today, all of them came to the school," she said. "We sent students of upto Class 5 back and informed them that the school was closed for them. Online classes are possible only in big schools. Here we have no alternative. Until the orders are in place, we cannot take classes," she said. Speaking about students of Class 6 onwards, the Principal said: "They will have to come to school." Meanwhile, six yellow school buses stood in a neat line outside the Kothari International School in Sector 50. Their wide windows offered glimpses of the empty seats — the pattern broken only by a few students sitting quietly at the back. Some also queued outside to meet their parents waiting in their cars. "The school has switched to hybrid mode. Therefore, there are not many students here," said a school official. At several CBSE-affiliated private schools in the area, including Kothari International School and S D Vidya School, classrooms remained

largely empty. "Only a small number of students came to school," the Principal of one of such schools said. She said that the school received a notice from the district administration around 5 pm, after which a message was sent to parents. "We have completely switched to online mode for all the students up to Class 5. For the rest, it is up to the parents to decide if they want to send their children to school. We are teaching as usual," the Principal also said. Overall, school buses were visibly vacant as many parents chose to limit their children's exposure to the hazardous air. "The health of my children is a concern. But with the frequent switch of mode of classes, it is difficult to juggle. We are hoping for a better arrangement as their exams are nearing," said a parent, whose son studies at Kothari International School, requesting anonymity.

Private pre-primary and kindergarten schools in the city remained completely shut, shifting all activities online in compliance with the government's pollution-related advisories, citing the vulnerability of younger children. The Principal of Euro Kids, Puja Kashav, said that students aged up to six study at the school. "We have 15 students and two teachers. Earlier, we engaged them for three hours, but now we engage them only for two hours, considering the effect on their eyes," Kashav said.

'If we sit at home, how will we get food?': In this Delhi pollution hotspot, WFH not an option

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

At around 1 pm, the air-quality reading on the Central Pollution Control Board's (CPCB) mobile application showed an AQI of 480 for Anand Vihar, one of Delhi's most polluted neighbourhoods, a level classified as "Severe." Less than a kilometre away, Monu Patel, a 24-year-old e-rickshaw driver, navigated traffic through a dense grey haze. He wore a mask, but only intermittently. "There is a heaviness," he said. "I cannot breathe." When the pressure in his chest built up, the mask came off. Monu has driven an e-rickshaw in Anand Vihar for nearly nine years. He recognises the smog by sight and smell, but has little understanding of the long-term health risks of prolonged exposure.

"Some of my friends have watery eyes," he said. What he knows more clearly is that staying home is not an option. A few metres from the monitoring station, dozens of people waited for buses or crossed the flyover leading to the bus terminal and the railway station. Traffic congestion — a near-constant presence here — is frequently cited by experts as a major contributor to vehicular emissions, the single largest source of Delhi's hazardous air. Even at midday, the smog hung thick. Near the curb, commuters gathered around Ram Niwas, 50, who sells hot snacks from a bicycle. He has worked at the spot for eight years. He said dust irritated his nose and chest, but he does not wear a mask. "Koi bhi insaan apni marzi se yahan nahi aayega jahan saans bhi aadmi ko sochke leni padhe (No sane person would willingly come to a city where you have to think before breathing)," Ram said. The Delhi government has directed administrative and private offices to operate with no more than 50% of staff physically present, urging those who can to work from home. For informal workers like Monu and Ram — among the hundreds of thousands who earn by the day — the advisory offers little protection. As offices thin out and schools close during peak pollution days, the city retreats indoors. Its poorest workers, however, remain outside — driving, selling and waiting — breathing air that has become both a public-health emergency and an everyday condition. Leaving is not a realistic option. Ram said he returns to his hometown of Bareilly for brief visits during peak agricultural seasons, but a permanent move is not feasible. "Not everyone has enough land to stay home and survive," he said. "I came to Delhi to earn." A few lanes away, Krishan Pal, 32, pushed a handcart through Anand Vihar, collecting municipal solid waste across roughly a kilometre. The trash is eventually transported to the Ghaziabad landfill, one of the capital's most notorious pollution hotspots.

Krishan said sanitation workers remained on duty even during the Covid-19 lockdowns. The pollution season, he added, offers no alternative. "If we sit at home, where will we get food?" he said. "I have a family of five to feed and two children to educate." Wearing gloves but no mask or protective gear, Krishan emptied his cart into a larger bin at a dhala, or waste collection point. "We worked during Covid, and we have to work now," he said. "Otherwise the city will become a mess. Across from the dhala stood a cluster of jhuggi-jhupri settlements, home to domestic workers employed in nearby apartment blocks. Around 1.45 pm, Tara, 38, hurried home after finishing work at one house. Her daughter had yet to return from school. She pulled the loose end of her sari across her face, using it as a shield



against the polluted air. Masks, she said, made physical labour difficult. "I can't bend and wipe floors wearing one — I feel breathless," Tara said adding "my throat becomes sore and I cough a lot, but what can I do?" If she had studied more, she added, perhaps she, too, would have found work indoors. "But we don't have that option now," she said.

Cyberfraudsters land in police net after duping 61-year-old man of Rs 33 lakh

From a rented hideout in Lucknow, shell companies, cryptocurrency routes, and a hawala network were being allegedly used by a bunch of cyber fraudsters, the Delhi Police said on Monday. The group came under the police radar after allegedly siphoning off over 33 lakh from a 61-year-old man. The Delhi Police have nabbed three people in the case, including a man who has been accused in a drug case before — he also sheltered the key operative.

According to the police, Deepanshu, the key operative, and two other accused were all involved in creating shell entities and operating bank accounts to launder money duped via fraudulent online investment schemes. "During the course of a meticulous technical and financial investigation, it was established that the cheated amount was systematically routed through multiple bank accounts operated through shell entities, prominently linked to a fictitious firm namely," DCP (Cyber Cell, Crime) Aditya Gautam said. The Cyber Cell began investigating the fraudsters, said officers, after a 61-year-old man was cheated of Rs 33,10,000 through a fraudulent online investment scheme. Analysis of the banking trail established that an amount of Rs 10,68,000 was directly credited into accounts associated with the fictitious firm, according to police. Two key accused were earlier arrested from Delhi, who, during sustained questioning, disclosed the involvement of Deepanshu as a key operative and facilitator of the cyber-hawala syndicate. Deepanshu was found absconding. He was apprehended at midnight from Mohanlalganj, Lucknow on December 15 during a raid.

G20 host South Africa sees consensus for summit declaration despite U.S. boycott



EMS News Agency, Dec 16

G20 envoys drew up a draft leaders' declaration on Friday (November 21, 2025) without U.S. input, four sources familiar with the matter said, in a surprise move that a senior White House official described as "shameful". One of those sources confirmed that the draft made references to climate change, despite objections from the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump, who doubts the scientific consensus that warming is caused by human activities. In opening remarks to the Johannesburg summit, Mr. Ramaphosa said: "There's been overwhelming consensus and agreement that one of the other tasks we should undertake right at the beginning is to ... adopt our declaration." He thanked all delegations who had worked together with South Africa "in good faith to produce a wor-

thy G20 outcome document". "We should not allow anything to diminish the value, the stature and the impact of the first African G20 presidency," he continued. Trump rejects South Africa's G20 agenda

Mr. Trump said U.S. officials would not attend the summit because of allegations, widely discredited, that the host country's Black majority government persecutes its white minority. The U.S. President has also rejected the host nation's agenda of promoting solidarity and helping developing nations adapt to weather disasters, transition to clean energy and cut their excessive debt costs. The boycott had put a dampener on Mr. Ramaphosa's plans to trumpet South Africa's role in promoting multilateral diplomacy, but some analysts suggested it might be a benefit, if other members embrace the summit's agenda and make headway on a substantive declaration. It was not clear what concessions had to be made on the language to reach agreement on a draft declaration. The United States had objected to any mention of climate or renewable energy in the discussion, and some other members are often reticent about it. Three out of four of South Africa's planned top agenda items — preparing for climate-induced weather disasters, financing the transition to green energy, and ensuring the rush for critical minerals benefits producers — are closely linked to climate change. The fourth is about a more equitable system of borrowing for poor countries. The United States will host the G20 in 2026 and Mr. Ramaphosa said he would have to hand over the rotating presidency to an "empty chair". The South African presidency has rejected a U.S. offer to send the U.S. charge d'affaires for the G20 handover.

Commission for Air Quality Management makes GRAP more stringent in Delhi-NCR amid worsening air quality



The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has tightened the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) for Delhi-NCR, advancing several pollution-control measures to earlier stages to prevent further deterioration of air quality in the region. The revised schedule, finalised on November 21 after consultations with stakeholders, shifts multiple actions from higher alert stages to lower ones meaning restrictions will now be triggered sooner as the Air Quality Index (AQI) worsens. Under the new framework, several curbs that previously fell under Stage II ('Poor' AQI 201-300) will now be enforced at Stage I. The city's overall AQI stood at 360 in the 'very poor' category at 9 am on Saturday, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). These include ensuring uninterrupted power supply to discourage the use of diesel generator sets, deploying additional personnel to streamline traffic at congestion-prone points, issuing pollution alerts through newspapers, TV and radio, and augmenting CNG and electric public transport fleets with higher service frequency and differential fares to promote off-peak travel. Measures earlier listed under Stage III ('very poor' AQI 301-400) have been moved to Stage II, such as staggering working hours for government offices in Delhi, Gurugram, Faridabad, Ghaziabad and Gautam Buddha Nagar. The Centre may also decide on staggered timings for its offices in the region. Similarly, restric-

tions previously applicable only in Stage IV ('severe+') will now apply at Stage III ('severe' AQI 401-450). These include allowing public, municipal and private offices to operate with 50% staff while the remainder work from home. The Centre may also implement work-from-home provisions for its employees. CAQM said the changes were based on scientific assessments, expert recommendations and past experience. All implementing agencies across NCR have been directed to enforce the revised schedule immediately.

EU leaders meet in South Africa to counter US Ukraine peace plan

Johannesburg, South Africa, in a show of support to Kyiv. The planned talks were announced by top European Union officials, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and EU Council President António Costa, after their call with Zelensky on Friday. Earlier that day, von der Leyen said a key principle for Kyiv's European allies was "nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine".

The US plan foresees Ukraine handing over territory to Russia — something Kyiv has repeatedly ruled out — while reducing the size of its army and blocking its coveted path to NATO membership. It contains many of Moscow's long-standing demands, while offering limited security guarantees to Kyiv. Elsewhere, a nighttime Ukrainian drone strike hit a fuel refinery in southern Russia, killing two people and injuring two more, a local official said. The attack on the Samara region in the latest of Kyiv's long-range strikes against Russian oil infrastructure that it says fuels the Kremlin's war in Ukraine. Regional Gov Vyacheslav Fedorichchev did not immediately name the site that was targeted or detail any damage. There was no immediate comment from Ukraine. Russian air defences overnight shot down 69 Ukrainian drones over Russia and occupied Crimea, including 15 flying over Samara province, according to the Defence Ministry in Moscow. The nighttime strikes forced at least five Russian airports to temporarily halt or restrict operations, and cut off power to some 3,000 households in the southern city of Rylsk, according to Russian officials.

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Kyiv: European leaders were set to meet in South Africa on Saturday to hash out alternatives to a US plan to halt Russia's war in Ukraine, seen as favouring Moscow, nearly four years after it invaded its neighbour. The 28-point blueprint to end the Kremlin's aggression sparked alarm in Kyiv and European capitals, with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky saying on Friday that his country could face a stark choice between standing up for its sovereign rights and preserving the American support it needs.

European countries see their own future at stake in Ukraine's fight to beat back Russia, and have insisted on being consulted in peace efforts. On Saturday, they prepared to meet on the sidelines of a Group of 20 summit in

Johannesburg, South Africa, in a show of support to Kyiv. The planned talks were announced by top European Union officials, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and EU Council President António Costa, after their call with Zelensky on Friday. Earlier that day, von der Leyen said a key principle for Kyiv's European allies was "nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine".

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Hasina mourns Bangladesh quake victims, blames interim govt for negligence

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Dhaka: Bangladesh's former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Saturday expressed deep sorrow over the loss of lives and widespread destruction caused by the devastating earthquake that struck the country. Her remarks came after a 5.7-magnitude earthquake reportedly killed at least 10 people and injured more than 200 across Bangladesh, causing widespread panic and structural damage. "Many lives were lost, hundreds were injured, and the country has suffered immense damage due to the terrible earthquake that struck Bangladesh," read a statement issued by the former PM, which was posted on the Awami League's social media platform. Expressing condolences for the victims and extending sympathy to the bereaved families, Hasina wished a swift recovery for those injured. Slamming the Muhammad Yunus-led interim government, she said, "This illegal occupying government has no accountability to the people, and that is why they are not actively working to ease the suffering of citizens. Instead, they are handing over the country and its national resources to foreigners." Highlighting the country's vulnerability to natural disasters, Hasina added, "Bangladesh is a disaster-prone country. Keeping this in mind, the Awami League government has governed the

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GNS News Agency, Jan 16

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European countries see their own future at stake in Ukraine's fight to beat back Russia, and have insisted on being consulted in peace efforts. On Saturday, they prepared to meet on the sidelines of a Group of 20 summit in

Johannesburg, South Africa, in a show of support to Kyiv. The planned talks were announced by top European Union officials, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and EU Council President António Costa, after their call with Zelensky on Friday. Earlier that day, von der Leyen said a key principle for Kyiv's European allies was "nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine".

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Bangladesh earthquake kills 10, over 200 Injured



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Dhaka: At least 10 people have died and more than 200 others were injured across Bangladesh after the 5.7-magnitude earthquake struck the South Asian nation, causing widespread panic and structural damage, local media reported on Saturday. Four of the victims died in Dhaka, five in Narsingdi, and one in Narayanganj. In Dhaka, the fatalities occurred in Armanitola after the railing of a building's roof collapsed, killing three people and injuring several others. Reports from Dhaka indicated that minor cracks appeared in buildings across the capital, according to the local media. Residents described the experience as unlike any tremor they had felt before, with many taking to social media to share photos and videos showing cracked walls, damaged floors and furniture scattered throughout their homes.

Tribune. In Narsingdi, five deaths were reported as the impact of the tremor rippled through the district. The quake, which struck at 10:38 a.m. on Friday, measured 5.7 on the Richter scale according to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, which identified its epicentre in Madhabdi, Narsingdi and described it as a moderate earthquake. More than 200 people sustained injuries in Dhaka, Narsingdi and Gazipur. The Directorate General of Health Services confirmed that 10 injured people were admitted to DMCH and 10 others to Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Medical College Hospital. Several Dhaka University students were seriously hurt after leaping from buildings in panic, with at least 10 students injured, some requiring hospitalisation. In Narsingdi, 45 people received treatment at the district hospital, with three transferred to DMCH in critical condition, while another 10 were treated at the Narsingdi 100-bed Hospital. In Gazipur's Sreepur area, more than 150 workers were injured in a stampede as they rushed out of the multi-storey Denimex garment factory when the quake struck. Reports from Dhaka indicated that minor cracks appeared in buildings across the capital, according to the local media. Residents described the experience as unlike any tremor they had felt before, with many taking to social media to share photos and videos showing cracked walls, damaged floors and furniture scattered throughout their homes.

China takes spat with Japan over Taiwan to UN, cites right of 'self-defence' against armed intervention

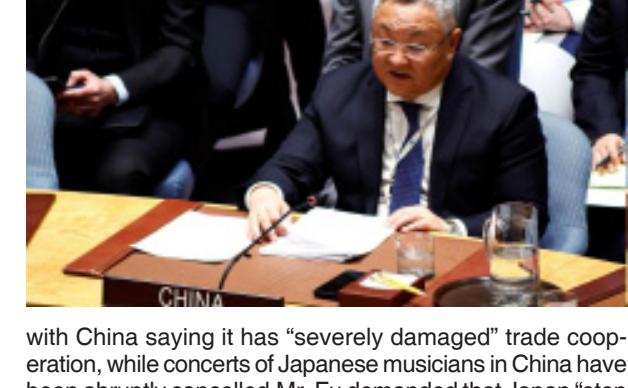
GNS News Agency, Jan 16

China has taken its widening spat with Japan to the United Nations, accusing Tokyo of threatening "an armed intervention" over Taiwan and vowing to defend itself in its strongest language yet in the two-week-old dispute.

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi committed "a grave violation of international law" and diplomatic norms when she said a Chinese attack on Taiwan could trigger a military response from Tokyo, China's U.N. Ambassador Fu Cong wrote in a letter on Friday to U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. "If Japan dares to attempt an armed intervention in the cross-Straits situation, it would be an act of aggression," Mr. Fu wrote, according to a statement from China's U.N. mission. "China will resolutely exercise its right of self-defence under the U.N. Charter and international law and firmly defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity." Beijing views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory and has not ruled out the use of force to take control of the island. Taiwan's government rejects Beijing's claims and says only the island's people can decide their future.

Japan's Foreign Ministry and Prime Minister's Office could not immediately be reached on Saturday (November 22, 2025) for comment on Mr. Fu's letter, the strongest criticism of PM Takaichi yet from a senior Chinese official in the biggest bilateral crisis in years. PM Takaichi, a conservative nationalist who took office last month, ditched the ambiguity that Japan and the U.S. have long used regarding Taiwan when she told a questioner in parliament on November 7 that a hypothetical Chinese attack on Taiwan — which lies just over 100 km (60 miles) from Japanese territory — could be deemed "a situation threatening Japan's survival". That is a legal designation that allows a Japanese prime minister to deploy the nation's military.

PM Takaichi's remarks sparked the tit-for-tat dispute with China that has spilled beyond diplomacy in recent days,



with China saying it has "severely damaged" trade cooperation, while concerts of Japanese musicians in China have been abruptly cancelled. Mr. Fu demanded that Japan "stop making provocations and crossing the line, and retract its erroneous remarks", which he said were "openly challenging China's core interests". Ahead of this year's 80th anniversary of Japan's World War Two defeat, Beijing has increasingly invoked Tokyo's wartime atrocities and China's post-war role in setting up the U.N. as it criticises its Asian neighbour and seeks to reshape the international governance system. China, a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, has repeatedly emphasised two postwar declarations envisioning that Taiwan and other territories that had been occupied by Japan would be "restored" to Chinese rule. The Potsdam and Cairo declarations form the basis for China's legal claims of sovereignty over Taiwan, though many governments view them as statements of intent, not legally binding accords. Moreover, the declarations were signed by the Republic of China government, which fled to Taiwan in 1949 after losing a civil war with Mao Zedong's communists. Taiwan held China's U.N. seat until 1971, when it was transferred to the Beijing government of the People's Republic of China.

Centre notifies four new Labour Codes



The government on Friday notified all four Labour Codes ushering in major reforms including extending universal social security coverage for gig workers, promising gender pay parity, expanded rights and safety for women workers, providing statutory backing for minimum wages, and introducing fixed term employment.

Today, our Government has given effect to the Four Labour Codes. It is one of the most comprehensive and progressive labour-oriented reforms since Independence. It greatly empowers our workers. It also significantly simplifies compliance and promotes 'Ease of...'. — Narendra Modi (@narendramodi) November 21, 2025 The four Labour Codes — Code on Wages (2019), Industrial Relations Code (2020), Code on Social Security (2020) and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSHC) Code (2020) — have been held back due to protests from trade unions, which continue. In a joint statement, 10 Central Trade Unions (CTUs) called the Codes an "anti-worker and pro-employer" reform. The laws came into effect from Friday. These replaced 29 fragmented laws, many of which date back to pre-Independence and early post-Independence eras (1930s-1950s). Prime Minister Narendra Modi described the new laws as "one of the most comprehensive and progressive labour-oriented reforms since Independence" which, he said, will serve as a strong foundation for universal social security, minimum and timely payment of wages, safe workplaces, and remunerative opportunities.

"It greatly empowers our workers. It also significantly simplifies compliance and promotes 'Ease of Doing Business', " he said in a post on X. Union Labour Minister Mandaviya said the Codes will formalise employment, strengthen worker protections, and make the labour ecosystem simpler, safer and globally aligned. He had been in regular touch with State governments, trade unions and employer bodies for the past three years. The Ministry had informed that almost all States had published draft rules for the Codes, and the Centre is hand-holding those States and Union Territories that were yet to frame the rules.

The reforms include expanded rights and safety for women, including night-shift work, free annual health check-ups for workers aged over 40 years, pan-India ESIC coverage including hazardous process units, and a single registration, licence and return system. Additional systemic

reforms include a national floor wage, gender-neutral work policy, inspector-cum-facilitator model for supportive compliance, faster dispute resolution through two-member tribunals, and a National Occupational Safety, Health (OSH) Board to harmonise safety standards. The reforms are aimed at streamlining contractual workers with the provision of "fixed term employees" which entails all benefits equal to those of permanent workers, including leave, medical, and social security. The Codes have defined gig work, platform work, and aggregators for the first time. Aadhaar-linked Universal Account Number will make welfare benefits easy to access, fully portable, and available across States, regardless of migration. Plantation workers will be brought under the OSHWC Code and the Social Security Code. The government will now initiate consultations to frame detailed rules and schemes.

On Thursday (November 20), the CTUs met Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and urged her not to implement the Codes. On Friday, 10 unions sent a message that the notification of these codes, amidst deepening unemployment crisis and rising inflation is nothing short of "declaration of war" on the working masses. "The Union government in cahoots with its capitalist cronies is attempting to take the country back to the exploitative era of master-servant relationship," they said, adding that a series of protests will be launched on November 26 against the Codes. The CTUs had observed a one-day general strike on July 9.

Reliance halts Russian crude at Jamnagar SEZ to meet EU sanctions

New Delhi: Reliance Industries Ltd on Thursday said it has halted the use of Russian crude at its export-only refinery in Jamnagar, Gujarat, as the company moves to comply with European Union sanctions. Reliance is India's largest buyer of Russian oil, which it processes and turns into fuel, such as petrol and diesel, at its giant oil refining complex at Jamnagar. The complex is made up of two refineries — one SEZ unit from which fuels are exported to the European Union, the US and other markets, and an older unit that caters to the domestic market. The European Union — a big market for Reliance — has imposed wide-ranging sanctions targeting Russia's energy revenues, including measures that restrict the import and sale of fuels produced from Russian crude oil. To comply with these, Reliance has stopped processing Russian crude oil at its only-for-exports (SEZ) refinery. "We have stopped importing Russian crude oil into our SEZ refinery with effect from November 20," a company spokesperson said in a statement. As is the case with any large industrial factory, the refinery must have past raw material (crude oil) inventories, which it is currently processing and turning into fuels.

How illicit cultivation of cannabis has left the verdant hills of Kandhamal in the weeds



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

A 30-kilometre drive from the district headquarters of Kandhamal and a short 300-metre trek off a blacktop road leads to a valley where nature still breathes in its purest form. But the calm is deceptive. Without warning, a team of police personnel armed with mowers descends on the landscape. In barely half an hour, two acres of lush cannabis plantations lie flattened. Since November, Kandhamal police have razed over 4,000 acres of such cultivation. Their action, they insist, is not oppressive but a preventive effort to choke the supply chain before cannabis (also known as ganja, marijuana, and weed) grown on these remote slopes reaches the end users in distant metropolitan cities.

Between raids and field destructions, the district administration has seized 59,068 kg of cannabis, and arrested 211 people in 185 cases in 2025 alone – the highest amount of cannabis seizure recorded by any district in the country this year. "We have mobilised all our efforts to ensure that the ganja consignments do not leave the district and are destroyed or seized within our jurisdiction. The effort required is humongous, involving both physical and financial exhaustion. But we are up to it," Kandhamal Superintendent of Police (SP) Harish B.C. said. Phulbani Subdivisional Police Officer (SDPO) Subhrajit Biswal, who has been leading the teams on the ground, hopes to destroy sizeable tracts of the illicit crop before the plants begin to flower.

So, how did Kandhamal turn into a haven for illicit cultivation?

The geography and terrain of the area favour it. The remote, forested, and inaccessible areas of the district coupled with a climate well-suited for cannabis make it ideal for clandestine plantations. Ganja cultivation is also far more lucrative than regular legal crops. It sells at around ₹2,000 per kg, and prices spike to ₹3,000 during shortage or in-

tense police crackdowns. The crop is so lucrative that a Deputy Superintendent of Police was recently suspended over allegations of involvement in the trade. A slice of the pie in the past, police teams from other States have also visited Kandhamal to arrest criminals, but were found to have made attempts to take some of the seized consignments back with them, according to local officials. "It is not easy to reach every location where ganja is grown. Sometimes the crop is found deep inside the forests, 15 km from the nearest road, requiring hours of trekking. There is a huge cost attached to the mission of uprooting these plants," said Mr. Harish. Police sources added that the outlawed Communist Party of India (Maoist) also extends patronage to the illicit cultivation.

Although the police and the Excise Department have deployed drones to detect illegal plantations, growers have adopted a new strategy by reducing patches to fewer than 150 plants and camouflaging them under the tree cover to evade satellite and drone imagery. Identifying the financiers behind the cultivation is even more challenging. These funders employ villagers to grow the crop, keeping their own identity hidden. This year, the police have begun targeting those who bankroll the plantations by running crop raids and criminal investigations simultaneously. The crop is often grown on forestlands, which belong to the Forest Department, and establishing ownership and bringing the culprits to investigation is always a challenge. "Investigators often face difficulties in making financiers, transporters and arms dealers tied to ganja networks prosecutable. To establish a financial trail, it requires a specific skill set," the Kandhamal SP said. To detect, discourage In Boudh, the police found a person whose account transactions ran into crores of rupees. But the accused person did not have any discernible business to back his income source. The case was referred to the Income Tax Department for further investigation. To discourage villagers from growing cannabis, the police have mooted the idea of engaging them in other crops such as fruits, spices, high-value vegetables, beekeeping and agroforestry through the government's rural employment guarantee scheme during the sowing and harvest windows. A robust value-chain system could also help these farmers, the police suggest. An official, who has been part of intelligence gathering and surveillance, said it is ironic that in Kandhamal, whose indigenous turmeric has received a geographical indication tag for its medicinal value, villagers have turned to ganja cultivation. Even though villagers participate en masse in the illicit farming, the police tread cautiously. "Antagonising villagers is the last thing on our minds," said an officer.

Spurious ointment racket busted; Delhi Police recovers material worth 2 crore from Ghaziabad unit

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

The police have also located a manufacturing unit and seized counterfeit drugs and raw material worth over ₹2.3 crore. According to the police, two men — Gaurav Bhagat, a resident of Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad, and Shree Ram alias Vishal Gupta of northeast Delhi's Sabarpur — have been arrested in the case.

"The operation was carried out by the Crime Branch. The accused were engaged in producing and selling counterfeit versions of popular prescription ointments, including Betnovate-C and Clop-G, which are widely used for treating skin infections, allergies and sports-related injuries," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime Branch) Aditya Gautam said in a statement. The officer further said the spurious medicines were sold as genuine branded products, posing a serious risk to public health.

Acting on inputs, the Crime Branch team first conducted a raid at Teliwara in Sadar Bazar, one of the country's largest wholesale pharmaceutical and cosmetic markets. During the raid, a large quantity of counterfeit Schedule-H ointments was recovered. Subsequent technical analysis and follow-up intelligence led the team to a manufacturing unit operating from Meerupur Hindu village in the Loni area of Ghaziabad. "A search of the premises resulted in the recovery of counterfeit medicines, huge quantities of raw chemicals, packing material, empty tubes bearing forged brand labels and machinery used for mixing, filling and sealing ointments," the DCP said. He further said drug inspectors from the North and Central Zones of Delhi and Uttar Pradesh, along with authorised representatives of the concerned pharmaceutical companies, conducted



spot inspections and drew samples from the seized stock. They confirmed that the medicines were counterfeit and neither manufactured nor supplied by their companies. The accused were also found to be operating without any valid licence to manufacture, store or sell pharmaceutical products, he added. The police said that an FIR was registered at the Crime Branch police station on December 12 under various sections of the BNS and provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act. "The seized material included around 1,200 tubes of spurious Betnovate-C ointment, over 2,700 tubes of fake Clop-G, more than 3,700 tubes of spurious Skin-Shine ointment, nearly 22,000 empty fake Clop-G tubes, over 350 kilograms of semi-prepared ointment, besides chemicals and manufacturing equipment," the DCP said. He said further investigation is underway to trace the entire supply chain, including wholesalers, distributors, delivery handlers and retailers involved in the illegal trade.

Ukraine hits Russian submarine in first underwater drone attack

that in recent months have inflicted serious damage to the Ukrainian power grid. The strike comes amid a tense period of U.S.-brokered peace negotiations that have sparked fears among Ukrainians that they will be bullied to accept settlement terms with Russia that they see as tantamount to capitulation. Ukraine has been trying to show it can inflict significant damage on Russia, especially after U.S. President Donald Trump said that Mr. Zelenskyy did not "have the cards" in the negotiations. Ukrainian navy spokesperson Dmytro Pletenichuk said the operation to hit a submarine — the most difficult target to hit — marked "another turning point" in the naval battle between Ukraine and Russia. "This day once again upends the perception of the possibilities of naval combat in this war."

Secunderabad Cantonment Board identifies locations to shift hoardings for elevated corridor construction

Hyderabad: Secunderabad Cantonment Board officials these days are busy identifying suitable locations to shift the centre median hoardings that are obstructing two elevated corridors — Paradise Circle to Dairy Farm Road (near Suchitra) and Gymkhana Grounds to Shamirpet ORR limits — in Cantonment. The decision to shift hoardings was taken in the recent SCB board meeting after the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) highlighted the need to remove or relocate these hoardings to facilitate the smooth progress of the corridor works. The SCB officials stated that necessary action would be taken in coordination with the departments concerned to ensure that the hoardings do not obstruct the construction activities.



EMS News Agency, Dec 16

Ukrainian underwater drones struck and disabled a Russian Kilo-class attack submarine in the Russian Navy's most important remaining Black Sea base, in the first operation of its kind, Ukrainian officials said on Monday. The strike carried out by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) with its "Sub Sea Baby" drones hit the submarine in the port of Novorossiysk where Russia has rebased many naval vessels to put them out of reach of Ukrainian strikes. Footage published by the SBU showed a powerful explosion erupting from the water at a pier near where a submarine and other vessels were docked. Reuters confirmed the location of the video using the port's layout and piers. Alexander Kamyshin, an advisor to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, wrote on X that it was the first time in history that an underwater drone had neutralised a submarine. Ukraine, which has practically no naval fleet left, has used sea drones and missiles to harry Russia's large naval Black Sea Fleet and dislodge it from its perch in the port city of Sevastopol on the occupied peninsula of Crimea. The diesel-electric submarine was one of many vessels that Russia was forced to move from Crimea to Novorossiysk in southern Russia, the SBU said. The submarine is capable of carrying at least four Kalibr-type cruise missiles, one of the workhorses of Russia's massive strikes

Are methane emissions in India being missed?



What fuels landfill fires and is 84 times more potent than carbon dioxide over a 20-year period? The answer is methane. While it is an excellent fuel for kitchen stoves, CNG vehicles, and power plants, it is also busy burning the planet. Methane is generated naturally by decomposing organic matter. The same prehistoric processes that created natural gas reserves are now at work within landfills. Managing methane means not just cleaner cities but also a significant step toward our climate ambitions. Around 15% of India's methane emissions are from the waste sector. Unlike the agriculture or energy sectors, which require complex, long-term reforms, waste management offers immediate gains through targeted action. Crucially, the policy frameworks and incentives are already in place through national programmes such as the Swachh Bharat Mission.

Targeted action is only possible if we know exactly where the hotspots are, but tracking an invisible gas is difficult. Historically, we have relied on models that estimate emissions by tracking incoming waste volumes and applying baseline assumptions. However, this approach depends on accurate, recurring data, which is often scarce in developing countries. Because such data are aggregated at the regional or national levels and updated infrequently, it makes pinpointing individual sources nearly impossible. The alternative is physical monitoring, which is even more challenging in the Indian context. Ground-level detection requires expensive equipment, regular maintenance, and constant oversight, making it logically and technically difficult to scale. As technology advances, satellites are stepping into this gap. This data broadly fall into two categories: regional measurements that monitor methane over a few kilometers (frequent and useful for national trends), and fine-resolution detection that can pinpoint hotspots down to a few square meters (critical for targeted action). India has already taken the first steps toward this opportunity. Last year, a paper published by scientists from ISRO quantified anthropogenic methane emissions across the country using satellite data that was acquired in 2023. Based on these measurements, the study identified major dumpsites in Pirana (Ahmedabad), Deonar and Kanjur Marg (Mumbai), and a sewage outlet as significant emitters. The National Green Tribunal took these findings further, establishing a committee to conduct ground investigations at the flagged sites.

Over the past few years, multiple new satellite missions have emerged, such as CarbonMapper's Tanager and the Space Research Organisation Netherlands (SRON) projects. These satellites provide public data covering major landfills across the country, including Ghaziabad and Okhla in Delhi, Jawaharnagar in Hyderabad, and Dhapa in Kolkata. Platforms such as ClimateTRACE and WasteMap collate this global monitoring data, combining it with baseline statistics for advanced modeling. These newer models refine traditional calculations by integrating real-time satellite observations and updating landfill-specific estimates to reflect reality. Globally, satellite surveys estimate that actual landfill emissions can exceed model-based predictions by around 1.8 times. In India, city-level comparisons are difficult due to a lack of granular data on waste characteristics. Consequently, we must rely on State-level estimates from 2018 for sector-wise breakdowns, as newer public data have not yet been compiled. This discrepancy between advanced satellite observations and older State models highlights a critical information gap: we currently cannot agree on the

true scale of the numbers or the location of the hotspots. Take Delhi as an example: its 2018 emissions inventory estimates 1.07 million tons of CO₂ equivalent annually from the entire solid waste sector. Recent satellite observations, however, estimate emissions from just Ghaziabad and Bhalswa alone to be between 0.85 and 0.96 million tons — almost as much as the sector's entire theoretical footprint. In Mumbai, the data offer a different perspective. While calculations suggest that the Kanjur Marg landfill accounts for 11% of the city's waste emissions, an expected number given its engineered design. However, satellite data show it to be emitting 1.05 million tons. This is almost 10 times the model's estimate and approximately half of the entire State's solid waste emissions. A similar discrepancy emerges in Gujarat: the state estimates 0.73 million tons for the entire sector, satellite observations show the landfills in Surat and Ahmedabad alone emitting between 0.60 and 0.81 million tons. These are not just numbers. They indicate potential leakages, accelerated methane generation, or opportunities to refine our engineered systems. Critically, these are hazards we never tackled simply because we did not know they existed. Now, we can not only gauge the magnitude of the problem but, in the case of large landfills, also pinpoint the exact source of the leaks, allowing for precise, targeted solutions. Of course, these observations come with limitations. Cloud interference and complex weather dynamics mean that satellite data cannot fulfil its potential in isolation. Urban local bodies must complement these findings with ground-level insights, a step that is especially critical for the massive, unwieldy landfills of our metro cities. The real breakthrough lies in linking satellite detection with ground-level action. When satellites detect a methane hotspot, ground teams can immediately investigate the cause — whether it is poor waste coverage, a gas collection failure, or illegal dumping. This creates a powerful feedback loop: space-based detection guides targeted ground interventions, while ground data validate and improve satellite accuracy. Integrating other data sources beyond just methane monitoring can further enhance the efficiency of this loop. At open dumpsites such as Ghaziabad, recording dumping and reclamations provides critical insight into how human activity drives methane generation. Meanwhile, at engineered landfills such as Jawaharnagar and Kanjur Marg, infrastructure data on existing gas collection systems can help pinpoint leaks and identify hidden hotspots. Cities such as Bengaluru, with their advanced waste management systems, are well-positioned to integrate these datasets to increase transparency.

To address this, we need coordinated action on three critical fronts: expanding satellite monitoring to cover all major waste sites, establishing on-ground validation systems in metro cities, and creating standardised data-sharing protocols between urban local bodies and oversight agencies. Currently, urban local bodies operate in silos, separate from the State Pollution Control Boards that oversee them. This disconnect hinders coordinated action on methane reduction. However, the revised municipal waste guidelines already envision a centralised data portal for bulk waste management, handling the wet waste that is the primary source of untreated methane. This portal could be expanded to connect with a standardised nationwide dataset for tracking emissions. Regional bodies such as the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) in the NCR can oversee this monitoring, while the Swachh Bharat Mission can integrate methane targets, aligning them with other central schemes. This integrated approach delivers multiple co-benefits that make the investment worthwhile. Methane's potential as a fuel is already recognised in policy. Just recently, Indore has utilised the Gobardhan scheme to set up a Bio-CNG plant from its waste. This strategy creates a powerful ecosystem: satellites detect hotspots, ground teams investigate and fix leaks, and standardised data sharing ensures insights reach decision-makers instantly. What is needed now is coordinated implementation across these three fronts. By making data the backbone of our waste policy, we can turn one of our biggest environmental challenges into our smartest climate solution.

Congress warns Election Commissioners, threatens strict action over 'vote theft'

In a no-holds-barred attack on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Election Commission, the Congress on Sunday (December 14, 2025) held a public rally at Delhi's Ramlila ground in which party chief Mallikarjun Kharge said those indulging in alleged vote chori (theft) are "gaddars" (traitors) and need to be removed from power. Former party chief Rahul Gandhi said vote chori is in BJP's DNA but the Congress would work with truth and non-violence to remove the Narendra Modi government, a path shown by Mahatma Gandhi. "This fight is between 'satya' and 'asatya' [truth and untruth]. We will stand behind 'satya' and will remove [Prime Minister] Narendra Modi, [Home Minister] Amit Shah and the RSS government from the country. They have 'satta' [power] and they indulge in 'vote chori', Mr. Gandhi said. The party showcased nearly six crore signatures it gathered as part of its campaign against vote chori and these would be submitted to the President.

Addressing the 'Vote Chor, Gaddi Chhod' rally, Mr. Kharge said the ideology of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat or RSS founder M.S. Golwalkar and Manu Smriti would destroy the country, and only the ideology of the Congress could save it. He accused the BJP-RSS of trying to "finish off the Constitution and enslave the poor in the name of Hindutva".

"These [BJP] people are 'gaddars', you will have to remove these gaddars. If you want to protect yourself, remove these gaddars. For that purpose, Rahul Gandhi walked throughout the country. BJP people are 'dramebaaz', they only believe in their own propaganda," the Congress chief said. A massive turnout of Congress workers from across the country marked the party's mega rally against alleged "vote chori", with chants of "vote chori, gaddi chhod" echoing across the venue. Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi, several senior party leaders, and the Chief Ministers of Karnataka, Telangana and Himachal Pradesh — Siddaramaiah, Revanth Reddy and Sukhdev Singh Sukhu — were present at the rally. Addressing the gathering, Mr. Gandhi named Chief Election Commissioner Ganesh Kumar and Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi, alleging that they were working in favour of the BJP and standing with untruth. The Lok Sabha Opposition leader alleged that "vote chori" was not merely theft of votes but an attack on Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Constitution.

"These [BJP] people are 'gaddars', you will have to remove these gaddars. If you want to protect yourself, remove these gaddars. For that purpose, Rahul Gandhi walked throughout the country. BJP people are 'dramebaaz', they only believe in their own propaganda," the Congress chief said. A massive turnout of Congress workers from across the country marked the party's mega rally against alleged "vote chori", with chants of "vote chori, gaddi chhod" echoing across the venue. Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi, several senior party leaders, and the Chief Ministers of Karnataka, Telangana and Himachal Pradesh — Siddaramaiah, Revanth Reddy and Sukhdev Singh Sukhu — were present at the rally. Addressing the gathering, Mr. Gandhi named Chief Election Commissioner Ganesh Kumar and Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi, alleging that they were working in favour of the BJP and standing with untruth. The Lok Sabha Opposition leader alleged that "vote chori" was not merely theft of votes but an attack on Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Constitution.

"Had they not been indulging in vote chori, you would have removed them from power in five minutes. Like truth is in your DNA, there is untruth and vote chori in their DNA," he said to loud applause. Warns of action Recalling that Prime Minister Narendra Modi brought a new law granting "immunity" to the Election Commission, Mr. Gandhi warned, "We are telling you [election commissioners] clearly that this law is to protect you and we will change this law retroactively and will take strict action against you." He also claimed that the Prime Minister had lost confidence after the alleged vote theft was exposed, adding that Mr. Shah's "hand was trembling" in Parliament. "Amit Shah is brave only as long as he holds power.

The day power is gone, his bravery will also vanish on that very day," the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha said. Mr. Kharge asserted that only the Congress's ideology could "save the country". "The seeds being sown by the RSS-BJP are very dangerous," he said, adding that the Congress's fight was against the RSS-BJP and those indulging in vote theft. Referring to Mr. Modi's victory claims, Mr. Kharge remarked, "We lost at many places, but still our party and our ideology are alive. If Modi loses once, there will be no trace of him after that," and urged people to strengthen the Congress's struggle for the people.

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The evolution of India's liver transplant programme



The first successful liver transplant was performed on a 20-month-old child from Kancheepuram at Apollo Hospital in Delhi on November 15, 1998. This success laid the foundation for the establishment of liver transplantation in India. In the early years, only a select group of institutions took on the challenge of establishing liver transplant programmes. They invested heavily in infrastructure, built multidisciplinary teams, and trained specialists capable of managing every aspect of the transplant. Back then, the surgery involved large open incisions, prolonged hospital stays, and reliance on imported immunosuppressive (anti-rejection) medicines that made the treatment prohibitively expensive for most families. Over the years, however, steady progress has been made. From barely 100 procedures in 2005, the annual number of liver transplants in India exceeded 1,000 by 2012. By 2024, the country was performing roughly 4,500 transplants each year, one of the highest volumes in Asia.

Innovation and expertise Behind this transformation lies a convergence of medical innovation, policy support, and growing clinical expertise. Outcomes have improved sharply as surgical techniques, post-operative care, and infection control practices have evolved. Indigenous production of essential immunosuppressive drugs has reduced dependence on imports, significantly lowering long-term costs. The introduction of minimally invasive and robotic procedures has shortened hospital stays and enhanced recovery. Greater experience has allowed expansion to a range of liver transplants — ABO incompatible transplants (where the blood group of the donor and recipient does not match), combined liver-kidney transplants, multiorgan transplants, domino transplants, and auxiliary transplants. Training programmes have produced a new generation of skilled professionals — adult hepatologists, paediatric hepatologists, surgeons, anaesthesiologists, and transplant nurses — who are taking transplant services beyond major metros to smaller cities. This decentralisation has made access to advanced care more equitable and strengthened the national transplant network. Despite this

growth, liver transplantation remains complex and costly, calling for sustained policy attention. Greater coordination between State and Central authorities under the Transplantation of Human Organs Act (THOA) can help address key barriers such as donor availability and public awareness. India's organ donation rate remains low compared to global averages, leaving a vast unmet need. The majority of liver transplants in India remain live donors, despite there being many potential deceased organ donors. The country needs to shift away from live donors to deceased donor transplants. Southern and western regions in India have led in deceased organ donations, and the rest of the country must follow.

Teaching and tertiary care centres are ideally positioned to become major contributors to deceased organ donation programmes. Efforts to integrate donor registration with existing national identity platforms — such as Aadhaar, voter IDs, or driving licenses — could simplify organ pledging and promote wider participation. Public awareness must go beyond one-time campaigns. Regular community education, coordinated hospital programmes, and the inclusion of organ donation topics in medical and nursing curricula can help change long-term attitudes toward donation. While India's transplant outcomes now compare favourably with global standards, we need to improve access. Expanding health insurance coverage — both public and private — to include the entire continuum of care, from evaluation to recovery, will ease the financial burden. Equally important is improving early referral systems. Many patients with end-stage liver disease are referred to transplant centres only after irreversible complications arise. Earlier referrals, guided by clear protocols and greater primary care awareness, can improve outcomes and reduce costs by avoiding late-stage interventions.

India's liver transplant story is one of adaptation, collaboration, and resilience. In less than three decades, the country has moved from a handful of experimental attempts to a thriving ecosystem with global standard outcomes. What began as a rare, high-risk procedure is now a successful treatment option for thousands of patients each year. The next phase of this journey must focus on scaling capacity, enhancing deceased donation, and ensuring greater financial inclusivity. As we celebrate 27 years of successful liver transplantation in India, we can draw inspiration from the first recipient. He is now pursuing a post-graduation in microbiology after completing his MBBS and recently became a father. Today, a baby weighing as little as 3 kg can receive a successful liver transplant and that speaks volumes about the capability and skills of our transplant teams. (Dr. Anupam Sibal is group medical director and senior consultant paediatric gastroenterologist and hepatologist at Apollo Hospitals Group. anupamsibal@apollohospitals.com)

'123456' tops India's password list again, highlighting weak digital security habits



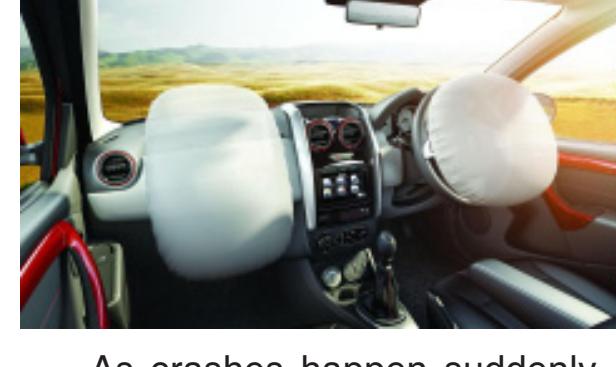
New Delhi: '123456' has once again emerged as India's most common password, topping the list for the second consecutive year, a new report said on Wednesday. The data compiled by password manager NordPass analysed passwords used globally and in 44 countries, with a special focus this year on how different generations choose their passwords. The report shows that Indians continue to rely heavily on extremely weak and predictable passwords.

After '123456,' the next most used passwords in India include 'Pass@123' and 'admin,' followed by simple numeric sequences such as '12345678,' '12345,' and '123456789.' Despite adding symbols like '@' or capital letters, combinations like 'Admin@123,' 'Password@123,' and 'Abcd@123' remain easy to guess. The research notes that many Indians try to make their passwords appear strong

by inserting special characters, but the overall patterns are still very easy for hackers to crack. Personal elements also influence password choices. Names and patriotic references appear frequently, with passwords such as 'Kumar@123,' 'Global123@,' and 'India@123' making the country's top list. Experts warn that while such combinations may feel more personal or unique, they follow predictable formats that can be easily targeted by automated attacks. Globally, the findings are similarly worrying. "123456" is again the world's most common password, followed by "admin" and "12345678."

Simple numeric patterns like "12345," "1234567890," and easy combinations such as "qwerty123" dominate lists across countries. Researchers also observed a significant rise in the use of special characters this year — with 32 passwords on the global list containing them, compared to just six last year. However, most of these remain predictable variations of common words or number patterns. Karolis Arbaciauskas, head of product at NordPass, said that overall improvements in password hygiene remain slow despite years of awareness campaigns. Arbaciauskas added that until passwordless authentication methods like passkeys become widespread, strong, unique passwords are essential. "Around 80 per cent of data breaches are caused by weak, reused, or compromised passwords," he noted. The report also found that generational differences are minimal. In fact, the most popular passwords among 18-year-olds look very similar to those used by 80-year-olds. Numeric sequences like "12345" and "123456" dominate every age bracket.

How do airbags work?



As crashes happen suddenly, airbags cannot waste even a millisecond. Once the sensors in the bag detect a crash, the airbag has to be inflated quickly before damage is done.

(0.025 to 0.03 seconds!) Then, in about 50 milliseconds, the person inside the car comes into contact with the airbag. The airbag intervenes and absorbs the sudden forward movement reducing injuries and damage. Airbags are fantastic when there is space between the bag and the person. If the person is too close to where the airbag is, the immediate inflation can cause grave harm.

This is why it's advised that airbags should be used in conjunction with seatbelts. Make sure your seat is a good distance away. For children, care must be taken to ensure that they are properly buckled up for the ride. It is advised that children should be placed in the back seat. Ensure that the airbags aren't defective.

Crash protector chemistry Car companies want to offer best protection with the airbags they provide in their cars. To ensure this, the airbag mechanism goes through a series of simulations and tests for different types of impact conditions. After all, crashes aren't all a single type. For this the bag is prepped thoroughly. Airbags have one aim — to protect those inside the car. Airbags are made of strong nylon fabric which does not allow the gas with which it is filled to leak out. It is not normal air around us that's inside the bag. There is a special chemistry for it. The key chemical involved is Sodium Azide (NaN₃). Once the bag is made, they are kept folded at places in the car's dash.

As crashes happen suddenly, airbags cannot waste even a millisecond. Once the sensors in the bag detect a crash, the airbag has to be inflated quickly before damage is done. Once the crash is sensed, electric signals are sent to the igniter which triggers an exothermic reaction where sodium azide decomposes to produce nitrogen gas. This gas fills up the airbag. Since the sensors need a bit of time to do the detecting, the inflation has to be even quicker. Typically the full process takes about 25 to 30 milliseconds.

Space startup Agnikul Cosmos raises 150 crore in fresh funding round at \$500 million valuation



scaling production units of aerospace and rocket components and advance its stage-recovery programme.

A portion of the funds is earmarked for the development of Agnikul's upcoming integrated space campus on the 350 acres allocated by the Tamil Nadu government, which will be used for building end-to-end facilities for manufacturing and testing of launch vehicle systems. "Given our previous successful controlled ascent launch that allowed us to demonstrate all our patented technologies with ISRO and IN-SPACe support, we have now been able to scale our strategy to include lower stage recovery and upper stage extension — features that will make the unit economics of launch services much better. This fund raise allows us to work on such missions while also focusing on scaling launch frequency and building for the world, from India," said Srinath Ravichandran, CEO and co-founder, Agnikul Cosmos.

Agnikul will also use the fresh funds to strengthen their reusable launch architecture, building on its recently granted patent that extends the operational life of upper stages. This innovation opens new pathways for reusability and cost-efficient orbital access, marking a pivotal step towards becoming world's first recoverable small satellite launch vehicle. Moin SPM, co-founder and COO of Agnikul, explained: "With growing demand and more than a dozen customers eager to launch with us, scaling our operational depth was the natural next step. The indigenous facility, which is planned near the new upcoming launchpad, will equip us to serve these missions on schedule and with the responsiveness the market expects." With customers spanning India, West Asia, and Australia, Agnikul is equipped to meet a globally distributed launch demand, cementing India's emerging leadership in the space tech sector. Agnikul also recently announced its new Large Format Metal Additive Manufacturing Unit, which will allow it to use 3D printing for multiple sub systems beyond just its engines.

What changes are planned for the plant variety Act? | Explained

The story so far: Union Agriculture Minister Shri Raj Singh Chouhan said that the Centre will amend the Protection of Plant Variety and Farmers' Rights Act (PPV&FRA Act), incorporating suggestions from stakeholders. While promoting new and high-yielding varieties is essential, preserving traditional seeds is equally important, he said. The Minister said there is a need for reforms, and new suggestions received from various stakeholders would be considered and incorporated into future amendments of the PPV&FRA Act, wherever necessary.

Have consultations started?

A committee headed by eminent agriculture scientist R.S. Paroda, appointed by the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority (PPVFRA), has started stakeholder consultations on the amendments. PPVFRA Chairman Trilochan Mohapatra told *The Hindu* that the committee will examine in detail the premises for amending the law and hold wide consultations with all stakeholders about the amendments. After consultations, the committee will submit its report to the PPV&FRA, and the PPV&FRA subsequently will present it with its views to the Union Agriculture Ministry. Prof. Mohapatra said the process of consultations has just begun and it will take time for preparing a report. The committee met farmers' organisations, civil society organisations, industry representatives and researchers in the last week of October. The committee consisting of scientists and policymakers will review various provisions of the Act in light of inherent deficiencies, present day challenges, and to further bolster farmers' interests. Prof. Mohapatra said the present Act has completed two decades, and in that time the sector has witnessed various technological and scientific advancements as well as changes in trade aspects and farmers' requirements. The panel's terms of reference include that it shall make wider consultations with various stakeholders and identify the issues and needs to cater to their requirements. It will propose the amendments in relevant sections of the PPV&FRA Act of 2001.

What are major topics of discussion?

Though officials maintain that consultations are at the preliminary stage, discussions with farmers include amendments to the definition of 'variety needs' that could be modified to include 'combination of genotypes' so that it could be at par with the draft Seeds Bill of 2019. It was also proposed to include seedlings, tubers, bulbs, rhizomes, roots, tissue culture plantlets, synthetic seeds and other vegetatively propagated material in the definition of seed. There is a proposal to define the term "institution" occurring in the definition of 'breeder' to include both public and private establishments in the seeds sector. The committee also has questions for stakeholders on the Distinctness, Uniformity and Stability (DUS) test. Stakeholders are being told about the importance of trait and the necessity to include it in DUS guidelines. Further, there are discussions to define "abusive act" so that acts such as producing, selling, marketing,

exporting and importing a variety which has the same or an identical denomination of another variety can be made punishable.

What are the concerns?

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (non-political) founding leader K.V. Biju, who attended the meeting, said the Act should have provisions to register all community-developed seeds. He said that seeds which went through DUS tests should not be allowed to register under a farmers' or an individual's name. "This is to prevent the misuse of the ownership of the seeds in future by private companies and to avoid monopolisation of seeds. The government should make it a priority that seeds developed by the farmers should remain under community control," he said. Mr. Biju added that there are suspicions of the misuse of the DUS test. He said farmers' groups suspect that in the case of njavara, a paddy seed from South India, proper DUS testing was not followed before registration. Policy analyst Shalini Bhutani, who attended the meeting, said small peasantry is still largely outside of the system and many of them are not aware of techno-legal issues. She said that as per their biocultural practices, they have been approaching seeds as a shared material. "This does not fit into the Intellectual Property Rights framework of granting exclusive economic rights over seeds," she said adding that many countries are operationalising open-source ideas to keep their local plant varieties outside of the IPR system so that no body can claim private rights on them. She said there have been attempts to arm twist developing nations so that domestic laws such as the PPV&FRA Act are compliant with the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants. On another matter of seed quality, "despite provisions for accountability for non-performance of IP-protected propagating materials in the original Act, the criteria for compensating farmers are not yet detailed out in its Rules," she said. Ms. Bhutani said the committee may watch how the plant treaty negotiations scheduled in Peru towards the last week of November, particularly on the multilateral system (MLS) pan out. "Both are connected in a way. Expansion of MLS is a big issue," she said and added that other concerns are in situ conservation and benefit sharing with local seed keepers.

US sanctions Indian entities, individuals involved in Iranian petroleum & petroleum products sales

New York/Washington: The Trump administration has sanctioned entities and individuals from India involved in sales of Iran's petroleum and petroleum products, saying the funds from this trade support Tehran's regional terrorist proxies and procure weapons systems that are "a direct threat" to the US. The Departments of State and Treasury sanctioned shipping networks responsible for funding the Iranian regime's "malign activities" through illicit oil sales, as well as an airline and its affiliates that arm and supply Iran-backed terrorist groups. Among those added to the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control Specifically Designated Nationals List are Indian nationals Zair Husain Iqbal Husain Sayed, Zulfikar Hussain Rizvi Sayed, Maharashtra-based RN Ship Management Private Limited and Pune-based TR6 Petro India LLP. The State Department is designating 17 entities, individuals, and vessels in several countries, including, but not limited to India, Panama, and the Seychelles, involved in Iran's petroleum and petroleum products sales, the administration said.

Concurrently, the Department of the Treasury is designating 41 entities, individuals, vessels, and aircraft, intensifying its efforts against Iran's petroleum and petrochemical exports and disrupting financial streams and commercial operations that support Iran's malign activities. The funds generated by this oil trade are used to support Iran's regional terrorist proxies and procure weapons systems that

Why the criminal investigation into Fed Chair Jerome Powell sends a chilling message



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

In an unprecedented move, federal prosecutors in the United States opened a criminal investigation into Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell, according to a video Powell released on Sunday (January 11). In the video, Powell said that the US Department of Justice served the Fed with subpoenas and threatened a criminal indictment over his testimony to a Senate committee. A subpoena is a written order to attend a court of law to give evidence, and the case in question pertains to some building renovations at the Fed's headquarters in Washington, DC.

Powell argued that the probe was launched due to the frustrations of US President Donald Trump, stemming from the Fed's refusal to lower interest rates in line with his expectations. The probe, which prosecutors have not confirmed, could signal a fresh escalation in Trump's slugfest with Powell. Incidentally, it was Trump who had nominated Powell for the job in 2017, during his first term. The US Fed, like many of America's independent institutions, has traditionally enjoyed an arm's length of distance in setting interest rates, independent of presidents and the executive branch. Under Trump 2.0, however, that independence has been frequently tested. The Fed Chair is the latest to draw Trump's ire, and in the process, invite criminal investigation by the American justice department. Powell's investigation will be supervised by the US Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia, according to The New York Times, which broke the story about the probe.

"This is about whether the Fed will be able to continue to set interest rates based on evidence and economic conditions, or whether instead monetary policy will be directed by political pressure or intimidation," Powell said in his response. Trump has repeatedly threatened to remove

TCS reports 14% fall in Q3 profit, to pay Rs 57 dividend

TCS shares closed 0.86 per cent higher at Rs 3235.70 on the BSE on Monday. TCS shares closed 0.86 per cent higher at Rs 3235.70 on the BSE on Monday. Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), India's largest IT services firm, reported a 14 per cent year-on-year decline in net profit for the third quarter (Q3) ended December 2025, weighed down by large exceptional charges linked to restructuring, labour law changes and a legal dispute in the US.

The company's consolidated net profit for the December quarter fell 14 per cent on-year to Rs 10,657 crore from Rs 12,380 crore a year ago. Revenue for the quarter rose 4.58 per cent year-on-year to Rs 68,205 crore from Rs 65,216 crore in the same period a year ago. However, the IT major posted steady sequential growth and announced a hefty dividend of Rs 57, including a special dividend of Rs 46. The record date for the dividend is January 17, 2026. A major portion of the dividend will be accrued to Tata Sons, the holding company, which owns 71.77 per cent stake in TCS.

TCS said re-structuring expenses were Rs 253 crore and Rs 1,135 crore in the three months ended December 2025 and September 2025, respectively. Statutory impact of new labour codes was at Rs 2,128 crore in three and nine months ended December 31, 2025. Provision towards legal claim was Rs 1,010 crore in three and nine months ended December 2025. K Krishivasan, MD and CEO, said, "The growth momentum we witnessed in Q2FY26 continued in Q3FY26. We remain steadfast in our ambition to become the world's largest AI-led technology services company, guided by a comprehensive five-pillar strategy." "Our AI services now generate \$1.8 billion in annualized revenue, reflecting the significant value we provide to clients through targeted investments across the entire AI stack, from In-

X admits Grok AI objectionable image issues, blocks 600 offending accounts: Sources

After the government's stern notice over Grok AI generating objectionable images of women without consent, Elon Musk-owned social media platform X has removed 3,500 pieces of content and blocked 600 accounts. X has admitted its mistake, government sources said, adding that X will not allow obscene imagery going forward. This action comes after the government had earlier expressed dissatisfaction over X's response to its January 2 notice for the platform's failure to observe statutory due diligence obligations under the Information Technology Act, 2000 and associated rules.

As reported by The Indian Express last week, the social media platform had told the IT Ministry that it was open to permanently disabling accounts which engaged in such activity on the platform and committed to taking action against accounts creating such inappropriate prompts on its artificial intelligence platform. The platform had already blocked pieces of such content that were flagged by the government.

The government, though, was unconvinced by the company's response, owing to a lack of any technical explanation behind the issue, and any steps to prevent Grok from generating such images in the first place, The Indian Express had learnt. In its formal response, sent on Wednesday, X had acknowledged the severity of the issue and had committed to taking action against accounts creating such inappropriate prompts on its artificial intelligence platform. The company had assured the government that it will strictly comply with India's Information Technology Act, 2000 and associated rules governing digital content. On January 2, the IT Ministry had taken note of Grok being abused to generate objectionable pictures and videos of women, without their consent, while increasing the risk of exposure and harm, and had sent amissive to the company saying that it



was not adhering to the country's laws, raising red flags over "serious failure" of safeguards enforcement. The issue became a global concern, with regulators in the European Union, United Kingdom and Malaysia also scrutinising the social media company.

The notice said that due to Grok's actions, X was not adequately adhering to provisions of the Information Technology (IT) Rules, 2021, and the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, particularly in relation to obscene, indecent, vulgar, pornographic, paedophilic, or otherwise unlawful or harmful content which are potentially violative of current laws.

Users on X were increasingly tagging Musk's AI chatbot Grok to generate sexualised and objectionable images of women without their consent, raising fresh concerns over AI misuse and platform safeguards. In several instances, users replied to photos of women, often taken from public posts, and prompted Grok to alter their appearance by adding revealing clothing or creating suggestive visuals, which the AI-bot promptly did.

Ashish Chanchlani details workout routine, spills weight loss secrets: 'I am at 94 kg right now'



Powell, who he has lambasted for not cutting interest rates fast enough. To be sure, in the second half of 2025, the Fed cut interest rates three times. "I have deep respect for the rule of law and for accountability in our democracy. No one, certainly not the Chair of the Federal Reserve, is above the law, but this unprecedented action should be seen in the broader context of the administration's threats and ongoing pressure," Powell added. Ian Bremmer, president and founder of the Baltimore-based Eurasia Group said of the federal investigation, "Political loyalty to President Trump the decisive factor for the US attorney's office, not rule of law. Let's see if the business community has anything public to say condemning this. Since republicans in congress will not."

Commenting on Powell's video message, David Folkenflik, NPR Correspondent and the author of the book Murdoch's World said on X, "Extraordinary assertion of independence by Fed Reserve Chair Powell, saying US DOJ is investigating him as payback for setting interest rates higher than President Trump wants... Reminder: Powell was first appointed Fed chair by Trump." Trump administration officials have repeatedly accused the Fed of "mis-handling" the multi-billion renovations at the Fed headquarters. Trump himself had repeatedly threatened legal action. Meanwhile, Trump said in an interview with NBC News on Sunday that he did not "know anything" about the Justice Department's investigation. "I don't know anything about it, but he (Powell) is certainly not very good at the Fed, and he's not very good at building buildings," he said.

Trump had previously targeted Lisa Cook, a governor at the US Fed, whom he tried to fire over alleged mortgage fraud. The case was blocked by an American federal court and will be heard by the Supreme Court later this month. Criminal charges brought by Trump's justice department against ex-Federal Bureau of Investigation boss James Comey were also dismissed by a court. Just last year, the Supreme Court of the United States held that "The Federal Reserve is a uniquely structured, quasi-private entity that follows in the distinct historical tradition of the First and Second Banks of the United States". This reasoning helped Cook stay on. As inflation is projected to inch upwards from early 2026, the odds for a January rate cut have remained low. Even traders had begun pricing in a higher chance of a March reduction. The CME Group's FedWatch tool showed a 58.3 per cent probability of a rate cut for the month, up from around 53.9 per cent last week. In the larger scheme of things, the investigation sends a message that long-held expectations of the Fed's independence may need to be tapered, with possible impact on how it acts on key future policies, in turn impacting the rest of the world.

Calling a fitness-oriented lifestyle "addictive," YouTuber Ashish Chanchlani shared his workout routine in an interaction with actor Soha Ali Khan. Talking about his massive weight loss journey, Chanchlani said, "I was at 130 kgs. I lost around 40 kgs, then another 5 kgs, and then I gained back my weight because I am trying to gain muscle. I am at 94 kg right now. I will go back to being in the 80s. But I will make sure that I am a little more muscular," he said on Mashable India. His fitness routine? "First some jogging, core, then weight training and 40 minutes of high-intensity cardio daily," continued Chanchlani, adding that the incline bench press workout is one of his favourites. He further confessed that, at some point, when you diet so much, "I think a simple wheat roti or a paratha is also like a good cheat meal."

Taking a cue from his candid confession, let's under-

stand all about sustainable transformation. Chanchlani's workout, which combines cardio and strength training to accelerate fat loss and build lean muscle, is extremely pertinent. "His regimen, including jogging and resistance exercises, strengthens major muscle groups and boosts metabolic rate. This combination supports not just weight loss but also improves fitness, stamina and posture. Regular movement also reinforces discipline and makes sustainable lifestyle habits easier to maintain," said consultant dietitian and fitness expert Garima Goyal. Chanchlani's focus on a calorie deficit or consistently consuming slightly fewer calories than the body needs indicates how well his meals were planned to include high-quality protein, fibre and healthy fats, while refined carbohydrates were moderated.

*Breakfast of boiled eggs or an omelette paired with sprouts, providing satiating protein and fibre.

*Lunch and dinner featuring lean protein such as grilled chicken with vegetables

*Minimum carbohydrates to support steady energy levels.

*Add a well-suited whey protein shake to help with muscle recovery after workouts.

A mindset of moderation rather than strict avoidance helps one stay consistent and enjoy the journey, both emotionally and physically. "Sustainable changes in body composition are driven by consistency, mindful eating and regular activity rather than extreme diets or short-term challenges."

Rakul Preet Singh warns your favourite 'healthy' salad may be 'loaded with calories': 'Well, let's break that myth'

Many people are unaware of how quickly a seemingly healthy salad bowl can turn into a calorie-heavy meal. Actor Rakul Preet Singh recently pointed this out while discussing common misconceptions about salads ordered from restaurants or delivery apps. "Well, let's break that myth that salads are healthy," she said in an interview published on the YouTube channel Khaane Mein Kya Hai. "Actually, when you end up eating these ordered salads, they are loaded with calories because you'll have a handful of nuts, you'll have cheese and multiple things, and tonnes of oil. I'm not a believer in that. I feel like homemade food or clean, clear food is always healthier."

Her comments echo what many nutrition professionals have long cautioned: that toppings, dressings, and portion sizes can drastically change the nutritional profile of a salad. What may appear fresh and light can actually contain more calories than a home-cooked meal. To confirm this, we spoke with an expert.

What should people watch for when ordering salads outside?

Kanikka Malhotra, consultant dietitian and certified diabetes educator, tells indianexpress.com, "A basic bowl of veggies might be 80–150 kcal, but once restaurants add generous oil, nuts and cheese, the numbers climb fast. Just one tablespoon of oil (olive, canola, etc.) adds about 120 kcal; many salads easily have 3–4 tablespoons in the dressing, which is nearly 360–480 kcal from oil alone." She continues, "A small handful (30 g) of mixed nuts adds roughly 180–190 kcal. About 30 g of cheese (two small cubes or a thick sprinkle) adds another ~120 kcal."

So a "healthy" ordered salad can quietly cross 500–800 kcal, she says, especially if there is creamy dressing, croutons, fried toppings or added bread on the side. She suggests asking how much dressing is being used and requesting dressing on the side, preferably vinaigrette with limited oil. Scan the menu for words like "creamy," "mayo-

based," "crispy," "fried," "candied nuts," "loaded cheese"—these usually mean high fat and sugar. "Request for less cheese, fewer nuts (or seeds instead), grilled protein instead of fried, and no extra croutons or garlic bread unless you're consciously accounting for them," mentions the expert.

What does truly 'clean' or minimally processed eating look like?

From a nutrition point of view, Malhotra states, 'clean' or minimally processed eating is less about perfection and more about choosing foods in their natural form while limiting added oil, sugar and salt. It looks like plates built around vegetables, whole grains, pulses, good-quality protein, and measured healthy fats, with sauces and toppings contributing most of the calories. "In restaurants, this means picking meals where you can clearly see the ingredients like grilled paneer/chicken/fish, roasted veggies, plain lentils, millets or brown rice, simple soups and salads with light, visible dressings and customising by asking for less oil, no butter/ghee finishing, sauces on the side and swapping sugary drinks for water, buttermilk or unsweetened options," notes Malhotra.

Why does sleeping after 11 pm impact weight even with a clean diet?



When people discuss weight loss, they usually focus on diet, exercise, or steps. However, they often overlook the importance of sleep, particularly the hours before midnight. "Many individuals may eat well but find themselves stuck at a certain weight. One major reason for this is poor sleep patterns," said Dr Amit Saraf, director, internal medicine, Jupiter Hospital, Thane.

Why does sleeping after 11 pm impact weight even with a clean diet?

The body follows a biological clock. "Around 10:30 pm, a natural phase begins where digestion slows down. If someone stays awake too late, their body stays stressed, leading to higher cortisol levels. When cortisol remains elevated at night, it becomes easier to store fat and harder to burn it,

International Kite and Sweet Festival set to kick off in Parade Grounds

Hyderabad: Colossal and colourful kites in the sky, and a spread of sweets from different States on the ground are set to take over Secunderabad Parade Ground as the International Kite and Sweet Festival is set to kick off here on Tuesday.

The event, which will be launched by Tourism Minister Jupally Krishna Rao at 4 pm, will witness international participation, with 40 professional kite flyers from 19 countries joining 55 national flyers representing 15 Indian States. Visitors can expect massive and uniquely designed kites soaring the sky, with night kite-flying sessions as well, during the event being organised by the Telangana Tourism department from January 13 to 15.

Further, the department in collaboration with Culture

regardless of the quality of the food. This is why people who maintain a good diet may still struggle with excess weight," said Dr Saraf. The body's natural metabolic rhythm has the "most efficient repair occurring between 11 pm and 3 am". "If sleep is delayed, a period of metabolic chaos begins. This affects sugar control, confuses hunger hormones, and increases cravings the following day," said Dr Saraf.

According to him, staying up late disrupts hormones like leptin and ghrelin, which help balance hunger and fullness. "A delayed sleep cycle triggers hormonal imbalance, leading to increased hunger, stronger carbohydrate cravings, and less satisfaction after meals. Insulin sensitivity declines, making it easier for the body to store fat," said Dr Saraf.

What can help?

It's helpful to gradually shift bedtime closer to 11 pm, moving it 15 to 20 minutes earlier each night for a few nights, said Dr Saraf. "Eating dinner at a reasonable hour, ideally three hours before sleep, can help reduce late-night hunger. People who frequently wake up at night might benefit from reducing screen time, dimming lights, and avoiding heavy meals close to bedtime," said Dr Saraf. A good diet cannot make up for a disrupted sleep cycle. "Going to bed before 11 pm often serves as a quiet accelerator for metabolism, stabilises cravings, and makes it easier to reach weight goals," said Dr Saraf.

Language Indian Connections (CLIC) is organising the sweet festival, featuring 60 stalls where women from various States, including Punjab, Gujarat, West Bengal, Kerala and Maharashtra, will display and sell traditional homemade sweets. In addition, 100 stalls have been allotted for handlooms and handicrafts to promote local artisans. The department is also hosting a hot air balloon festival at the Parade Ground from January 16 to 18 between 4 pm and 9 pm. A two-day drone festival will also be held at the Gachibowli Stadium on January 16 and 17, featuring displays from 9.30 am to 8 pm.



Why Harshit Rana's 29 matters for India's ODI balance



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

At 242 for 5, with 59 runs still needed in 53 balls and the momentum drifting away towards the Black Caps, India found themselves in an unfamiliar position: slightly anxious, suddenly thin on finishing, and one wicket away from discomfort. New Zealand sensed it too, their body language sharpening as Harshit Rana walked out to bat in the first ODI at Vadodara. Rana was not meant to be here – not as a problem-solver in batting, not as a finisher. But with Washington Sundar injured and the chase slowing, India needed him to be more than a fast bowler with a bat.

The steep Kyle Jamieson had cracked the game open by removing Virat Kohli, Ravindra Jadeja and Shreyas Iyer in the space of two overs and left the match intriguingly poised. Rana's first few balls were about survival. He was beaten outside off, defended with soft hands and resisted the urge to manufacture shots. Off the third ball of the 42nd over, Jamieson hit the channel hard and the ball flew over off stump, underlining how little room there was for error.

The tension peaked two balls later. Rana punched a short-length ball square and set off for a risky second. He was more than halfway down when KL Rahul sent him back. Rana turned sharply, dived full length, and made his ground – awkwardly. He stayed down briefly, clearly in discomfort. It was a small moment, but a telling one. India could not afford to lose him. Slowly, Rana began to breathe. A squeezed two to deep backward point. Gentle nudges into the leg side. Nothing extravagant yet everything purposeful. Against Kristian Clarke's changes of pace, he misread a slower ball and hacked across the line, the ball sneaking under his bat. The release came in stages. A full delivery outside off was driven hard and sliced past backward point for four, a boundary India badly needed. Then came the moment New Zealand would rue. Off the fifth ball of the 44th over, Rana mistimed a slog off Zack Foulkes, the ball ballooning to long-on. Mitchell kneeled, settled, but spilled it. From there, the innings shifted tone. Rana rotated strike, combined well with Rahul, and ensured the required rate never climbed again. A couple off Michael Bracewell through midwicket. A controlled drive back past the bowler. The pressure ebbed away quietly. And then, with the finish line in sight, Rana picked his moment. Clarke dropped one short

and slower into the wicket. He cleared his front leg, threw everything behind the pull, and nailed it over deep midwicket for six. The crowd responded instantly. India were almost home. Rana eventually fell for 29 off 23 balls, top-edging a pull to wicketkeeper Mitchell Hay, but by then the job was done. "Harshit did a terrific job as soon as he walked in," Rahul said later. "He took a lot of pressure off me with the way he struck the ball, and suddenly the chase became much easier."

Earlier in the afternoon, Rana's day with the ball unfolded in phases. He began in a containing role with the new ball on a surface offering little assistance. As New Zealand pushed towards 350, he returned to break the opening stand, dismissing both openers in contrasting fashions. In a late third spell, Rana combined effectively with Mohammed Siraj and Prasidh Krishna, using his variations to curb the scoring and deny the big hits. The finishing with the bat was something more. Harshit Rana of India celebrates the wicket of Henry Nicholls of New Zealand during the 1st ODI match between India and New Zealand at Baroda Cricket Association Stadium, Vadodara, India, on January 11, 2026. (CREIMAS for BCCI) Harshit Rana of India celebrates the wicket of Henry Nicholls of New Zealand during the 1st ODI match between India and New Zealand at Baroda Cricket Association Stadium, Vadodara, India, on January 11, 2026. (CREIMAS for BCCI) That 'something more' is what India are quietly trying to build.

"The team management wants to groom me as an all-rounder and it is my task to keep working on it," Rana revealed after the match. India's ODI balance is currently in flux. Hardik Pandya, central to the side's composition for years, is still not fully fit to bowl his full quota of ten overs regularly. While his presence remains invaluable, it has forced India to explore alternatives. Nitish Kumar Reddy has promise but is yet to receive a sustained run. More significantly, Rana, only 24, is already clear about where the team sees him. "It was a matter of confidence, which KL bhai helped me with when I went in," Rana said. "I kept my focus on it and made the runs." Rana's value lies in what his batting unlocks. He is a frontline fast bowler first. If he can reliably contribute runs, India can afford to think differently – especially away from home. Once Pandya is fully fit to bowl, a batting No. 8 like Rana could allow India to drop a finger spinner and field four fast bowlers without excessively lengthening the tail, especially with an eye on the 2027 World Cup in South Africa. For now, these remain possibilities rather than guarantees. Rana will face sterner tests ahead, but on a night when India briefly flirted with uncertainty, he showed he could absorb pressure and deliver in a format that increasingly demands flexibility, such contributions carry weight beyond a single result. They give captains options, selectors reassurance, and teams the freedom to think ahead rather than react. For India, that may matter as much as the runs themselves.

'I would pay to sit in their team meetings': R Ashwin lauds New Zealand's planning, analytical approach against India

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Former India all-rounder R Ashwin heaped praise on New Zealand's fighting spirit, insisting that he would love to be a fly on the wall during the Kiwis' planning sessions for matches. Despite holding only a fourth of the experience across departments, a second-string BlackCaps outfit handed India a scare in the first ODI in Vadodara last Sunday. Batting first, the Kiwis put on 300 on the board and nearly stopped India from crossing the line before KL Rahul's unbeaten cameo took the side home in the 49th over.

In 2024, the Kiwis hammered India at home, handing them a landmark 0-3 whitewash defeat that marked the start of the Test team's transition. Speaking on his YouTube channel, Ashwin highlighted New Zealand's analytical approach and said, "A lot of the top teams aren't very analytically driven. New Zealand is a very analytically driven side. I hope to sit down with them and observe their planning; I am even willing to pay money for it if needed. The way they execute their plans, I would pay to sit in their team meetings to understand how they go about it."

"We must give credit to New Zealand for the way they were ready to fight in the game. They didn't stop till the end, and that's why they were able to come back into the game. I also posted a tweet that New Zealand don't have a lot of strength in their squad, in terms of man-to-man. But because of their discipline, fielding, and how they execute their



plans well, they are able to fight and compete with some of the top teams," remarked Ashwin. The spin legend also said the Kiwis were the better side during the first ODI, although India were saved by the all-round exploits of Harshit Rana and batting maestro Virat Kohli whose stroke-filled 93 set up to chase. "The most impressive was the New Zealand team. India didn't play the best of cricket. There were pockets where Harshit Rana bowled really well and batted really well. Another positive was Virat Kohli, what batting! His movements and footwork, he played a shot against Kristian Clarke, maybe, where he showed all three stumps. Kristian Clarke followed him, not allowing him enough space to open his hands, and he ended up hitting a four with a flick," Ashwin observed.

'When Shubman Gill was injured, he did not come out to bat': Former India batter slams team for risking Washington Sundar in NZ ODI

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Former India batter Mohammed Kaif has slammed the Indian team management for exposing an injured Washington Sundar during the 301-run chase against New Zealand in the first ODI in Vadodara on Sunday. Suffering from a side strain, Sundar did not bowl his full quota of overs during the first innings. The 26-year-old Sundar had hobbled off mid-way through New Zealand's innings after bowling five overs for 27 runs. And while he did not come back to the field, he was out in the middle in India's innings to see them through.

While KL Rahul saw his team through in the chase with an over to spare with his 29-run cameo, he would later admit that he wasn't aware that Sundar could not run from the other end. Kaif questioned the Gautam Gambhir-led management for sending out Sundar out to bat in the situation. "You will remember when Shubman Gill was injured, he did not come out to bat in that Test match, the Kolkata Test. It was a high-scoring game and people thought that even 20 or 30 runs from him could help India win, but he still did not bat. That was done to give full protection to the player so the injury would not aggravate. But the same approach was not applied with Sundar. That is why I feel it was a wrong call. KL Rahul's running between the wickets was affected. Even though India won the match, I feel there were higher chances of aggravating the injury in yesterday's



game," Kaif said on his YouTube channel. The Tamil Nadu all-rounder is part of the 15-member squad for the forthcoming T20 World Cup and has now been ruled out of the remainder of the ODI series. He is also doubtful to start in the five-match T20I series against the Kiwis. "If he is injured and you need runs at a run-a-ball, you should first try someone else. When a player is injured and you send him in under pressure, the injury can worsen. He couldn't run doubles even though the ball was going to deep point or square leg, and he was only managing singles. Although the required run rate was around a run-a-ball and the match was under control, I felt that sending an injured player was risky. What might have been a one-week or ten-day injury could stretch to 20, 25, or even 30 days," Kaif added.

Kane Russell scores third hat-trick in four games as table-toppers HIL GC beat Tamil Nadu Dragons 4-2



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

New Zealand veteran Kane Russell scored his third hat-trick in four matches as HIL GC defeated Tamil Nadu Dragons 4-2 to consolidate their position at the top of the eight-team Hockey India League while handing the Dragons their first outright defeat of the season.

Russell scored in the 14th, 33rd and 47th minutes for HIL GC — a team administered by the league's governing council after the initial owners withdrew — while Sam Ward scored in the 23rd minute. For TN Dragons, Blake Govers (32') and Uttam Singh (56') were on target during the clash at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Astro Turf Hockey Stadium in Ranchi on Monday. In another match on Monday, Tomas Domene's brace guided SG Pipers to their first win in the HIL across two editions as they prevailed 2-1

over Hyderabad Toofans, for whom Amandeep Lakra got on the scoresheet. The star of the match was goalkeeper Tomas Santiago who stopped a penalty stroke late in the match.

The day's highlight was, however, Russell's hat-trick. It was the Dragons, in fact, who began brightly, with Tom Craig testing James Mazarello early, but HIL GC soon took control. Russell broke the deadlock in the 14th minute, powering home his seventh goal of the season. Sustained pressure followed, and Ward doubled the lead in the 23rd minute after a sharp baseline assist from Lalit Kumar Upadhyay.

The Dragons responded after halftime through Govers' penalty-corner conversion, but Russell struck again almost immediately, converting the third of successive penalty corners to restore HIL GC's two-goal cushion. Despite improved attacking play and multiple circle entries from the Dragons, Mazarello stood firm. Russell completed his hat-trick in the 47th minute with a thunderous drag-flick. A late goal from Uttam Singh reduced the margin, but HIL GC's defence held strong. Earlier in the day, SG Pipers made a flying start, dominating early exchanges and converting one of six first-quarter penalty corners through Domene's (8') dragflick. Despite Toofans growing into the contest and enjoying greater possession, the Pipers struck again against the run of play, Domene (29') completing his brace for a 2-0 halftime lead. Persistent Toofans pressure finally paid off when Amandeep (41') scored from a dragflick. The Pipers then held firm under sustained final-quarter attacks to protect their narrow lead.

Australia captain Alyssa Healy announces retirement from cricket after upcoming home series against India

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Alyssa Healy, one of Australia's greatest match-winners and an eight-time World Cup winner, announced her retirement from cricket at the end of the multi-format home series against India starting in February. The Australian captain said the last few months have become mentally draining as she had to deal with injuries, and with her deciding not to play the upcoming T20 World Cup in England later this year, she has taken the call to sign off after one of the 'biggest series' for Australia. "I wanted to save it for the podcast because this has been the most enjoyable little side hustle that I've been a part of over the last little period. Officially, coming out today that you hear this, I am actually retiring from cricket at the end of the Indian series. Please don't make me cry. Not an easy decision, but had to be made at some point," Healy said on WillowTalk Cricket Podcast.

Healy joked that she made the decision to quit cricket because her husband and Aussie pacer Mitchell Starc hit a hole-in-one in golf recently and she felt like she needed to take up the sport full time to beat him. But soon, went on to elaborate the mental fatigue that had set in recently. "It's been a long time coming. I think probably the last few years have been probably more mentally draining than anything else," the 34-year-old said. "Few injuries. You got to dive into the well a couple of times and probably that well was getting less and less full of water, so getting harder to dive back in there. At the end of the day having the opportunity to finish at home against India, which is on the calendar one of the biggest series for us, a multi-format one. I thought it was a really cool way to finish with some of my teammates and obviously some family around as well. It would have been nice to do it in India with a World Cup, but to finish at home would be really cool, really special." "Obviously, that means I'm not going to the T20 World Cup, so there might be a little bit of change over the next few weeks that you'll see within that series and some leadership stuff leading into that World Cup. For me, the opportunity to play at home, still captain the team in that series is going to be really special."

India's tour of Australia begins on February 15 with three T20Is, followed by three ODIs and then a one-off Test at WACA in Perth, which now appears set to be Healy's last appearance for the all-conquering side. So far, she has played 123 ODIs scoring 3563 runs with 7 centuries and 162 T20Is tallying 3054 runs with one century. She has also played in 10 Tests. Most notably, she was the player of the match in the final of the 2020 T20 World Cup when Australia thrashed India as well as the 2022 ODI World Cup when they prevailed against England. "I never really wanted to do it like this. I will say that. I never wanted to announce it. I just wanted to get to the end of the Test match and hang up my boots and celebrate. But as I said, with me not going to the T20 World Cup, it's probably forced a little bit of change. Not a lot of T20 cricket leading into that for the girls. So, it's probably been then placed on me to make a decision on that format and give the opportunity for the girls to prepare for that World Cup in the best possible way, knowing that I'm not going to be there," Healy explained. "So, yeah, it's forced an announcement of sorts, but I guess at the end of the day, um, yeah, it's probably given me a little peace as well, because I've known that's at the back of my mind for probably the last 6 months. Um, but to finally just say it, get it out there, everyone to clap it, and move on. That would be ideal."

WPL 2026: Grace and power to the fore as Harris' stunning 40-ball 85 powers RCB to two wins in two

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

There is a case to be made that the Royal Challengers Bengaluru are not quite getting their combinations right at the start of the Women's Premier League season, but what they do have are elite match-winners who can single-handedly take the game away from the opponents. On Monday in Navi Mumbai, it was Grace Harris' turn to produce a stunning innings that powered RCB past UP Warriorz's total of 143 with nearly eight overs to spare.

Grace and PowerThat Harris is one of the most powerful ball-strikers in the world is well established, but over the course of her 40-ball 85, she also showed how good her timing can be when she is in the zone. When Meg Lanning decided to open the bowling with Deepi Sharma, most likely as a match-up option to Smriti Mandhana, Harris took strike and calmly struck a straight drive off the first ball, swinging through the line effortlessly for a four. When Deepi shortened the length, she was ready to rock back in the crease and find the gap behind square on the offside. In the fourth over, when Kranti Gaud dropped short, she cashed the ball through point and short-arm jabbed through square leg for a couple more elegant boundaries.

Make no mistake, there was plenty of power on display too. The run-chase was effectively broken in the sixth over as she smashed Deandra Dottin for 32 runs, with the third six in the over bringing up a 22-ball half-century. Mandhana, who hit a serene 32-ball 47 with nine fours herself, quipping later that if she were the opponent captain with Harris in this form, she'd have not known what to do either. "It was the best seat in the house to watch Grace," Mandhana said after the match. "All I need to do is take a single. Amazing to watch. She can bat in the middle-order as well as she does for Australia. But we all were very clear of how dangerous she can be at the top, and how she can take the game away from the opposition," the RCB skipper said, on the decision to make her open the batting.

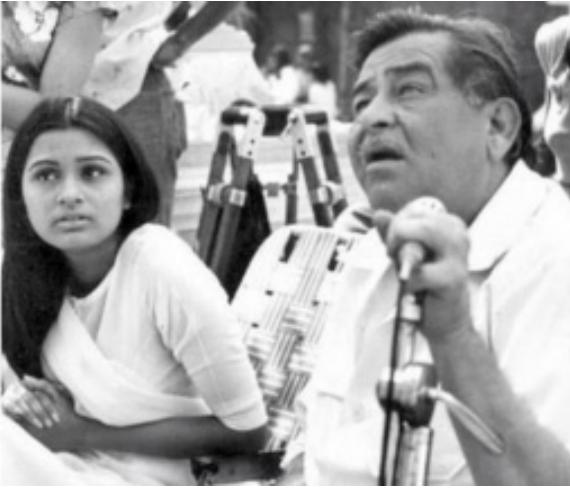
Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Grace Harris plays a shot RCB's Women's Premier League (WPL) match against UP Warriorz at the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai. (Express photo by Narendra Vaskar) Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Grace Harris plays a shot RCB's Women's Premier League (WPL) match against UP Warriorz at the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai. Indeed, with the grace of Mandhana and power of Harris, RCB have an opening pair that the other four teams would fear, especially on flat wickets when dew sets in. "When Malo bhai (coach Malolan) told me I will open, I just thought, oh, how good. I get to bat



with Smriti. She's so classy and just calm. It's a great reminder when you watch her bat that you don't actually even have to over-hit the ball. She makes batting look so easy, so smooth and technically correct," Harris said in mutual admiration. Bell sets the tone for the second match running, Lauren Bell delivered a new ball spell that saw the opponents' opener struggle to put bat on ball. On opening night, it was Amelia Kerr who kept getting beaten outside off-stump because of the late swing she was extracting. Against UPW, she troubled both Meg Lanning and Harleen Deol; the latter was stunned by an away swinger that landed on the middle stump and almost turned like a leg-break to beat the outside edge. The English pacer bowled 13 dot balls in the three overs she bowled in the powerplay, and accounted for the wicket of Deol, whose frustration at not being able to connect with the ball led to a desperate hoick. Shreyanka's mixed night

One of the reasons Shreyanka Patil was successful in WPL was her knack for dismissing the top batters in the opposition ranks. Back playing in the league after missing out in 2025 due to injury, the spinner showed she still has that ability in her as she accounted for Lanning and Phoebe Litchfield in one over to break the back of UPW's batting order. She'd concede that later that it was a mixed night for her, as she went for 50 runs in an otherwise miserly bowling effort by RCB. Her lines and lengths were thrown off at the death by Deandra Dottin and Deepi, who led UPW's recovery from 50/5 to 143/5, and Shreyanka spoke in the mid-innings break about not getting her execution right. She is no stranger to bowling at the death, and if she can rectify those mistakes, a wicket-taking Shreyanka will once again be an asset for RCB. Brief scores: UP Warriorz 143/5 (Deepi Sharma 45; Nadine de Klerk 2/28, Shreyanka Patil 2/50) lost to Royal Challengers Bengaluru 145/1 (Grace Harris 85; Shikha Pandey 1/28) by 9 wickets.

Kamna Chandra on working with Raj Kapoor and Yash Chopra, and where Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Devdas went wrong



On this edition of SCREEN Spotlight, veteran screenwriter Kamna Chandra discusses her 40-year-plus journey, from Raj Kapoor's Prem Rog to Yash Chopra's Chandni, and co-writing 1942: A Love Story with future son-in-law Vidhu Vinod Chopra.

Kamna Chandra was one of the very few women screenwriters of Hindi cinema back in the early 1980s. In many ways, she paved the way for screenwriters like Honey Irani, Sooni Taraporewala, and Juhi Chaturvedi. She's worked with late legendary filmmakers like Raj Kapoor on Prem Rog (1982) and Yash Chopra (Chandni, 1989). She also co-wrote 1942: A Love Story (1994) with director Vidhu Vinod Chopra, who later became her son-in-law. In an exclusive interview with SCREEN, Kamna breaks down her 40-year-plus journey.

You didn't have any connections to the film industry. And it was nonetheless an uphill climb for any woman screenwriter to get her script greenlit in the early 1980s. How did you then land a film as seminal as Raj Kapoor's Prem Rog (1982)?

I'd written extensively before that also, but for magazines, radio, and television in Delhi. People had just started warming up to television back then. My husband, who worked at a multinational company, got transferred to Mumbai. So, excitement sparked within me that I can try writing for films now. I also began writing for radio stations and magazines in Mumbai. I was pleasantly surprised that there was so much respect of the Hindi language in Mumbai. You expect that in Delhi, but even Mumbai surprised me.

When I thought of writing films, Raj Kapoor's name came to my mind. He was one of my favourite directors. I was in eighth or ninth class when I watched his film Aag (1948). So, I just looked up his name in the phone directory and called up RK Studios. Can you believe it? I never thought that one call would change the course of my career. His secretary picked up the call. He said Raj sahab is very busy, so would I be okay narrating my story to his assistant? I asked, "What if the assistant doesn't like my story?" Because it's a creative thing. Each person has a different opinion on a story. So, he asked me to leave my number with him. And can you believe it, I got a call back within a week itself.

How well did Raj Kapoor receive you when you first met him, since you were a newcomer in the business of films?

He gave me a lot of respect. I can't even tell you. Firstly, his secretary guided me how to reach their office because I was new to the city (laughs). When I reached there, he served me tea and then made me meet Raj sahab. Raj sahab never made me feel like he's such a prolific director and I was a newcomer in films.

What did he like about your story of Prem Rog?

All the six films I've written so far, they're based on a basic truth. That's why they appeal to everyone. They've come from the heart, and haven't been curated clinically. It takes years to knit together the screenplay, but the basic story should touch your heart. You should feel the emotions. My mother had narrated me the story of a zamindar in a village. That story stayed with me. I found all of Raj sahab's films to be great, but I felt there was a lack of plausibility in Satyam Shivam Sundaram (1978). So, I really wanted to meet Raj sahab. When I narrated the story to him, he'd laugh but also feel sad about what happened to that girl (Padmima Kolhapure's character). He asked me if I wanted to get involved in the screenplay writing. But my kids were quite young then, and I was quite happy with the fact that my story appealed to Raj sahab. I told him I don't know anything about writing a screenplay. So, he brought in Jainendra Jain. But the story I gave to him was already more than 100 pages.

Did Raj Kapoor do justice to your story?

He even asked me to get my story registered with the screenwriters association. Can you believe it? He could've taken my story and lied to me that he didn't like it and then made a film out of it. He sent someone to help me with the registration and asked me to keep the original document with me. During the making of the film, I told Raj sahab that my husband got a transfer to Hong Kong. He'd made 9-10 reels by then. So, he invited us to watch the film and give our feedback. When I returned to India for a break, I saw posters of Prem Rog, in which my name was as big as the director, the screenplay writer, and the music director. I don't know how much more respect he could give me.

Were you wary that Raj Kapoor wouldn't glamourize Prem Rog too much like he did with Satyam Shivam Sundaram?

(Laughs) He was so worthy of worship that I wouldn't dare make such a belittling request to him. He'd made so many films. The only film I felt he strayed away from reality was Satyam Shivam Sundaram. I narrated him two stories. There was more scope for glamour in the other story, but he chose this widow's story. Even when I watched those nine reels, I felt he'd crafted each scene with so much emotion. It became a huge success and was nominated for several awards. I was also nominated for Best Story, but I think the award went to Gulzar for Namkeen. Raj Kapoor used to present his heroines very beautifully. When he told me Padmima Kolhapure would play the lead role, I asked him if she can do justice to it since it's such a difficult role. He was very confident of her talent. She indeed did such a great job, and even won the Best Actress award for it.

How did Chandni happen after that?

Since Prem Rog was loved so much, Yash ji approached me himself. He also liked my story in the first narration itself. At that time, three big films of his hadn't worked then — Mashaal (1984), Faasle (1985), and Vijay (1988). But those were mostly action films. Chandni was his return to romance after Silsila (1981). He also treated me with a lot of respect. When we were developing the film, he pointed out that the hero-heroine meeting in college isn't something new. So, I borrowed from my story Bade Log, which got published in Dharmyug magazine, in which a gorgeous girl visits a new city for a wedding where the hero meets her. It's a story that's still very close to me, and is one of my best.

Was Yash Chopra able to make that story even better for the big screen?

Absolutely. The casting was so well done. When Vinod Khanna met me for the first time, he asked me, "Why have you written such a short role for me?" (laughs).

Is it true that in an initial draft, Vinod Khanna's character marries Chandni (Sridevi)?

No. But there was a draft in which Rishi Kapoor's character marries Chandni initially. Because I felt it'd have been so tough for her to leave her home after that. But Yash ji didn't want them to get married then. So, I thought he knows far more than me. He's made so many films. It's his movie. But he did full justice to my story. Chandni also became such a huge hit that I got a lot of encouragement. I didn't really have to struggle. Everything just worked out on its own.

Rishi Kapoor would know you from earlier right, since he was Raj Kapoor's son?

Oh, very well. Rajji used to tell him that she's the mother of this story so you should ask her questions. They treated us so nicely that it never felt that I was an outsider. Rajji also invited us to the premiere of Ram Teri Ganga Maili (1985) and introduced me to everyone as the writer of Prem Rog. Whenever Rishi would meet me, he'd point out that he worked in two of my films, Prem Rog and Chandni.

How was your interaction with Sridevi like?

Yash ji used to say she's a woman of few words. But once the camera rolls, she transformed into something else. She must be coming prepared to set, which is why she could blend into her character like that. I met her on the set only a couple of times. She used to greet me very politely, like everyone else.

Was it your daughter Anupama Chopra who recommended you work with Vidhu Vinod Chopra?

Yes, all my three kids were studying in the US. My husband used to travel there for work, so I'd accompany him so that I also get a chance to meet the kids. One day, we got a video cassette of Parinda (1989) to watch together. None of us could even get up as we watched that film. It was starkly different from the films being made then. I hadn't heard of Vinod Chopra's name by then. He'd already won a National Award and got nominated for an Oscar, but I wasn't aware. It was destiny that Anupama asked me to narrate my next story to that director (laughs).

Wasn't Parinda a very different film from the ones you'd written?

It was extremely different! It was such an eye-opener. Although I still don't endorse or write violence, but that film was such an impactful story about the human condition. I didn't even think whether Vinod can make a romantic film, but I just called up his office in Natraj Studio. They asked me to come over and narrate the story the next day. It was that easy.

Is it true that you wrote Kareeb (1998) before you wrote 1942: A Love Story?

Yes, and it took two years to write Kareeb. I don't even remember how many drafts we wrote. When I submitted the story, Vinod said, "I don't work like that," and asked me I should also get involved in the screenplay. He said if I could write so many stories and dialogues for television (Trishna, Kashish), writing a film screenplay should be a cakewalk. Since my kids were away then, I agreed to write the screenplay as well. We finalized Kareeb, but once I returned from a US visit, he said he'd make it later and nothing goes waste. He wanted to make a bigger film on India's freedom struggle first.

How did you react to that abrupt change in plans?

I was thrilled because I'd watched India get independent in front of my eyes. Waving the tricolour and listening to then-Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's speech Tryst with Destiny from the terrace of my school — these are all a part of my childhood. I remember on Raksha Bandhan, a bunch of us girls stormed into the collector's office and tied him a rakhi which said, "Do or die." I re-watched 1942: A Love Story after over 30 years at IFFI Goa. It gave me goosebumps watching how hard we'd worked back then.

How easy or tough was it to work with Vidhu Vinod Chopra?

It's not easy to co-write with Vinod. On the first day, he'd say, "It's very beautiful, Kamna ji." The next day, he'd say, "Try harder." A couple of times, I even said I can't push myself further. If you remember there's a Romeo & Juliet play scene in 1942: A Love Story. Vinod didn't want to show that in English, so he asked me to translate the scene in Hindi. I gave him six-seven scenes written in verse in Hindi. Vinod loved it so much that he asked me to translate the full play in Hindi so that it can get published. But later, he chopped off those scenes from the film. When I asked him why, he said, "Don't get emotionally attached to your lines." He wanted to keep the film's length limited to two and a half hours.

Kareeb couldn't recreate the success of 1942: A Love Story. Why do you think that was the case?

The story changed a lot across the years and the drafts. There were other co-writers too. Sanjay Leela Bhansali was already involved, and later, Abhijat Joshi also joined in. He tells me even today that a lot of other ideas came in from the outside, but my main story got pushed to the back (laughs). My hero eventually became someone who used to wash clothes at a laundromat. Maybe it didn't work as much as we were hoping to it, but everybody said it's a sweet film. Bobby Deol and Shabana Raza in Kareeb. Bobby Deol and Shabana Raza in Kareeb.

You worked with your daughter Tanuja Chandra on Qarib Qarib Singlle (2017)?

I'd originally written that as a radio play for Hawa Mahal show on Vividh Bharati long ago. It was about a poet who keeps falling in and out of love. He assumed that they'd be pining for him, but when he visits them again, he finds out they're happily married.

Shark Tank India pitcher calls Supreme Court's stance on stray dogs 'harsh', Namita Thapar lauds his 'thoughtful' actions to care for them



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