

INDIAN CHRONICLE

16 February, 2026|Monday | Volume No:10| Issue No: 322

Pages: 12+8

www.indianchronicle.com

Published from : Ranga Reddy (Telangana State)

₹ 3

Grand Maha Shivaratri Celebrations in Chilakalaguda

“Indian Chronicle, Secunderabad, February 15:“Maha Shivaratri celebrations were held grandly in Chilakalaguda, Secunderabad. At the Sri Saibaba Sametha Sri Bala Anjaneya Swamy Temple, special rituals including Eka Rudrabhishekam and other special poojas were performed under the leadership of Temple Chairman Naguluri Sai Baba.“The temple premises echoed with chants of Lord Shiva’s name from early morning. A large number of devotees participated in the rituals, performed abhishekams and archana, and had darshan of the deity.“The temple committee members coordinated the arrangements smoothly, and theertha prasadam was distributed to the devotees. The celebrations concluded successfully in a devotional and peaceful atmosphere.



Grand Maha Shivaratri Celebrations at Keesaragutta Sri Ramalingeswara Swamy Temple



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 15, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“On the auspicious occasion of Maha Shivaratri, Sunday witnessed a grand celebration at the Keesaragutta Sri Ramalingeswara Swamy Temple, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, along with Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya, visited the temple and offered prayers to Lord Shiva. They were warmly welcomed by the temple chairman and priests, who performed traditional rituals and guided them through the festivities. In addition to the dignitaries, several senior judges and prominent personalities paid homage to the deity, highlighting the spiritual and cultural significance of Keesaragutta. The air was filled with the rhythmic chants of Om Namah Shivaya and the sound of temple bells,

creating an ambiance of devotion and serenity. Devotees actively participated in the rituals, performing abhishekam to the Shiva Lingams spread across the temple premises and surrounding areas. Special arrangements were made to ensure smooth darshan and offerings for the massive crowd. The celebrations also included lighting of traditional lamps, distribution of prasad, and devotional singing, adding to the spiritual fervor of the occasion. The temple hill, illuminated by thousands of lamps, became a beacon of faith, drawing families, youth, and elderly devotees alike. The day-long celebrations not only reinforced the age-old traditions but also provided an opportunity for devotees to seek blessings, reflect, and engage in communal worship, making Maha Shivaratri a truly memorable spiritual event at Keesaragutta.

Government Whip and Aleru MLA Beerla Ailaiah Couple Perform Special Pooja at Someswara Temple

Aleru MLA Beerla Ailaiah Makes a Noise by Driving a Tanga (Horse-Drawn Cart) at a Jain Temple.



“(Mandava Srisailam..Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 15):- On the occasion of Mahashivratri, Telangana State Government Whip and Aleru MLA Beerla Ailaiah along with his wife and Beerla Foundation Chairman Beerla Anitha performed special pooja with his family at the Sri Someswara Swamy Temple in Kolanupaka “village in Aleru Mandal. On this occasion, they performed abhishekam, rudra abhishekam and bilvarachana in the temple and received the blessings of the Lord. Later, the MLA said that he prayed to Lord Shiva that the people of Telangana State, especially the people of Aleru constituency, should be happy and prosperous and that dairy crops should be abundant. Later, the temple administrators honored the MLA couple with shawls and bestowed blessings. The temple contin-

ued to be crowded with devotees on the occasion of Mahashivratri.“Beerla Ayilayya and his wife made a noise by driving a tonga (horse-drawn cart) near the Jain temple.“In Aleru constituency, Telangana State Government Whip and Aleru MLA Beerla Ayilayya made a noise by driving a tonga near the Jain temple. He spent a pleasant time with the locals, chatting amicably and understanding their problems. The people expressed happiness at seeing him riding the tonga himself. The locals expressed happiness at the leader interacting with them like a common man. On this occasion, he explained the programs being undertaken by the government for the welfare of the people. The locals gave a grand welcome to the MLA and expressed their congratulations.

MP Etela Rajender Visits Hill County Relay Hunger Strike, Pledges Personal Intervention



“NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 15, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):“Hill County residents and women from Bachupally staged a peaceful relay hunger strike to highlight pressing social issues. Honorable Malakajgiri Member of Parliament, Mr. Etela Rajender, visited the protest and interacted personally with the participating women,

listening attentively to their concerns. He assured them that he would take personal initiative to address the issues raised. The women participating in the strike Navatha, Tanuja, Jyothi, Bharani, Renuka Devi, Vijaya, Kavitha, and Manjula were offered lemon juice by Mr. Rajender as a gesture of solidarity, marking the conclusion of their protest. Hill County residents expressed heartfelt gratitude for the MP’s support and empathetic engagement. During the visit, a representative submitted a memorandum to the Bachupally Police in the presence of Mr. Rajender, requesting a fair and transparent investigation into economic irregularities affecting the community. Additionally, a national-level memorandum was submitted, urging the strengthening of residential welfare associations across the country and recommending reforms in relevant legislation. Residents expressed confidence that, with the MP’s support, their issues would receive prompt and just resolution. The program was attended by prominent leaders including BJP State Vice President Kolli Madhavi, Bachupally Corporator Vijayalakshmi Subbarao, Nizampet President Prasad Raju, Bikshapati, Narendar Chowdhary, Chetri Dher, Sai Krishna Reddy, along with several other key leaders and party workers.

Tomorrow Chairman, Vice-Chairman Selection at Kagaznagar Municipal Office

“Indian Chronicle (Taj Khan), February 15.“District PRO Requests Media Coverage for Municipal Leadership Election“The District Public Relations Officer of Komaram Bheem Asifabad has informed that the selection process for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Kagaznagar Municipality will be held tomorrow at 11:00 AM at the Kagaznagar Municipal Office.“Representatives of print and electronic media who have been issued passes during the municipal counting and election process are requested to attend the programme and provide coverage of the event.“The District Public Relations Officer urged all eligible media personnel to be present at the venue on time.

Minister Ponnam Prabhakar Special Pooja at Potlapalliswayambhu Sri Rajarajeswara Swamy Temple Offering silk cloths to Swami



“K Sadanand “ Husnabad, February 15 : On the occasion of Maha Shivaratri“Minister Ponnam Prabhakar visited the temple of Sri Rajarajeswara Swami, Potlapalliswayambhu, Siddipet District Husnabad Constituency. “Minister Prabhakar participated in special puja on this occasion“Swami offered silk clothes to them. “Afterwards“Minister Ponnam Prabhakar said...wished the devotees auspicious occasion of Mahashivratri.“He

wanted the Lord to make the entire Husnabad area green, with good rains and dairy crops to keep the people healthy. He said that he wanted the blessings of Lord Shiva to complete the Gauravelli project by the next Shivratri and make the area green through the canals. “The welfare schemes implemented by the public administration government should continue without any hindrances, and in the future also more development and welfare car”[

Among these 5 women, who will get the chance to be the Municipal Chairman...?

Who has the blessings of the MLA Kumbh...?

Who will the top brass suggest...?

Whose name will the PCC president send in a sealed cover...?

Chairman candidates in tension...?

Swearing-in ceremony for the Bhuvanagiri Municipal Chairman and Vice Chairman today.

“(Mandava Srisailam..Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 15):- After the oath-taking ceremony of the councilors in the Bhuvanagiri Municipality of Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district, the posts of Chairman and Vice Chairman will be decorated today, Monday.

In the Bhuvanagiri Town Municipality, the councilor candidates were elected for 35 wards. In Bhuvanagiri Municipality... With the Congress Party candidate for Ward 29 in Bhuvanagiri town, has requested Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy to provide her with an opportunity and provide effective governance, saying that her husband Pothamsetty Venkatesh warlu had previously contested as Bhuvanagiri MLA from the Congress Party (losing with a narrow majority) and had held the post of Municipal Councilor several times and recently as Municipal Chairman. It is learnt that the Congress Party candidate from Ward 35, Thangallapalli Srivani Ravikumar, has worked as a Congress Party worker and a youth leader in the Congress Party for 30 years, has worked as a DCC delegate and has gained the affection of the people as a public figure, has worked as a municipal councilor in the past, has a lot of political experience, and has requested MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy to give him an opportunity as the Municipal Chairman once, and will work hard to provide good governance, and to give him an opportunity as the Chairman. It is learnt that the Congress Party candidate from Ward 11, Bommaipalli village, Ganji Srivani Ganesh Reddy, has asked the MLA Ganji Srivani Ganesh Reddy, who has a lot of political experience, and that if he is given an opportunity as the Chairman once, they will provide effective governance. It is learnt that the Congress Party candidate for the 7th ward is Kukkadugu Padma Somaiya, her husband K u k k a d u g u Somaiya has a lot of political experience, has been elected as a councilor for three or four terms, and has been serving the public by adhering to the Congress party since that time and today, and that it would be good if he were given a chance as the chairman once, and that



gress Party winning 22 seats and the support of 5 independent candidates, the Congress Party will be fully strengthened to 27 councilors. Despite the complete majority, the Congress Party won 22 seats without the support of independent candidates, but there is a possibility of unanimously electing the posts of Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Congress

Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy to give him an opportunity as the Municipal Chairman once, and will work hard to provide good governance, and to give him an opportunity as the Chairman. It is learnt that the Congress Party candidate from Ward 11, Bommaipalli village, Ganji Srivani Ganesh Reddy, has asked the MLA Ganji Srivani Ganesh Reddy, who has a lot of political experience, and that if he is given an opportunity as the Chairman once, they will provide effective governance. It is learnt that the Congress Party candidate for the 7th ward is Kukkadugu Padma Somaiya, her husband K u k k a d u g u Somaiya has a lot of political experience, has been elected as a councilor for three or four terms, and has been serving the public by adhering to the Congress party since that time and today, and that it would be good if he were given a chance as the chairman once, and that



Party. It is noteworthy that five candidates are among those competing for the post of Chairman. It is learnt that Pothamsetty Manjula Venkatesh, the Congress

four terms, and has been serving the public by adhering to the Congress party since that time and today, and that it would be good if he were given a chance as the chairman once, and that

he would provide good governance, and that MLA Anil Kumar Reddy had requested him to give him a chance as the chairman. It is learnt that the Congress Party candidate for the 23rd ward is Barre Pujita Jahangir, her husband Barre Pujita Jahangir has been a Congress Party worker and youth leader since childhood, has served as a public servant and has previously served as the municipal chairman and has earned public respect, and that if he is given a chance as the chairman once, he will provide good governance. Whoever is elected as the Municipal Chairman among these five...whose name is suggested by the local MLA...whom the high command suggests...whose name is suggested by the Pradesh Congress Committee President Mahesh Kumar Goud...whose name is sent by the sealed covering letter will get the opportunity to become the Municipal Chairman of Bhuvanagiri. Similarly, if the minority is given the opportunity to be the Vice Chairman, then it is learnt from reliable sources that Ward 30 Congress Party candidate MD Layak Ahmed is likely to become the Vice Chairman. It is learnt that Layak Ahmed has requested the MLA to give him the opportunity as the Vice Chairman. If the SCs are given the opportunity, there is a possibility that one of the SC candidates among the SCs will become the Municipal Vice Chairman. It is learnt that Tummeti Pandu, who joined the Congress party under the leadership of MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy and contested as an independent candidate in Bhuvanagiri town in accordance with the circumstances of ward 14 (despite being a Congress party), and secured the largest majority among all the councilors in Bhuvanagiri town... If he is given the opportunity to become the Vice Chairman, then he too, as a young man, is worthy of holding the position and has requested the MLA to give him the opportunity to become the Vice Chairman. In any case, with the Con-

gress Party flying high in the Bhuvanagiri municipalities in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district, the councilor oath-taking ceremony and the elections for the chairman and vice-chairman will be held today. It is learned that government officials, Revenue Additional Collector Veera Reddy, Bhuvanagiri MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy, Bhuvanagiri MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, and government Vippu Aleru MLA Beerla Ilayya are participating in this program.



Indian Chronicle

English Daily

AI fury batters IT stocks

The disruptive power of artificial intelligence technologies is nothing new. But what happened to the global IT stocks around the world last week mirrored far deeper fears of the industry. A set of new AI tools released by Anthropic, a US-based AI company, sent tremors through America, Europe and Asia, wiping billions of dollars off the software and IT services firms' stock prices as their shares fell sharply. Anthropic, the creator of Claude chatbot, released 11 open-source plugins for its 'Claude Cowork' agent aimed at automating tasks across legal, sales, marketing and data analysis functions. The worry is that these automation tools, which can handle a wide range of customer service tasks, could replace many traditional software and IT outsourcing services.

The scale of the meltdown was so massive that some analysts described the market reaction as a "SaaSocalypse," meaning a severe downturn for software-as-a-service (SaaS) companies. The new plugins will lead to automation of tasks such as legal document review, compliance, sales workflows, marketing support and data analysis. Indian IT stocks too came under sustained pressure with their shares plunging by up to 8% and wiping out roughly Rs 2 lakh crore in market value amid fears that automating coding, legal review, sales workflows and other enterprise functions could erode the high-margin application services revenues that account for 40–70% of Indian IT companies' business. Analysts estimate that 9%–12% of industry revenues could be at risk over the next four years as clients pivot to AI-led efficiency over traditional service providers.

A key takeaway for the Indian IT sector from Anthropic's disruption is that it should move from traditional outsourcing to becoming AI implementation partners. As Indian enterprises integrate Claude for critical coding workflows, dependency on large vendor teams may decline, squeezing billable hours and margins. Anthropic's advanced AI systems also threaten the entry-level talent pool at Indian IT firms by replacing routine development and testing tasks.

However, the doomsday predictions are highly exaggerated. A closer look reveals that the scale of legacy software embedded in global enterprises is of the order of \$20–25 trillion across the US and Europe — with annual technology spending of \$1.2–1.75 trillion. Such installed bases cannot be replaced or automated away overnight by plugging in a new AI tool. Most global enterprises continue to use AI selectively, particularly in research, discovery and limited productivity use cases. Comprehensive AI-led transformation of core operations remains at an early stage. Tools like Claude may directly apply to roughly 25–30% of total work in application development and related services. While application services form a significant share of revenues for large IT firms, the nature of work within that bucket varies widely. Large-scale system integration, legacy modernisation, database consolidation, testing, governance and compliance layers are not easily automated. The AI represents a powerful productivity accelerator, but not an overnight structural wipe-out.

Uppal Congress In-charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy Participates in 287th Birth Anniversary Celebrations of Sri Sevalal Maharaj

""KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 15 (Indian Chronicle):""Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge Mandamula Parameshwar Reddy attended the 287th birth anniversary celebrations of Sri Sevalal Maharaj, organized by the Velugutta Sevalal Committee in Habsiguda Division of the Uppal constituency. The celebrations were held on Sunday morning at Velugutta,



where Parameshwar Reddy participated as the chief guest and paid floral tributes to the portrait of Sri Sevalal Maharaj. Speaking on the occasion, he praised Sevalal Maharaj for guiding society with the principles of non-violence, humanity, and equality. He called upon people to remember and follow the path of peace and the life values preached by the great leader. Division President Vijay Kumar, Kandi Shravan Reddy, Babu Rao, Rajanna, Devi Reddy, members of the Habsiguda Sevalal Committee, Ganesh Naik, Kishan Naik, Raju Naik, Dharmender Naik, Vasu Naik, Narendra Naik, Chando Naik, Linga Naik, Mallu Naik, Suresh Naik, Dinesh Naik, Suman Naik, Govardhan Naik, Balu Naik, and other committee members participated in the programme.



Special Prayers Offered at Shiva Temple in Old Ramanthapur by Uppal Congress In-charge Parameshwar Reddy



""KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 15 (Indian Chronicle):""On the occasion of Maha Shivaratri, Uppal Constituency Congress Party In-charge



Parameshwar Reddy visited the Shiva temple in Old Ramanthapur on Sunday. "During the visit, he performed special abhishekam rituals and offered prayers to Lord Shiva along with devotees. Speaking on the occasion, he expressed hope that the holy festival of Maha Shivaratri would bless the people of Uppal constituency with spiritual strength and peace, and wished that every family be blessed with happiness, good health, and prosperity." Temple EO Surrender, Ramanthapur Mallikarjuna Swamy Temple Chairman Saga Sridhar, trustees Chittikala Krishna, Mudigonda Arun Sai, Seemakandla Jangaiah, Sirish Goud, Kasarella Shekhar Reddy, Manga Shobha, Ramanthapur Division Working President Vallapu Srikanth Yadav, Garika Sudhakar, Poosa Satheena, Shamyul, Jaleel Pasha, Baburao, Sandeep, Bhaskar, Shravan, Raju, Surrender, Swami, G. Swami, Bullet Ashok, Mallesh Yadav, Naresh Reddy, Ramraj, Ashok, Nagaraju, Santu, Laddu, Narasimha, Vinay Goud, Yadagiri, Satish Goud, Nagamallaiah, Shankar, and a large number of devotees participated in the program.

Senior Uppal Congress Leaders Participate in Sant Sevalal Maharaj Jayanti Celebrations



""KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 15 (Indian Chronicle):""The birth anniversary celebrations of Sant Sevalal Maharaj, the revered deity of the Lambadi community, were held grandly on Sunday at Velugutta, Habsiguda. "Senior Congress leaders from the Uppal constituency participated in the event, including Habsiguda Division senior leader Janumpalli Venkateshwar Reddy, Habsiguda Congress in-charge Sudhakar Reddy, senior leader Gaddam Ravikumar, and Ramantapur Congress



in-charge Tavidaboyina Giribabu. Speaking on the occasion, Venkateshwar Reddy praised Sant Sevalal Maharaj as a great saint who guided humanity towards the path of peace. He stated that the teachings of Sant Sevalal continue to inspire the present generation. He also expressed special thanks to the organizers for conducting the Jayanti celebrations. "The organizers felicitated the Congress leaders on the occasion.

Ramzan Relief Program Conducted by Inaya Charitable Education Trust-Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy



""NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajigiri Staff Reporter, February 15, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):""Inaya Charitable Education Trust organized a large-scale relief program ahead of the holy month of Ramzan, distributing grocery kits and essential commodities to 500 poor families. Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy attended the program as the chief guest and personally distributed the grocery kits to the beneficiaries. Speaking on the occasion, he said that such service initiatives strengthen the spirit of humanity in society



and emphasized that everyone should come forward to support the welfare of the poor. The program was conducted under the leadership of M.K. Badruddin, organizer of Inaya Charitable Education Trust. BRS Party Division President Bairi Naveen Goud, Syed Afser, Majeed, Ali, and others participated in the event and contributed to its success. Local residents and beneficiaries expressed gratitude to the trust organizers for bringing smiles to the faces of poor families through this humanitarian initiative.

Grand Celebrations Mark Birthday of Nagunuri Mahesh in Kapra Division



pressed hope that he would continue serving the public with the same dedication in the future. Bandari Lakshma Reddy extended birthday wishes to Mahesh and wished him good health, long life, and greater strength to continue his public service. The event was attended by Bairi Naveen Goud, Regalla Satish Reddy, Pentareddy, Koppula Kumar, Macha Kondalu Goud, N. Kumar, Solar Narasimha, N. Vikas, Raju, Sai, Nagender, Srikanth, Naveen, Anil, and others.

MLA's group with CM... Jeevan Reddy's group with Deputy C M Jagtial Municipal Chairperson position to be shared for 2.5 years each

""Jagtial Correspondent: (Ennam Kishan Reddy)"February 15 (Indian Chronicle)"" Jagtial municipal panchayat is gaining attention. MLA Sanjay's group met with CM Revanth, while Minister Adluri Laxman and former minister Jeevan Reddy met with Deputy CM Bhatti to discuss the chairperson position. ""The Congress party has put forward two proposals before Jagtial Congress leaders: one, give the chairperson position to MLA Sanjay's group and vice-chairperson to Jeevan Reddy's group; two, share the chairperson position for 2.5 years each. ""Jeevan Reddy has demanded that the chairperson position be given only to those who have carried the



Congress flag. He has also stated that any decision will be taken only after discussing with his group. ""Despite Congress party's overwhelming victory in municipal elections, the issue of disagreements between MLA Dr. Sanjay Kumar and former minister Tatiparthi Jeevan Reddy has come up. The meeting decided to ensure smooth municipal chairperson elections in Jagtial. ""AICC General Secretary Sachin Sawant and SC, ST Welfare Minister Adluri Laxman Kumar have been given responsibility to ensure smooth chairperson elections in Jagtial and Raikal municipalities. ""Both leaders have set up separate camps with councillors. In Jagtial municipality, Congress won 23 seats, BJP 6, BRS 4, MIM 2, and independents 15. Jeevan Reddy's group has 9 independents and 9 Congress councillors, totaling 18, while MLA Sanjay Kumar has 23 councillors. ""Jeevan Reddy has reportedly said he won't join hands

BSP Party Growing Stronger Set to Give Tough Competition in GHMC Elections Upal Constituency President Mindrala Narsinga Rao

""Nacharam, Indian Chronicle, February 15: ""The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) is steadily gaining strength across Telangana, said Upal Constituency President Mindrala Narsinga Rao. He stated that the party's recent performance in the municipal elections clearly reflects the growing trust and support among the people. "According to him, BSP councillor candidates emerging victorious in Aliabad, Nalgonda, and Medak municipalities has significantly boosted the morale of party cadre. In addition, in the recent local body elections held in Telangana, 4 Sarpanches, 9 Deputy Sarpanches, and 123 Ward Members were elected from the BSP, which he



described as strong evidence of the party's expanding grassroots presence. "Narsinga Rao expressed strong confidence that in the upcoming elections to the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), the BSP will secure corporator seats and emerge as a decisive political force. He asserted that the party is preparing strategically at the ward level, strengthening booth committees, and mobilizing support from various sections of society. "He alleged that the ruling Indian National Congress (Congress), as well as opposition parties like Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), have failed to effectively address pressing public issues such as unemployment, sanitation, drinking water shortages, infrastructure gaps, and welfare implementation. He criticized these parties for neglecting the concerns of ordinary citizens. "He further stated that the BSP is committed to social justice and equitable development. The party stands firmly with Dalits, backward classes, minorities, and other marginalized communities. He emphasized that the BSP continues to work in accordance with the principles and vision of B. R. Ambedkar, Kanshi Ram, and Mayawati, striving to build a society based on equality and dignity. "Narsinga Rao concluded by expressing confidence that in the forthcoming Greater elections, the BSP will stand as a strong alternative to other parties and prove its strength by delivering impressive results. He affirmed that the party cadre is united, motivated, and determined to expand the BSP's footprint in the Greater Hyderabad region.

On the 16th of this month.. At 11.00 am today, arrangements for the election of the chairman and vice chairman, oath-taking of councilors in the Bhuvanagiri Municipality:- Additional Collector of Bhuvanagiri District Local Bodies Bhaskar Rao



“(Mandava Srisailam..Yadadri Bhuvanagiri District Bureau... Indian Chronicle... February 15):- On the 16th of this month..at 11.00 am today, Additional Collector of Local Bodies Bhaskar Rao inspected the arrangements for the election of the chairman and vice chairman, oath-taking of councilors in the Bhuvanagiri Municipality in a good atmosphere. As part of the municipal elections, the orders given by the State Election Commission should be followed without fail. The Additional Collector made several suggestions to the Municipal Commissioner that the officials should be alert to prevent any mistakes. Municipal Commissioner Ramalingam and relevant officials participated in this program.

Special Pujas Held in Kushaiguda on Maha Shivaratri- Bontu Sridevi Yadav



“(NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 15, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):-“On the occasion of Maha Shivaratri, special pujas were conducted in Kushayiguda Division. Bontu Sridevi Yadav offered special prayers at Sri Kanyaka Parameshwari Temple located in Vasavi Shivanagar and at the Kushaiguda village Shiva Temple, seeking the blessings of Lord Parameshwara. The celebrations included abhishekam and archana rituals, with the temple resonating with chants of Om Namah Shivaya. Devotees gathered in large numbers and participated in the prayers with devotion and spiritual fervor. Speaking on the occasion, she stated that Maha Shivaratri signifies self-discipline, spiritual purity, and the importance of devotion. She expressed hope that people would move forward with peace and unity, fostering communal harmony in society. She also encouraged the youth to uphold Sanatana traditions and preserve spiritual and cultural values. Local leaders, women, and youth participated actively in the puja ceremonies. Night-long jagaran and bhajan programs were organized, creating a vibrant and spiritually uplifting atmosphere in and around the temple premises.

Sant Sevalal Maharaj Jayanti Celebrated in Kushaiguda Division



“(NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 15, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):-“The 287th birth anniversary of Sant Sevalal Maharaj was celebrated with devotion and enthusiasm at Sri Kanaka Durgamma Temple in Krishna Reddy Nagar Banjara Colony, under the limits of Kushaiguda Division. The event was organized by the Banjara Welfare Youth Association. Bonthu Sridevi Yadav participated in the celebrations and paid floral tributes to the statue of Sant Sevalal Maharaj. The gathering recalled his contributions toward the social upliftment, unity, and cultural preservation of the Banjara community. Speakers highlighted the importance of following the ideals and teachings of Sant Sevalal Maharaj for community development and social progress. Local leaders, youth association members, residents of the colony, and women attended the programme in large numbers. The event concluded with cultural activities and community participation.

Former Corporator Bandaru Sreevani Venkata Rao Performs Special Pujas at Sri Mallikarjuna Swamy Temple



“(KISHORE VADDEPALLI, Uppal, February 15 (Indian Chronicle):-“On the auspicious occasion of Maha Shivaratri, former Ramanthapur Corporator Bandaru Sreevani Venkata Rao performed special pujas at the Sri Mallikarjuna Swamy Temple in Ramanthapur. She offered prayers with deep devotion and conducted special abhishekams and archana seeking divine blessings. Speaking on the occasion, she said that the sacred festival of Maha Shivaratri should bring peace, prosperity, and well-being to every family. She prayed to Lord Shiva for the good health, happiness, and progress of the people of Ramanthapur Division and expressed hope that unity and harmony in society would continue to grow. BJP senior leaders Mutthineni Jagadish, Suresh Mudiraj, Dharma Reddy, Nagaraju Yadav, and other prominent members participated and contributed to the success of the program.

New Arch Inaugurated at MRR Colony in Cherlapally Division



“(NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 15, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):-“A newly constructed arch at MRR Colony in Cherlapally Division was inaugurated by Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy. On the occasion of Maha Shivaratri, he visited the local temple in the colony and participated in special prayers along with residents. Speaking at the event, he said that temples promote spiritual well-being and strengthen social unity within communities. He added that efforts to improve infrastructure and ensure the development of the area would continue. Extending Maha Shivaratri greetings to the residents of the colony, he expressed hope that every household would be blessed with peace and prosperity. Among those present were BC Commission member Rangu Bala Lakshmi, Bharat Rashtra Samithi Division President Nemuri Mahesh Goud, Congress leader Sitaram Reddy, local resident Krishna Reddy, party leaders, workers, and colony residents.

Sant Sevalal Maharaj 287th Birth Anniversary Celebrated Grandly in Cherlapally Division



and members participated in the celebrations. Floral tributes were paid to the portrait of Sant Sevalal Maharaj, and speakers highlighted his teachings and contributions to social reform and community upliftment. Among those present were BRS Party Cherlapally Division President Mahesh Goud, Venkat Naik, Shekhar Naik, Suresh Naik, Shankar Naik, Vijay Naik, Ramesh Naik, Rajesh Naik, Vinod Naik, Jail Singh Naik, Venkat Naik, Kumar Naik, and Akhil Naik, along with party leaders and workers.

“(NARRA SRINIVAS REDDY (NSR), Medchal - Malkajgiri Staff Reporter, February 15, (INDIAN CHRONICLE):-“The 287th birth anniversary of Sant Sevalal Maharaj, the revered spiritual leader of the tribal community, was celebrated with great enthusiasm in Cherlapally Division. Uppal MLA Bandari Lakshma Reddy attended the event as the chief guest. A large number of Banjara community leaders



Foggy conditions in Punjab likely over next few days: Met



The Meteorological Department, Chandigarh, has issued a dense to very dense fog warning for the city, cautioning that foggy conditions are likely to continue over the next few days, affecting visibility during late night and early morning hours. The warning comes amid forecasts of a western disturbance likely to affect northern parts of India from December 20, under whose influence light rainfall is expected at isolated places between December 20 and 22. Thereafter, weather conditions are expected to turn largely dry, though fog may still linger during night and morning hours, mentioned the Met Department, Chandigarh.

According to the Met Department's latest assessment, dense to very dense fog has been observed in Chandigarh, including at the Chandigarh airport area, with humidity levels remaining high — conditions that are conducive to the persistence of thick fog. On Thursday, several parts of the city witnessed extremely low visibility, disrupting smooth vehicular movement and causing delays for office-goers and inter-city commuters travelling towards Panchkula, Mohali and Zirakpur. As per official observations recorded at the Chandigarh Weather Observatory, the maximum temperature in the city stood at 21.9 degrees Celsius while the minimum temperature was recorded at 9.9 degrees Celsius, both marginally above normal. The maximum relative humidity touched 95 per cent while minimum humidity was around 53 per cent. The five-day forecast for the Chandigarh region indicates partly cloudy skies till December 21, followed by mainly clear conditions thereafter. Maximum temperatures are expected to range between 22 degrees Cel-

sus and 23 degrees Celsius, while minimum temperatures may fluctuate between 8 degrees Celsius and 11 degrees Celsius. Despite stable temperatures, meteorologists have cautioned that fog intensity may remain high during night and early morning hours, particularly on December 19, with dense fog at isolated places likely on December 20 as well. The dense fog on Thursday posed considerable challenges to motorists. "I was driving into Chandigarh from Ambala early in the morning, and visibility was hardly a few metres on some stretches. Even with fog lights on, it was difficult to judge the distance of the vehicle ahead," said Rishi Sharma, a private employee who commutes daily to the city.

Another commuter, Anas Ahmed, who was travelling from Mohali to Sector 43, said the fog made driving stressful and time-consuming. "The entire drive felt risky because cyclists and pedestrians were barely visible. I had to slow down significantly, and it took me much longer than usual to reach my destination," she said. In response to the prevailing conditions, the Chandigarh Traffic Police has issued a detailed advisory, urging the public to remain cautious while driving during foggy conditions.

Motorists have been advised to avoid unnecessary travel during dense fog, drive at reduced speeds, maintain a safe distance from the vehicle ahead, and strictly avoid lane jumping. The use of headlights and fog lights has been strongly recommended, while parking vehicles on roadsides has been discouraged due to the heightened risk of accidents in low visibility. A senior traffic police official said that traffic police personnel have been deployed at vulnerable and high-traffic stretches to manage traffic flow and assist commuters. "Dense fog significantly reduces reaction time and visibility. We urge drivers to strictly follow traffic rules, use fog lights properly, and stay alert for pedestrians and cyclists. Our teams are on the ground to ensure smoother traffic movement and to respond quickly to any emergencies," the official said. The Met Department has also highlighted potential impacts of dense fog on transport and aviation, warning of slower journey times and the possibility of traffic collisions. Citizens have been advised to limit outdoor exposure unless necessary and to cover their face when stepping out during peak fog hours.

Non-compliant with BS-VI norms in Delhi: 2,768 vehicles checked at borders, 460 ordered to return, 289 challans issued



GNS News Agency, Oct 15

With the Delhi government on Thursday stepping up checks for BS-VI compliance, 289 challans were issued to vehicles at the city's borders by the Delhi Traffic Police for flouting norms. The traffic police said that 2,768 vehicles were checked at the borders, including Kapashera in Southwest Delhi, Badarpur, and entry points from Noida and Gurgaon. Overall, 460 vehicles were ordered to return from the borders after being found non-compliant with BS-VI norms.

On Wednesday, the traffic police had issued 363 challans against light motor vehicles for flouting BS-VI norms, while Delhi Transport department issued an additional 34 challans in such cases, taking the total to 397. The traffic police has deployed 210 enforcement teams for the drive, along with 84 teams of the Transport department, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said in a statement. A senior police officer said no vehicle was seized during Thursday

drive at the borders. Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa, meanwhile, said on Thursday that over 3,700 vehicles were challaned under the 'No PUC, No Fuel' drive within 24 hours. On Wednesday, the inaugural day of the drive, 2,743 challans were issued to vehicles across the Capital by the traffic police, including at borders, for not having a valid pollution under control certificate (PUC), police said. Additionally, while the Transport department issued 316 challans, 687 were issued through the Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system, with the total coming to 3,746. The western range of Delhi saw the highest number of PUC challans — at 721 — issued on Wednesday. At 292, New Delhi region was issued the lowest number of challans, as per official data. The enforcement action coincided with a sharp surge in demand for PUCs, with more than 61,000 certificates issued between December 17 and 18, indicating increased compliance after the launch of the 'No PUC, No Fuel' rule. "We will continue the drive with a special focus on the border areas. Teams would be deployed round-the-clock to ensure compliance at night as well," Additional Commissioner of Police (Traffic) D K Gupta said. The CMO, meanwhile, said, "As part of focused efforts to curb road dust, 397 anti-smog guns have been deployed at various locations, while 276 water sprinklers have been installed to suppress dust from roads and open stretches." The statement added that under the government's mechanical cleaning initiative, 73 mechanical road sweeping machines have been deployed. "Through these machines, mechanical sweeping has been carried out on roads covering over 2,177.2 km, significantly contributing to the reduction of road dust levels," the CMO said.

Ghaziabad landlady killed by tenants over rent dispute: 'Hit on head with pressure cooker, strangled'

Couple kill landlady in Ghaziabad when she visits them to collect rent. The couple, Ajay Gupta and Akriti Gupta, were arrested on Thursday. A couple was arrested in Ghaziabad for allegedly killing their landlady when she visited them to collect rent and hiding the body in a red bag inside their flat at Raj Nagar Extension on Wednesday night, police said on Thursday. Police identified the deceased as Deepshikha Sharma (48). She was allegedly first hit on the head with a pressure cooker and then strangled with a dupatta, police said. The couple, Ajay Gupta and Akriti Gupta, were arrested on Thursday. Assistant Commissioner of Police (Nandgram) Upasna Pandey said police received information about the murder through the Police Control Room (PCR) around 11.15 pm on Wednesday. "The Nandgram police station received information that a murder had occurred in Aura Chimera residential complex at Rajnagar Extension. When a police team reached the complex, they found Deepshikha's body hidden in a red bag," Pandey added. Police said Deepshikha and Umesh Sharma owned two flats in Aura Chimera. While they lived in one, they had rented out the other. Couple kill landlady in Ghaziabad when she visits them to collect rent. Landlady Deepshikha Sharma. The tenants had not paid rent for about four months.



Deepshikha, a teacher by profession, decided to confront them. On Wednesday, when her husband was not at home, she went to collect rent. When she did not return for hours, her domestic help, Meena, started looking for her," said an officer. Police said when Meena went to the flat to look for her, the couple told her that Deepshikha had not visited them. Suspicious, Meena told the police that she then checked CCTV camera footage around the flat. "When she checked CCTV footage, she found that

UP Assembly session kicks off: Five-hour Vande Mataram debate on agenda for Monday



GNS News Agency, Oct 15

After a marathon debate in Parliament, the Uttar Pradesh Assembly is now scheduled to hold a five-hour long special discussion on Vande Mataram, to mark 150 years of the national song, during its Winter Session starting December 19. The decision was taken during a business advisory meeting followed by an all-party meeting at the Uttar Pradesh Assembly on Thursday in the presence of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Speaker Satish Mahana, and representatives of all political parties. Initially, a four-hour debate was decided on but was later slated for five hours.

The special debate is likely to be held on December 22. This comes close on the heels of the government mandating singing Vande Mataram at all schools and colleges, a move slammed by the Opposition, which targeted the chief minister for adopting a "communal route" to skirt other issues in the state. On Friday, before the start of the session, the CM said: "This Winter Session would be very important... On the occasion of the completion of 150 years of Vande Mataram, and to express gratitude to the one who wrote [it], we are going to hold a significant discussion on Vande Mataram... The foundation day of Uttar Pradesh and the day of notification recognising Vande Mataram as the National Song are on the same day, thus, a discussion on [it] is significant."

The Opposition is preparing to counter the government on the issues of Booth-Level Officer (BLO) deaths during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise and the cough syrup syndicate during the Winter Session. The Opposition has also demanded that the duration of the session, from December 19-24, be increased as there would hardly be any time left for discussion on supplementary demands for grants. Bills and ordinances would be taken up for discussion on December 22 and then at 12.20 pm, the supplementary demands for grants are to be tabled. Later in the day, the discussion on Vande Mataram is proposed to take place, people aware of the matter said, adding while other official discussions would be taken up on December 23, the issue of Supplementary budget would be taken up on December 24. "We have urged the government to increase the duration of the session as there is hardly any time for proper discussion on significant issues. Then there would also be a special discussion on Vande Mataram, which leaves discussion on the Supplementary Budget and eight bills to practically just three days," said Congress leader Aradhana Mishra, adding that the party is also preparing to

raise the issues of anomalies in the SIR process and the BLO deaths as well as cough syrup syndicate, unemployment, farmers plight.

Meanwhile, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav alleged that a massive scam involving the illegal supply of codeine-based cough syrups running into thousands of crores originated in Uttar Pradesh and accused the BJP government of shielding those involved. Addressing a press conference at the party headquarters in Lucknow after a meeting of the party MLAs, Yadav added that the racket started from the "area of Pradhan Sansad" (Varanasi MP), targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He said several important issues to be raised in the upcoming session of the assembly were discussed, with the alleged codeine and cough syrup racket being a major concern. "The concern over codeine and cough syrup is not limited to the common people of Uttar Pradesh. It is a matter of concern across the country. This racket started from the area of Pradhan Sansad (Varanasi MP), and its links extend not just across the country but also abroad," news agency PTI quoted him as saying. SP MLA Ravidas Mehrotra said that the party has also raised the issue of short duration of the assembly session. On Friday, Adityanath also said leaders of political parties were informed during Thursday's all-party meeting that the government is ready to hold discussions on all issues. "The government has a positive outlook towards all issues related to development and we expect support of all parties for proper functioning of [the House]." On the demand by Opposition parties that the duration of the Assembly session be increased, considering that the Supplementary Budget is to be tabled, Adityanath clarified that most members are busy with the SIR exercise and had requested time to participate in the process. He said it has been decided to run the session till December 24 only after taking supplementary demands, some significant parliamentary work and discussion on Vande Mataram.

Intermediate students allegedly assault Class IX students at tribal welfare school in Narsampet

Warangal: An incident of intermediate first-year students allegedly beating ninth-class students took place at Tribal Welfare Residential School and College (Boys) at Narsampet in the district. In the incident which was said to have taken place on Thursday night, a ninth-grade student Deepak fell unconscious. His fellow students rushed him to the government hospital at Narsampet for treatment. Two other ninth-grade students also sustained serious injuries in the attack. According to sources, an argument between the students suddenly turned violent, creating panic in the hostel. When the incident took place the warden and teachers were absent. Parents were expressing concern over the lack of supervision regarding the safety of students in the hostel.

PGIMER awarded India's Best Health Technology Assessment Institute for the 2nd consecutive year

GNS News Agency, Oct 15

The award highlights PGI's key role in strengthening evidence-based health policy, cost-effective care, and equitable resource allocation in India. PGIMER Chandigarh has bagged the Best Health Technology Assessment Institute title for the second consecutive year at the ARISE 2025 conclave organised by the Health Ministry. The PGIMER, Chandigarh, has been conferred the title of Best Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Institute in the country for the second consecutive year by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW). The award was presented at a national conclave entitled ARISE 2025, held at Sushma Swaraj Bhawan, New Delhi, and organised by Health Technology Assessment in India (HTAI) — the central HTA body under the MoHFW.

The honour was jointly conferred by Prof V K Paul, member (health), NITI Aayog, and Dr Rajiv Bahl, director-general, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and secretary, Department of Health Research (DHR). This marks the second time the PGIMER has received this national recognition, having earlier been adjudged the best HTA institute at the ICMR–DHR Health Summit held in New Delhi last year. PGI's leadership in the field of HTA is anchored in the HTA Resource Hub established by the Department of Health Research at the Department of Community Medicine and School of Public Health, PGIMER. The Hub is led by Prof Shankar Prinja, Professor of Health Economics, who has played a pivotal role in building national capacity for evidence-informed health decision-making. The ARISE 2025 ceremony witnessed participation from over 35 premier medical colleges and ICMR institutes engaged in HTA activities across the country. Addressing the gathering, Prof Paul underlined that the vision of 'Viksit Bharat' can be realised only through strong, credible institutions, and emphasised that the role of Health Technology Assessment is quintessential for ensuring that public money is allocated to interventions that deliver the greatest health gains equi-



tably and efficiently. Reflecting on India's HTA journey over the past eight years, Dr Bahl noted that HTA has emerged as a powerful policy tool for the Government of India, enabling more rational and transparent resource allocation. He highlighted its role in designing reimbursement rates under Ayushman Bharat–PMJAY, facilitating procurement of high-value medical devices at value-based prices, and supporting evidence-based coverage decisions. Dr Bahl commended Prof Prinja and the PGI team on their sustained efforts in strengthening HTA capacity nationwide, while also stressing the need to expand institutional and human resource capacity to keep pace with rapid advances in medical science. PGIMER Director Prof Vivek Lal lauded the institute's contribution to policy-relevant research and noted that PGIMER will continue to strengthen the efforts in building more capacity in this field in the entire country. Speaking at the ceremony, Prof Prinja talked about the challenges faced by institutions in conducting and applying HTA for policy use. He outlined a clear roadmap for advancing HTA in India, emphasising that closer and more sustained engagement with policy makers and key health system stakeholders, along with continuous improvement in the way studies are designed and evidence is generated, is essential to ensure that findings meaningfully inform decisions and translate into real-world impact.

Fake Air India website, ads on Instagram: How a man duped job seekers single-handedly



GNS News Agency, Oct 15

It all started in June this year. Ritu Singh (26), a resident of Geeta Colony in Shahdara area of Delhi, was allegedly looking for a job. She was scrolling down her Instagram feed on June 6 when she saw an advertisement — a job posting for an airline. "She clicked on the link and a Google form opened. She filled it and sent her resume to the email mentioned in the form" a police officer said. The next day, Singh got a WhatsApp message. The display picture allegedly bore the logo of Air India. "She was asked to pay Rs 945 for processing fees for application, and she did that. After that, she said she was sent an offer letter from Vistara (which is now a part of Air India)," the police officer said. In the coming months, by November, Singh had allegedly spent Rs 3 lakh for uniform, document processing, transportation and similar expenses. Clueless about her joining date, she finally saw red when the messages and emails stopped. She realised that she was scammed. Rohit Mishra (35), who allegedly conned Singh and many other job seekers like her, was arrested on Thursday from Ghaziabad, said police. With the help of fake email IDs, forged documents, WhatsApp profiles with airline logos, and a domain name used to create a fake Air India website, he was allegedly running a one-man show, said police. According to the

police, Mishra, a resident of Ghaziabad, also created Google forms and posted ads on social media. "The investigation revealed that the fraudster sent emails and subsequent messages from a mobile number, through which he gained the complainant's confidence and induced her to make payment for various job-related formalities," DCP (Shahdara) Prashant Gautam said. A cyber police team led by Inspector Vijay Kumar found a mobile phone, multiple QR codes, fake offer letters and other forged documents used for job fraud from his possession. "From his possession, the mobile phone which was used for the bank account linked to the fraud was recovered. The accused had saved his

Migrant tiger continues to move around coal mines in Mancherial

Mancherial: A migrant tiger which moved from Maharashtra, continued to roam around coal mines in Srirampur for the third day on Friday. Forest officials said that the tiger roamed at a hillock near RK5 underground mine on the fringes of Srirampur till Thursday night. They stated that 40 CCTV camera traps were installed to capture movement of the tiger, while 16 trackers were deployed to trail the animal and to ensure smooth passage for it. Awareness was being created among coal miners and locals, they added. According to the officials, two tigers migrated to the district crossing Kumram Bheem Asifabad district a few weeks back. They were sighted at different coal mines and opencast projects in Srirampur, triggering panic among coal miners. One of them entered Peddapalli district by crossing Godavari river on December 15.

UN elects former Iraqi President Barham Salih as head of refugee agency



GNS News Agency, Oct 15

The United Nations General Assembly on Thursday (December 18, 2025) approved former Iraqi President Barham Salih as the next head of the U.N. refugee agency, its first from the Middle East since the late 1970s. The 193-member world body elected the 65-year-old Kurdish politician as the U.N. high commissioner for refugees by consensus and a bang of the gavel by Assembly President Annalena Baerbock. Diplomats in the assembly chamber burst into applause as Mr. Salih's election became official.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, a former refugee chief who recommended Mr. Salih for the post, said he brings "senior diplomatic, political and administrative leadership experience" to the job, including as "a refugee, crisis

negotiator and architect of national reforms." At the age of 19 in 1979, Mr. Salih was reportedly arrested twice by Saddam Hussein's Baath Party on charges of involvement in the Kurdish national movement and spent 43 days in detention. When he was released, he finished high school and fled to the United Kingdom to avoid further persecution. After Saddam was ousted by a U.S.-led coalition in 2003, Mr. Salih returned to Iraq and held various posts in the government. He became Iraq's president in 2018, in the immediate aftermath of the Islamic State group's rampage across Iraq and the battle to take back the territory seized by the extremist group. He served until 2022.

Mr. Salih succeeds longtime agency veteran Filippo Grandi, whose second five-year term expires Dec. 31. Salih's five-year term starts Jan. 1. Mr. Salih will take the reins of the Geneva-based UNHCR at the end of a devastating year for many U.N. organizations, including the refugee agency. The U.N. has cut spending and thousands of jobs in the wake of sharply reduced foreign aid contributions by the United States — traditionally its top donor — and other Western countries. In a statement after his election, Mr. Salih said his experience as a refugee "will inform a leadership approach grounded in empathy, pragmatism, and a principled commitment to international law." With record displacement and severe funding shortages for humanitarian operations, he said, helping the world's refugees requires "a renewed focus on impact, accountability and efficiency."

Japan reaffirms no-nukes pledge after senior official suggests acquiring weapons

GNS News Agency, Oct 15

Japan reaffirmed its decades-old pledge never to possess nuclear weapons on Friday (December 19, 2025) after local media reported that a senior security official suggested the country should acquire them to deter potential aggressors. The unnamed official said Japan needed nuclear weapons because of a worsening security environment but acknowledged that such a move would be politically difficult, public broadcaster NHK and other outlets reported, describing the official as being from Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's office. At a regular press briefing in Tokyo, Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara said Japan's nuclear policy had not changed, but declined to comment on the remarks or to say whether the person would remain in government. There is a growing political and public will-ingness in Japan to loosen its three non-nuclear principles not to possess, develop or allow nuclear weapons, a Reuters investigation published in August found.

This is driven in part by doubts over the reliability of U.S. security guarantees under President Donald Trump and growing threats from nuclear-armed China, Russia and North Korea. Japan hosts the largest overseas concentration of U.S. military forces and has maintained a security alliance with Washington for decades. Some lawmakers within Ms. Takaichi's ruling Liberal Democratic Party have said the United States should be allowed to bring nuclear weapons into Japan on submarines or other platforms to reinforce deterrence. Ms. Takaichi, last month, stirred debate on her own stance by declining to say



whether there would be any changes to the three principles when her administration formulates a new defence strategy next year. "Putting these trial balloons out creates an opportunity to start to build consensus around the direction to move on changes in security policy," said Stephen Nagy, professor at the department of politics and international studies at the International Christian University in Tokyo. Beijing's assertiveness and growing missile cooperation between Moscow and Pyongyang are "creating the momentum to really change Japan's thinking about security," he added. Discussions about acquiring or hosting nuclear weapons "are highly sensitive in the only country to have suffered atomic bombings, and risk unsettling neighbouring countries, including China. Ties between Tokyo and Beijing worsened last month after Ms. Takaichi said a Chinese attack on Taiwan that also threatened Japan could constitute a "survival-threatening situation" and trigger a military response.

U.S. Energy Department signs AI collaboration deals with Big Tech for Genesis Mission



GNS News Agency, Oct 15

The U.S. Department of Energy said on Thursday it has signed agreements with 24 organisations, including tech giants such as Microsoft, Google and Nvidia, to advance the Genesis Mission. The mission is a national programme aimed at using artificial intelligence to accelerate scientific research and strengthen U.S. energy and security capabilities. The department said the program is designed to boost scientific productivity and reduce reliance on foreign technology. Participants include major cloud and chip providers such as AWS, Oracle, IBM, Intel, AMD and

Hewlett Packard Enterprise, alongside AI specialists OpenAI, Anthropic and xAI. Nvidia will provide accelerated computing platforms and AI models for scientific simulations, while Microsoft and Google will contribute cloud infrastructure and AI tools to support large-scale research.

Oracle is expected to assist in building high-performance computing systems, and Palantir will offer data integration and analytics capabilities. Startups Cerebras and Groq will supply advanced AI chips optimised for scientific workloads. OpenAI signed a memorandum of understanding under its "OpenAI for Science" initiative, deploying frontier AI models in national lab research environments and providing its tools and workflows to DOE scientists. Anthropic will supply its Claude models and offer a dedicated engineering team to DOE to develop AI agents, model context protocols, or MCPs, and specialised Claude "skills" for national labs. The partnerships will focus on AI models for applications ranging from nuclear energy and quantum computing to robotics and supply chain optimisation. The Genesis Mission builds on earlier collaborations between the DOE and the booming industry to deploy high-performance computing systems at Argonne and Los Alamos National Laboratories. The department said it expects the effort to significantly accelerate scientific discovery, as it plans to expand partnerships with academia and non-profits.



a commitment to Gandhian values in practice, where work is respected, labour is honoured, and public policy remains people-centric". Karmashree Prakalpa was announced in the State's 2024-25 Budget, aiming to guarantee 50 days of wage employment annually for rural unskilled workers with MGNREGA Job Cards. The agricultural unions of West Bengal, however, claim that they see no implementation of the scheme on the ground. Funds to the MGNREGA scheme have been suspended since April 2022 on account of corruption in the implementation of the scheme by the West Bengal government.

Mamata criticises VB-G RAM G Bill, says WB govt's employment scheme to be named after Mahatma

Coming down heavily on the Union government for passing VB-G RAM G Bill replacing MGNREGA Bill West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday (December 18, 2025) her government would rename State's rural job guarantee scheme after the father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi. The Lok Sabha on Thursday passed the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee For Rozgar And Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill that seeks to replace the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (MGNREGA).

Speaking at a business conclave in Kolkata's Dhana Dhanya auditorium the Chief Minister said, "I feel ashamed that they have decided to remove Mahatma Gandhi's name from the NREGA programme, because I too belong to this country. Are we now forgetting even the Father of the Nation?" Ms. Banerjee said that her government will "re-name the Karmashree scheme of our State after Mahatma Gandhi, because if they can't show respect to our national heroes, we will". The Chief Minister said that her government will honour national icons like Mahatma Gandhi and others like Netaji, Tagore, Nazrul, Ambedkar, Maulana Azad, Sardar Patel and Rajendra Prasad.

The Trinamool Congress lauded the initiative of Chief Minister and party chairperson and added "this step reflects

U.S. launches review of advanced Nvidia AI chip sales to China, sources say



GNS News Agency, Oct 15

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration has launched a review that could result in the first shipments to China of Nvidia's second-most powerful AI chips, five sources said, making good on his pledge to allow the controversial sales. Trump this month said he would allow sales of Nvidia's H200 chips to China, with the U.S. government collecting a 25% fee, and that the sales would help keep U.S. firms ahead of Chinese chipmakers by cutting demand for Chinese chips. The move drew fire from China hawks across the U.S. political spectrum over concerns the chips would supercharge Beijing's military and erode the U.S. advantage in artificial intelligence.

But questions have remained about how quickly the U.S. might approve such sales and whether Beijing would allow Chinese firms to purchase the Nvidia chips. The U.S. Commerce Department, which oversees export policy, has sent license applications for the chip sales to the State, Energy and Defense Departments for review, the sources said on condition of anonymity because the process is not public. Those agencies have 30 days to weigh in, according to export regulations. One of the sources, an administration official, emphasised the review would be thorough and "not some perfunctory box we are checking." But under the regulations, the final decision rests with Trump. The start of the inter-agency licensing review has not been reported

U.S. FTC probes Instacart's AI pricing tool, source says; shares drop

The U.S. Federal Trade Commission is probing Instacart, two sources familiar with the matter told Reuters, as the retail platform faces criticism over its artificial intelligence-driven pricing tool. Instacart shares were down about 10% in after-hours trading. The agency has sent the company a civil investigative demand, the sources said. The FTC is seeking information about Instacart's Eversight pricing tool, one of the sources said. The software, which allows retailers on Instacart to experiment with different prices using AI, drew criticism after a recent study showed different shoppers got different prices for the same groceries on Instacart. "The Federal Trade Commission has a longstanding policy of not commenting on any potential or ongoing investigations. But, like so many Americans, we are disturbed by what we have read in the press about Instacart's alleged pricing practices," the FTC said in a statement. The opening of a probe does not prove wrongdoing and not all FTC investigations result in lawsuits. The FTC is taking on the issue of a company's use of technology to set prices at a time when the high cost of living in the U.S. has been a top daily concern for Americans. The issue of affordability helped Democrats win several state and local elections in November, becoming a major political headwind for U.S. President Donald Trump and his Republican party.

A study involving 437 shoppers viewing Instacart prices in four cities saw wildly different prices for the same items sourced at the same stores. On average, there was a 7% difference in the total cost for the same grocery list at the same store, according to the study conducted by non-profit groups Groundwork Collaborative, Consumer Reports, and More Perfect Union. "Some shoppers found grocery prices that were up to 23% higher than prices available to other shoppers for the exact same items, in the exact same store, at the exact same time," the study's authors wrote. Instacart's Eversight allows retailers to run price tests to gauge shoppers' reactions to higher or lower prices across different categories of items. Grocers who use Eversight see revenue growth of 1-3%, according to Instacart's website. The pricing tests carried out through Eversight were randomized, unlike pricing practices based on fluctuating demand or a user's individual data and behaviors, Instacart said last week. "This year, we've focused heavily on en-

viously. The Commerce Department and Nvidia did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

A White House spokesperson did not comment on the review, but said "the Trump administration is committed to ensuring the dominance of the American tech stack — without compromising on national security." The Biden administration had imposed a raft of restrictions on advanced AI chip sales to China and countries it feared could become conduits for smuggling into the rival nation, citing national security fears. Trump's move represents a departure from that policy and a dramatic reversal from his first term, when he drew international attention by cracking down on Chinese access to U.S. technology. Back then, he cited claims that Beijing steals American intellectual property and harnesses commercially obtained technology to bolster its military, which Beijing denies. Exporting large numbers of the chips to China would be "a significant strategic mistake," said Chris McGuire, a former White House National Security Council official under President Joe Biden and senior fellow with the Council on Foreign Relations. McGuire described the chips as "the one thing holding China back in AI." "I cannot possibly fathom how the departments of Commerce, State, Energy, and Defense could certify that exporting these chips to China is in the U.S. national security interest," he said. Led by White House AI czar David Sacks, several members of the Trump administration now argue that shipping advanced AI chips to China discourages Chinese competitors like Huawei from redoubling efforts to catch up with Nvidia's and AMD's most-advanced chip designs. Reuters reported last week that Nvidia was considering an increase in production of the H200, the immediate predecessor to its current flagship Blackwell chips, after initial orders from China outstripped the current capacity. While the H200 chips are slower than Nvidia's Blackwell chips at many AI tasks, they remain in wide use in the industry and have never been allowed for sale in China. Trump had previously opened the door to sales of a less-advanced version of Nvidia's Blackwell chips, its cutting-edge offering, but backed away from the move and approved sales of the H200 instead.



couraging more retailers to move toward in-store and online price parity, working closely with partners to remove mark-ups and align online prices with in-store," the company said in a blog post. Instacart does not set prices for the items available on its platform, the company said at the time. With the exception of Target, retailers set the prices shoppers encounter, and Instacart provides the tools to do so. Target is not affiliated with Instacart and does not control the prices it sets, a spokesperson for the big box retailer said. Instead, Instacart scrapes publicly available Target prices and adds margin to cover its costs. Some members of Congress criticised Instacart in the wake of the study. "Consumers deserve to know when they are being placed into pricing tests. The FTC should require a prominent on-screen label," U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer, a Democrat from New York, said in a letter to the agency on Sunday.

The probe is not the first time for the FTC to delve into AI and data-driven pricing practices. Last year, the FTC under Chair Lina Khan demanded information from Mastercard, JPMorgan Chase, Accenture, McKinsey & Co., and four other companies about tools they sell to other businesses to analyse data and set prices or tailor discounts. Some of the tools help companies gauge what shoppers are willing to pay based on past purchases, location, and other data about online activity, the FTC staff wrote in a preliminary report in January. The preliminary report led to concern among state lawmakers about how companies use technology to set prices, and some have sought to restrict practices they call unfair.

Trump administration could strip some naturalised Americans of their citizenship: Report

New York/Washington: The Trump administration is looking at plans to strip some naturalised Americans of their citizenship, the latest in a series of efforts undertaken by President Donald Trump to crack down on immigration. A report in the New York Times cited new internal guidance issued on Tuesday to US Citizenship and Immigration Services field offices, asking them to "supply Office of Immigration Litigation with 100-200 denaturalisation cases per month" in fiscal year 2026. While federal law provides for stripping naturalised Americans of their citizenship if they committed fraud while applying for citizenship or in a handful of other situations, the new guidance "would represent a massive escalation of denaturalisation in the modern era," said the report. It added that such a move could impact people who had made honest mistakes on their citizenship paperwork and "sow fear among law-abiding Americans." The guidance is the latest in a series of measures announced by Trump in his second term in the White House as part of an intensified crackdown on immigration, both illegal and legal.

The NYT report added that there are about 26 million naturalised Americans in the country, citing Census Bureau data. USCIS estimates show that more than 800,000 new citizens were sworn in last year, most of whom were born in Mexico, India, the Philippines, the Dominican Republic or Vietnam. "It's no secret that US Citizenship and Immigration Services' war on fraud includes prioritising those who've unlawfully obtained US citizenship — especially under the previous administration," USCIS spokesman Matthew Tragesser said in the NYT report. "We will pursue denaturalisation proceedings for those individuals lying or misrepresenting themselves during the naturalisation pro-



cess. We look forward to continuing to work with the Department of Justice to restore integrity to America's immigration system." Former agency officials have voiced concern over such a guideline. "Imposing arbitrary numerical targets on denaturalisation cases risks politicising citizenship revocation," former USCIS official Sarah Pierce said. And requiring monthly quotas that are 10 times higher than the total annual number of denaturalisations in recent years turns a serious and rare tool into a blunt instrument and fuels unnecessary fear and uncertainty for the millions of naturalised Americans. "The NYT report said the new guidance was part of a document outlining USCIS priorities for the 2026 fiscal year, which began in October and listed goals such as "provide employee feedback opportunities", "strengthen management of high-risk cases" and "pursue denaturalisation." The Justice Department has also said it would make denaturalisation a priority this year.

Experts Explain | India AI applications stack: What the country can bring to the table



The ultimate success of artificial intelligence (AI) in India will not depend on the size of its GPU clusters, but on how our AI applications can help improve the quality of life of our citizens. Among other things, AI can help ASHA professionals detect the number of high-risk pregnancies, small farmers save significantly on pesticide consumption, or significantly improve the reading and math scores of a child in a remote government school. The Economic Survey 2026 is pragmatic about how India can leverage AI. A primary objective of the proposed AI Economic Council for India is Human Primacy and Economic Purpose. Clearly, a national AI adoption policy must be explicitly subordinate to human welfare and economic inclusion. AI needs to be sensitive to domestic economic realities, and the benefits of AI adoption should accrue to all sectors of the economy and all citizens.

Fortunately for us, Indian innovators are deploying AI applications to solve social and economic problems that are immediate and contextual to India. Applications in health, agriculture, education, urban management, and disaster preparedness have shown promise. With the right support, many of these can scale to a pan-India market and, at some future point, can be bundled into an India AI Applications Stack and even be taken to global markets.

Niramai has developed a non-invasive, privacy-conscious breast cancer screening tool that uses AI-driven thermal imaging instead of traditional mammography. This tool enables early detection of abnormalities in women of all ages, including those with dense breast tissue where mammography often fails. It is portable and low-cost, making mass screening viable in rural and semi-urban areas. Qure.ai is an AI tool that analyses X-rays and CT scans in seconds, detecting more than 35 conditions like TB, lung cancer, and heart failure. This solution is very effective in resource-constrained settings where radiologists are unavailable, facilitating rapid triage and treatment in remote districts. AISteth, an AI-powered stethoscope, converts heart and lung sounds into visual waveforms for accurate, remote diagnosis. This low-cost device has a 93% accuracy and empowers frontline health workers in rural India to detect cardiac and respiratory issues early. It bridges critical gaps in specialist care and has the potential to strengthen India's public health system. Neoperk is a portable device using near-infrared spectroscopy and machine learning to analyse soil health instantly without conventional lab chemicals. This provides lab-accurate results for 12 key soil parameters in under five

minutes. This empowers farmers to make data-backed decisions on fertiliser use, improving soil health and reducing input expenses.

CottonAce from Wadhvani Institute for Artificial Intelligence is an AI-based mobile app that allows farmers to upload photos of pests caught in traps to receive instant, localised advice on pesticide application. This app helps thousands of smallholder cotton farmers to protect their crops from pests like pink bollworm, leading to higher quality harvests and increased profit margins. Niqo Robotics uses AI-powered robots equipped with computer vision (day-and-night cameras) to identify pests and weeds in real-time. This enables selective spraying, which ensures chemicals are applied only where needed. This has led to a significant reduction in pesticide use (up to 60-90% in some cases), lowering costs for farmers and reducing environmental toxicity. Cropin is an AI-enabled digital ecosystem that spans farm monitoring, credit risk analytics, and last-mile farmer engagement. It drives sustainable productivity and climate-smart decisions, turning fragmented practices into predictive farming systems ready for global scale. PadhaiWithAI uses an AI-powered personalised learning platform designed to tackle poor mathematics learning outcomes in government schools. Within just six weeks, the initiative significantly improved pass rates and the performance of high-achievers. It serves as a scalable model for bridging learning gaps in rural Indian education. Rocket Learning has an AI-powered learning companion, Appu (a generative AI elephant), that interacts with parents and children via WhatsApp. It delivers bite-sized, play-based activities to help children under six achieve foundational literacy and numeracy. Belagavi Smart City is integrating deep learning-enabled eBooks into its public library ecosystem. Designed to analyse user behaviour and adapt storylines, vocabulary, and difficulty levels in real time, these books have improved engagement and comprehension. There is a 12% improvement in reading speed in just two weeks. The government can become a powerful ecosystem orchestrator for these grassroots AI innovations, helping them scale to pan-India high-impact applications. A key focus area of the government could be to assist in market making for these AI applications. For example, the government can facilitate procurement for empanelled domestic AI applications to provide solutions for government (including state government) departments, hospitals, schools, etc. Further, by setting benchmarks for AI in health, agriculture, education, etc., the government can create a trusted environment for customers and citizens to adopt them. Once these AI applications have proven themselves, the government could facilitate integrating the most impactful applications into an India AI Applications Stack — i.e., solutions built for India's scale and diversity that are ready for global deployment. We can leverage platforms like the Global Partnership on AI as a strong national governance framework for the Indian AI Application Stack that dovetails with international frameworks like the European GDPR can make the stack a plug-and-play in many countries.

‘Opponents, not enemies’: Parliament needs to remember Sushma Swaraj’s words once more



For years, the decline of parliamentary standards in the country has been lamented. The passage of Bills without adequate or no discussion, the din during discussions, MPs rushing to the Well, the throwing of papers at each other, proceedings stalled for days on end, and allegations of partisanship against the presiding officers. All this has become commonplace. And yet, by any standard, the present crisis gripping Parliament is unprecedented. There is a notice, signed by 118 Opposition MPs, to move a no-confidence motion against the Lok Sabha Speaker. The Opposition may not be able to get the motion passed, given the numbers weigh heavily in favour of the ruling party, but it does raise questions about the credibility of the Speaker, something the Opposition had avoided over the years.

It was also unprecedented for Birla to admit that he had advised Prime Minister Narendra Modi not to come to the Lok Sabha to reply to the debate on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address. Birla said he had “concrete” information that “many members of the Congress party could carry out an unexpected act by reaching the spot where the prime minister sits”. In other words, the Speaker was apprehensive that the PM could be attacked and that it was not safe for him to attend the proceedings. This admission was startling.

The second implication was that the government was not in a position to protect the PM in the Lok Sabha. Since mid-2024, the Central Industrial Security Force, and not the Watch and Ward staff, has been looking after Parliament security. If the PM is really not safe in the Lok Sabha, that is serious business. The Opposition blamed the government for “managing the headlines”, as Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi had cited former Army chief General M M Naravane's unpublished book, “Four Stars of Destiny”, when attempting to question the Centre over the face-off with the Chinese military in eastern Ladakh in 2020. With Penguin Random House clarifying that the book had not been published and General Naravane endorsing the publisher's position, the situation has become more explosive. It has been complicated by an FIR registered that has turned the discussion from the contents of the book to how Gandhi came to possess it. On Thursday, a day after Gandhi addressed the House on the Union Budget, BJP MP Nishikant Dubey submitted a notice to move a substantive motion against the LoP for engaging in “anti-India activities”. Dubey has called for the cancellation of Gandhi's Lok Sabha membership and demanded that he be barred from contesting elections for life.

These developments have had a bearing on the dignity of two prime institutions of Parliament — the LoP and the Speaker — and underscore once again the breakdown of trust between the ruling side and the Opposition that has rendered Parliament dysfunctional. The bitterness that has come to vitiate the relationship between the two sides makes dialogue that much more difficult. While the government has to ensure Parliament runs smoothly, it is not possible without the cooperation of the Opposition, or without civility in public discourse, which is becoming a casualty.

It is not as if disruptions are new to Parliament. A sight indelibly etched in my mind is of Home Minister Indrajit Gupta, sometime in 1996, sitting near the entrance to

Parliament's Central Hall, holding his head in his hands and exuding helplessness after the shenanigans in the House. The coalition era (1989-2014) also saw contention convulse Parliament time and again. Regional parties had become national players; their MPs would often stall Parliament to send a message to their party chiefs that they were agitating for the state in Delhi. I remember how RJD MPs opposed the Lokpal Bill in the Rajya Sabha in December 2011, with one of them tearing the Bill and throwing it in the House. RJD chief Lalu Prasad sat in the visitors' gallery that day, hawk-like, to see how his MPs were faring. In 2016, a riled President Pranab Mukherjee had upbraided MPs to get on with business. “For God's sake, do your job,” he told the protesting members. In the past, when the House became uproarious, the presiding officers used to adjourn proceedings and call leaders from the ruling side and the Opposition parties to their chamber to persuade them to exercise restraint and “find a way out”. These attempts often succeeded because the presiding officers still exercised a kind of moral authority. Besides, there were leaders on both sides of the aisle who believed in the sanctity of Parliament and wanted it to function.

Where is parliamentary democracy headed?

Where then is our parliamentary democracy headed? The answers have to come from within Parliament. While Parliament has been a witness to many a stirring speech over the years, the essence of what the relationship between the ruling side and the Opposition should be was captured in the words of BJP leader Sushma Swaraj, then the LoP, in 2014. Swaraj made the speech during the last sitting of the 15th Lok Sabha, just before the House dissolved for elections that turned out to be historic. “Bhai Kamal Nath,” Swaraj said in her inimitable style, “apni sharaat se is sadan ko uljha dete the, aur adarniya Shinde ji (Sushil Kumar Shinde) apni sharaat se use suljha dete the.” (My brother Kamal Nath used to leave this House in tangles with his mischief, and the respected Shinde ji used to untangle it with his decency.) Swaraj then went on to compliment Sonia Gandhi, whose possible elevation as PM she had once opposed by threatening to tounsure her head. Swaraj thanked Sonia for her “mediatory role” during times of crisis, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for his “gentleness”, Speaker Meira Kumar for her “tolerance” (of different views), and L K Advani's “nyayapriyata (sense of fair play)”, all of which had contributed to the functioning of the House despite problems. But the core sentiment at the heart of Indian democracy, Swaraj said, was that “while we are opponents, we are not enemies”. That made it possible for relationships to be maintained despite ideological and programmatic differences.

Elon Musk targets self-growing Moon city within 10 years

New Delhi: Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk on Monday said he is aiming to build a self-growing city on Moon in less than 10 years, followed by human presence on Mars in about 20 years.

According to the world's richest man, SpaceX has already shifted focus to building a self-growing city on the Moon, “as we can potentially achieve that in less than 10 years, whereas Mars would take 20+ years”.

In a post on his X social media platform, Musk said the mission of SpaceX remains the same — extend consciousness and life as we know it to the stars.

At Yerawada prison, inmates take on role of chess coaches for 200 fellow prisoners



AS THE day began inside the high-security Yerawada Central Prison in Pune, a life-term inmate walked to the prison library. On the tables lay chessboards, pieces already arranged, and some desktop computers with chess applications open. A dozen inmates were ready for the lesson for the day: the King and Pawn versus King endgame, one of the most fundamental endgames in chess.

The life-term inmate, in his late 40s, is among a group of around 20 prisoners at Yerawada Central Prison who are training nearly 200 fellow inmates interested in chess. The group includes members of the winning team of the FIDE Intercontinental Championship for Prisoners, along with others receiving expert coaching as they prepare for future editions of the tournament. In October last year, a six-member team of inmates from Yerawada prison clinched gold by beating the El Salvador team in a decisive Armageddon game in a tense final match. All six members are serving life sentences, so are most of the 20 inmates who are being trained for future editions.

The chess team at Yerawada Central Prison began taking shape in mid-2021 under Indian Oil Corporation (IOC)'s social stewardship programme, Parivartan: Prison to Pride, launched across prisons in India. The initiative gained international attention in 2024 when Yerawada hosted the International Chess for Freedom Conference, organised by the International Chess Federation (FIDE) in partnership with IOC, focusing on chess as a key correctional activity. Prior to gold in the intercontinental championship in October 2025, the Yerawada prison team clinched silver in Asian championship in 2025, fourth position in intercontinental championship in 2024, gold in intercontinental championship in 2023 and bronze in intercontinental championship in 2022. The intercontinental championship is the biggest-ever chess event among correctional facilities, organised by FIDE and the Chicago Cook County Sheriff's Office, a part of the 'Chess for Freedom' programme. Yerawada prison Superintendent Sunil Dhamal said, “Inside the prison walls, chess has become more than a game. It offers inmates a structured space

As world adjusts to US power politics, India’s task is to secure market access, investment

Global economic engagement is and was riddled with contradictions. We aspired for growth yet feared competition. This diffidence shaped our early approach to trade. PM Narendra Modi has acted with panache. The present engagement on FTAs with the EU and US represents a discontinuity with the past. The US deal is not an isolated initiative but integral to a long, uneven journey from protectionist to purposeful participation in global trade. After Independence, barter trade was inescapable. In the gray corridors of the Soviet bloc, we swapped tea for machinery and rice for oil. It was a world where freedom of choice was traded for the comfort of certainty. State entities like the State Trading Corporation and the Mines and Minerals Trading Corporation canalised foreign trade in a debilitating trade regime. I witnessed this caution firsthand in 1973 while negotiating concessional oil with the Shah of Iran as the global economy buckled under the first oil crisis. Today, however, our deepening engagement with the United States represents the shedding of that protectionist skin.

My engagement with these issues began in 1969 when I joined as undersecretary in the Ministry of Commerce. I participated in GATT and UNCTAD negotiations and later during the transition to the WTO. At the time, we took pride in negotiating stratospheric bound tariff rates while keeping applied rates at more acceptable levels. As Anne Krueger argued, such protectionist regimes encourage rent-seeking, stifle competitiveness, and misallocate resources. The Tokyo Round attempted to discipline non-tariff barriers, but the Uruguay Round altered the landscape by creating the WTO. It expanded non-trade sovereign obligations. For developing nations, this sharpened anxieties. It introduced non-trade issues of investment and procurement policy into a forum designed primarily for trade issues. These divides were further exposed in Cancun and later in Seattle. On December 1, 1999, during the Seattle WTO Ministerial Conference, President Bill Clinton's attempt to introduce labour and investment standards met with massive protests. PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee tasked me to assist the delegation's leader, Murasoli Maran, then Minister of Commerce and Industry. The US presidency's whims derailed these negotiations. Whims mattered then as they do now.

Today, that rules-based order is strained by complex supply chains, industrial subsidies, and the rise of state capitalism. With its dispute settlement mechanism in shambles, the WTO has lost its functional credibility. We are witnessing the “trilemma” articulated by Dani Rodrik: Deep globalisation, democratic politics, and national sovereignty cannot be simultaneously maximised. In this vacuum, FTAs have displaced multilateral ambition. Jagdish Bhagwati's critique of the “spaghetti bowl” of overlapping rules remains valid, and Paul Krugman correctly cautions against viewing trade deals as universal remedies. Yet, these arrangements deliver the predictability that markets crave. India's evolution mirrors this realism. Following the 1991 crisis, trade liberalisation became the first ingredient of India's response. Initiated by a Congress government, these reforms dismantled extreme insulation. Fears of deindustrialisation proved baseless; Indian industry adapted and emerged globally competitive. Having come of age, India can no longer prosper behind walls of excessive protection.

Our current choices reflect a sophisticated understanding of strategic autonomy. It is not a purist doctrine but a practical instrument shaped by cost-benefit calculations. Access to American technology, capital, and markets have long-term value. Cooperation with the US and the EU strengthens domestic economic and defence capabilities. Diversifying external partnerships enhances India's strategic leverage, becoming a more consequential partner, better insulated against future uncertainties. Crucially, the new India-US interim arrangement does not leave us harshly exposed. Agriculture remains a vital political and social anchor; providing livelihoods for 45 per cent of our population despite contributing only 18 per cent to GDP. Diversification

to think, plan and focus, replacing idle hours with discipline and purpose. The dedication shown by the players reflects a deeper desire to rebuild themselves and move beyond the most difficult chapters of their lives. We have a group of around 20 inmates, most serving life sentences, who have been selected for specialised training. They undergo intensive training from outside coaches for two to three months prior to each international competition. But for the rest of the year, these 20 inmates become coaches for around 200 inmates who are interested in chess.”

A prison department officer said, “Every inmate carries a past marked by difficult and often dark chapters. Chess, with its emphasis on strategy, patience and discipline, offers a rare opportunity to look ahead with purpose. While all the participants are serving sentences for serious offences including murder, the programme aims to open a constructive path — one that encourages reflection, responsibility and the possibility of a more positive future.” Indian Chess Grandmaster Abhijit Kunte, who mentors the programme, roped in chess player and trainer Ketan Khaire as the team coach around the same time when the team was formed in 2021. Along with Kunte and Khaire, the trainers for the Yerawada chess team comprises International Master Eesha Karavade, Assistant Coach Sagar Mohite, Competition Referee Pavan Katkade, Computer Systems Assistant Ganesh Malkari and Team Coordinator Yogesh Pardeshi. The programme receives guidance from Additional Director General Suhas Warke and Special Inspector General Yogesh Desai.

Speaking to The Indian Express, Khaire said, “While the focus of the programme is training of the 20 selected inmates, what makes us even prouder is the fact that these 20 become coaches themselves for around 200 more inmates. That is a very unexpected yet reassuring spin-off of our programme. When we started the specialised training, chess skill sets were unrefined. The programme began by grounding participants in the basics — understanding the language of chess, learning how to record games, and gaining clarity about the level of competition ahead. As training progressed to deeper tactical and strategic concepts, the sessions evolved into more than lessons on the board. In that space, many inmates began sharing their personal challenges, speaking candidly about emotional burdens and their desire for change. We now have a set of 20 inmates who can compete in international competitions and a pool of 200 more to select from.” Training includes chess rules and terminology, algebraic notation and tournament protocols, followed by opening principles, core tactical motifs such as forks, pins and skewers, and fundamental endgames including king-and-pawn positions. Sessions also emphasise game analysis, error identification and time management.



Without this interim arrangement, India would face elevated tariffs, a widening competitiveness gap, and hemorrhaging of foreign investment. Such outward capital flight puts continuing pressure on exchange rates and currency management, making reserves increasingly vulnerable. Further, avoiding the 25 per cent tariff linked to Russia-related measures carries immense signalling value

into value-added agro-activities reduces overload and enhances incomes in the farming sector. Interestingly, Bangladesh's “free access” to the US came at the cost of exposing sensitive domestic agricultural sectors to American scale and subsidies. The India-US interim arrangement, alongside our successful negotiations with the EU, must be viewed through this lens of calibrated market access. The US agreement signals an ambition for trade and procurement flows approaching \$500 billion over five years. In 2024-25, India exported \$86.5 billion in merchandise to the US; 20 per cent of our total exports. Until recently, nearly \$41 billion of those exports faced reciprocal tariffs as high as 50 per cent. We are not reducing tariffs to zero. We are pursuing a balanced outcome that protects our industrial base while securing zero-duty access for high-margin sectors where India dominates, such as generic pharmaceuticals, gems and diamonds, and aircraft parts. While our reciprocal rate stands at a balanced 18 per cent, other exporters face significantly higher barriers: China at 35 per cent, Vietnam at 20 per cent and ASEAN nations at 19 per cent. This is neither a total victory nor a debilitating loss. In complex trade negotiations, unlike the ABBA song “The winner takes it all, the loser must fall”, there are no absolute winners or losers.

Without this interim arrangement, India would face elevated tariffs, a widening competitiveness gap, and hemorrhaging of foreign investment. Such outward capital flight puts continuing pressure on exchange rates and currency management, making reserves increasingly vulnerable. Further, avoiding the 25 per cent tariff linked to Russia-related measures carries immense signalling value. The certainty and openness of India's future support greater investor confidence and greater US investment flows. Judicial reforms, Bilateral investment protection treaties, and considering credible arbitration frameworks such as the Abu Dhabi Global Market could further fortify both investment flows and investor comfort. Trade negotiations are rarely one-sided and must be judged within a long-term geopolitical frame. The world is adjusting to US power politics, but India's task is precise: Securing market access and investment amid strategic churn. A successful negotiation is often said to leave all sides equally dissatisfied. If this agreement raises exports and deepens technical-industrial capability during a disorderly global transition, it is a substantial achievement. It is ironic that a momentous mindset shift is met with prevarication. India is mature enough to seek purposeful engagement with a credible place in the global value added chain. What could have been a moment missed has become a moment seized.

‘Right to dignified life’: Haryana human rights panel orders Gurgaon authorities to remove encroachments at Sector 57



GNS News Agency, Oct 15

The complaint, filed last year by Roshan Lal Yadav, president of the Residents Welfare Association (RWA) of Sector 57, alleged ongoing illegal activities at the site despite previous interventions. The complaint, filed last year by Roshan Lal Yadav, president of the Residents Welfare Association (RWA) of Sector 57, alleged ongoing illegal activities at the site despite previous interventions. The Haryana Human Rights Commission (HHRC) recently directed the Gurgaon authorities to take immediate and permanent measures to remove encroachments and prevent the unlawful dumping and storage of building materials at a nursery school site at Sector 57. The sector is just 3 km away from the Golf Course Road. In its order issued by Chairperson Justice Lalit Batra on January 14 and made public Saturday, the Commission emphasised the need for sustained enforcement to avoid recurrence.

The complaint, filed last year by Roshan Lal Yadav, president of the Residents Welfare Association (RWA) of Sector 57, alleged ongoing illegal activities at the site despite previous interventions. During the hearing, Yadav informed the Commission that unauthorised dumping and storage of building materials continued, and he supported his claim with recent photographs sent via WhatsApp that showed persistent alleged encroachment and misuse of the land. The Commission reviewed multiple reports submitted in compliance with a previous order dated October 31, 2025. A report dated January 12 from the Municipal Corporation

of Gurgaon (MCG) stated that enforcement in Sector 57 had not been handed over to the MCG and that Haryana Shehri Vikas Pradhikaran (HSVP) itself handled all such activities in its sectors. A December police report stated that the people involved were instructed to shift operations to non-residential areas. Some complied, while others were in the process of doing so. The report listed five FIRs registered at the Sector 56 police station last year for offences under the Motor Vehicles Act, the Disaster Management Act, and for negligent acts that led to the spread of infections. Yadav, during the hearing, explained that while HSVP removed encroachments periodically, the same individuals re-encroached due to a lack of continuous monitoring, deterrent measures, and strict enforcement by the district administration.

During the hearing, DCP East Gaurav Rajpurohit was directed via teleconference to personally oversee the matter, ensure effective and time-bound steps for permanent removal of the encroachment, and prevent future illegal activities. He was also instructed to submit a detailed status report on the FIRs, including whether trials had commenced, and if not, the investigation status in each case. HSVP Administrator Vaishali Sharma, also contacted via teleconference, informed the Commission that a tender had been floated for barricading the area. In view of repeated encroachments, she was directed to implement robust protective measures, including the construction of RCC/CC boundary walls not less than 8 to 10 feet high, the erection of permanent iron grills or fencing where feasible, installation of prominent warning signboards stating “Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted”, and reflective signage visible at night. Additional directives included exploring CCTV installation at vulnerable points, providing adequate lighting, demarcating the land with boundary pillars, and coordinating with local police for periodic patrolling and surprise inspections. Assistant Registrar Dr Puneet Arora stated that the Commission views encroachment on public land as a violation of citizens’ right to a safe, clean, and dignified life, and not merely a law-and-order issue. Speaking with Yadav said HSVP officials had since visited the site again, and told him that work on the directions would commence soon.

Fishing in Tapi River, man & 9-year-old daughter killed as angle iron falls on boat



GNS News Agency, Oct 15

A MAN and his nine-year-old daughter were killed in Surat on Saturday as their boat overturned after a heavy angle iron fell on it even as work was underway on the under-construction bullet train bridge on the Tapi River. The Utran police identified the deceased as Mohsin Ikbal Shaikh (35) and his daughter Huma, 9. Police said the incident took place in the afternoon, when Mohsin, a resident of Badat street in Kathor village of Kamrej taluka in Surat, was engaged in fishing activities in the Tapi River along with his

mother Mumtaz Shaikh (55) and daughter. Construction work on a bridge – that will connect Kamrej with Kathor villages – as part of the bullet train project was also underway at the spot at the time, police said. The boat overturned after the angle iron fell on it, throwing all three persons overboard. Mumtaz raised an alarm. A press release issued by the NHRCL (National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited) later on Saturday said, “...a workman heard a distress call. Upon reaching the spot, he noticed a woman in the water. He took prompt action, jumped into the water and rescued the woman. During the rescue, it was reported that two more persons, who were in the same boat, had fallen into the water. In the meantime, some local fishermen reached the location, traced the other two persons and took out of the water. Later, it was learnt both could not survive.”

A police team also reached the spot and sent the bodies for post-mortem examination. Mumtaz’s condition is stable, doctors said on Saturday evening. The release added that the NHRCL and its contractor are extending full co-operation to the police in the ongoing investigation. Inspector D U Barad said, “The girl died due to drowning and Mohsin suffered a head injury. We have registered an accidental death case and started a probe.”

Amit Shah meets senior BJP leaders amid buzz over cabinet, organisational rejig

GNS News Agency, Oct 15

Amid buzz over a reshuffle in the Uttar Pradesh Cabinet and organisational changes in the state BJP unit, Union Home Minister Amit Shah held a closed-door meeting with senior leaders at the party headquarters in Lucknow on Saturday. On his way to the airport after inaugurating the UP Diwas ceremony at Rashtra Prerna Sthal, Shah held the meeting. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, his deputy Brajesh Pathak, party state president Pankaj Chaudhary, state general secretary (organisation) Dharampal Singh, and other state general secretaries were present in the meeting that lasted for about 30 minutes. “By holding the meeting with top functionaries of the government and party organisation, Shah has sent out a clear message that both the government and the party will have to work together over the next one year to ensure BJP victory for the third consecutive time in the state next year,” said a BJP leader.

With the state elections scheduled next year, the reshuffle of the state cabinet is expected to accommodate new ministers to set the caste and regional equations right. Currently, both the chief minister and party state president are from Gorakhpur in Eastern UP. Also, Pankaj Chaudhary, who was elected state president in December, has to constitute the new state committee, regional committee, and district committees as soon as possible to set the organisation ahead of the assembly elections. Notably, those aspiring for a position in the state organisation as well as the state cabinet are making rounds of the state headquar-



ters in Lucknow and the central headquarters in Delhi. Meanwhile, the party has currently deployed the entire state organisation in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise of electoral rolls. After the end of the first phase, data showed that the state’s predominantly urban districts are facing a higher number of voter deletions than their relatively rural counterparts, triggering concern among the party. The BJP central leadership has held several rounds of meetings with the state leaders regarding the electoral exercise. Lalmani is an Assistant Editor with The Indian Express, and is based in New Delhi. He covers politics of the Hindi Heartland, tracking BJP, Samajwadi Party, BSP, RLD and other parties based in UP, Bihar and Uttarakhnad. Covered the Lok Sabha elections of 2014, 2019 and 2024; Assembly polls of 2012, 2017 and 2022 in

HC orders UP DGP to deal sternly with cops not disclosing ground of arrest in ‘memo’



GNS News Agency, Oct 15

The Allahabad High Court has directed the Uttar Pradesh Director General of Police (DGP) that police officials not disclosing the grounds of arrest to the accused in the prescribed document while making the arrest should be dealt strictly and shall face a departmental inquiry after suspension to stop them indulging in such “illegality”.

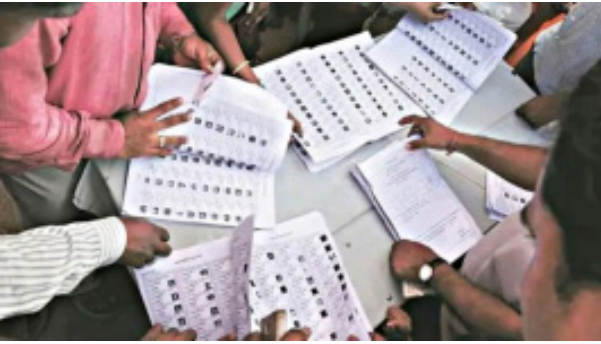
The division bench of Justices Jai Krishna Upadhyay and Siddharth said in the order that the DGP had issued a circular on July 25 last year in the matter along with a “memo” that has to be filled during arrest. The bench observed.. “his own Subordinate Officer of Police is not complying the same and therefore the purpose of new arrest memo having been made and circulated to all the police officers of the State has been frustrated”. The directive was issued while hearing a habeas corpus writ petition for issuing a writ order or direction to the Gautam Buddha Nagar police to produce and release the petitioner, Umang Rastogi, from “illegal custody”, while declaring his “arrest, detention and remand as illegal, null and void”.

The petitioner also prayed for issuing a writ order quashing the remand order passed by Civil Judge (SD) FTC/ACJM, Gautam Buddha Nagar. According to the petitioner, his father, a permanent resident of Haldwani, Uttarakhand, was “abducted” by the BISRakh police station (Gautam Buddha Nagar) station house officer (SHO) from their business premises at Laxmi Nagar in Delhi and was kept in illegal custody for 5 days. During his illegal detention, evidence was fabricated and an FIR was registered against his father under Section 317(2) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita on December 3, 2025, it was alleged. After the petitioner’s father filed a writ petition in the Delhi High Court, the police on December 26, 2025, arrested Umang Rastogi from Haldwani without disclosing to him the ground of his arrest, it was further claimed. Umang Rastogi was produced in the Gautam Buddha Nagar district court the next day seeking his remand but was not given a copy of the arrest memo, he said. His counsel moved an application in the local court seeking his release, but it was rejected. Then they approached the High Court challenging the remand order dated December 27. Justifying Umang Rastogi’s arrest, the additional advocate general argued

EC publishes 1.5 crore voter names on list of ‘logical discrepancies’

GNS News Agency, Oct 15

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Saturday published a list of 1.50 crore names for hearing in connection with the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. Out of them, 30 lakh names have been categorised as “unmapped voters” meaning they have no link with the last SIR conducted in 2002, and 1.20 crore names with logical discrepancies. According to the EC sources, the list has been published for Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and District Election Officers (DEOs), who will take printouts of the list and display it at various locations as per the Supreme Court guidelines. A senior ECI official stated that the commission had aimed to publish the list by Saturday night. “However, it was not mandatory to publish a list within January 24. The Supreme Court did not govern any such deadline,” a senior official of the EC said. The Supreme Court had on January 19 issued a set of directions to the Election Commission to ensure that the verification of the persons put in the ‘logical discrepancies’ category is conducted in a transparent manner, without causing stress and inconvenience to the persons. It had also directed the EC to display the names of those on the “logical discrepancies” list at gram panchayat bhavans, block offices of talukas and ward offices in West Bengal. The court noted that about 1.25 crore notices have been sent to various persons, citing discrepancies such as mismatch in parents’ names, low age-gap with parents, number of progeny exceeding six. The Supreme Court also clarified that persons, who have received notices from the EC, will be entitled to submit their documents/objections through their



authorised agents, who can be the Booth Level Agents (BLAs). The agents have to be appointed through a letter marked with a signature or thumb impression.

Taking into consideration the concerns expressed by the petitioners, that persons will have to travel hundreds of kilometres to respond to the notices, the Supreme Court directed that the office for submitting the documents/ objections shall be set up within the Panchayat Bhavan/ Block offices. If the documents are found to be unsatisfactory, the election officers should give the persons an opportunity of hearing, which can be attended by the authorised agent. According to sources, some districts had already published a hearing list after the Supreme Court verdict. “Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) ordered DEOs that no one can publish the list because it will be published by ECI centrally. Those who have already published lists locally, CEO asked DEOs to withdraw such lists because that can create confusions.”

Shiv Sena (UBT) corporators from Kalyan East untraceable, party leaders claim they have filed missing complaint

GNS News Agency, Oct 15

The formal group registration of corporators was held at the Konkan divisional commissioner’s office, where corporators from the Shinde-led Shiv Sena and the MNS were present together. The formal group registration of corporators was held at the Konkan divisional commissioner’s office, where corporators from the Shinde-led Shiv Sena and the MNS were present together. Four newly elected corporators of the Shiv Sena (UBT) from Kalyan East have been untraceable for the past few days, prompting the party’s district leadership to approach the police, claimed a Sena UBT leader.

The missing persons complaint was lodged at Kolsewadi police station in Kalyan by Shiv Sena (UBT) district chief Sharad Patil, who sought a technical probe into the matter, including examination of CCTV footage and call detail records, the party leaders claimed.

Patil said that two of the four corporators fall within his jurisdiction, and that concern for their safety led him to formally approach the police. “After instructions from the party leadership, we decided to lodge a complaint. If the corporators are safe, they should come forward and clarify their position before the media,” he said. The development comes amid heightened political activity in the Kalyan-Dombivli Municipal Corporation (KDMC) following post-election realignments. Earlier this week, five corporators of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), led by Raj



Thackeray, extended support to the Shiv Sena headed by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, strengthening the ruling alliance’s numbers in the civic body. The formal group registration of corporators was held at the Konkan divisional commissioner’s office, where corporators from the Shinde-led Shiv Sena and the MNS were present together.

The move altered the post-poll arithmetic and added momentum to negotiations over the mayor’s post. In the recently held KDMC elections, the Shinde-led Shiv Sena emerged as the largest party with 53 seats, followed by the BJP with 50. The Shiv Sena (UBT) secured 11 seats, while the MNS won five, Congress two and the Sharad Pawar-led NCP one, in the 122-member House.

1 arrested, 4 minors held days after man found near railway underpass in East Delhi

A 22-year-old youth has been arrested and three juveniles apprehended in connection with the murder of a 25-year-old man whose body was found near a railway underpass in East Delhi’s Preet Vihar last week, police said on Saturday. Police identified the arrested man as Aman, a resident of Mandawali, who has been booked previously in three criminal cases. The juveniles are in the 14 to 16 age group. Police said the deceased, Deva – originally from Rama Bai in Kanpur – who lived under a railway bridge in Mandawali, was allegedly involved in theft and snatching incidents along with the accused. A quarrel reportedly broke out over sharing of money between them. “In a fit of rage, the accused beat up Deva and also hit him with stones and knives, causing fatal injuries,” said an officer.

The matter came to light on January 22, when a head

constable on patrol spotted the body near the railway underpass close to Hotel Mona International on PPG Road. The deceased, who was initially unidentified, was sent to Hedgewar Hospital for medico-legal examination and the body was kept at Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital mortuary. A murder case was registered at Preet Vihar police station under BNS. “Considering the gravity and blind nature of the case... multiple teams from the Anti-Narcotics Squad, Special Staff of the East district and the local police station were formed to trace the killers. The teams conducted extensive CCTV camera analysis and technical surveillance, tracing the movements of the deceased prior to the incident,” said DCP (East) Abhishek Dhania. After the police identified the four suspects, Aman, during questioning, allegedly admitted that he was involved in the murder.

Top General Zhang Youxia threatened Chinese Communist Party’s leadership over military: PLA Daily



GNS News Agency, Oct 15

Beijing: PLA Daily, the mouthpiece of the Chinese military, has accused top military official Zhang Youxia and senior General Liu Zhenli of threatening the Communist Party’s absolute leadership over the armed forces as one of the reasons why they were placed under investigation. They have severely fuelled political and corruption problems that threaten the Communist Party’s absolute leadership over the armed forces and undermine the party’s governance foundation, an editorial in People’s Daily said on Sunday. The two senior Chinese military officials were placed under investigation for serious violations of the ruling Communist Party’s discipline and laws, the Defence Ministry here said on Saturday.

The charge of threatening the party’s absolute leadership is regarded as “very serious” as the Chinese military functioned under the command of the Communist Party of China (CPC), which exercises absolute control of the armed forces. Ever since he took over the leadership in 2012, President Xi Jinping, 72, who also heads the party, the military besides the presidency has been emphasising that it is imperative for the military to function under the party leadership. The party holds the gun, he has been persistently reminding the military generals. Observers say the emphasis of party loyalty also means endorsing his absolute leadership as he has been declared as the core leader of the party and action against Zhang 75, came as Xi may regard the top general undermining his leadership.

Unlike the other generals, Zhang is the first-ranking Vice Chairman of the powerful Central Military Commission (CMC), the overall high command of the Chinese military headed by Xi. Zhang’s position on the CMC makes him the highest-ranking uniformed officer in the Chinese military. In the end, his fate is no different to the two defence ministers and eight other generals who were sacked since

2023 under his watch as he too was detained by the military corruption investigators on Monday, according to reports. He was accused of corruption and of failing to rein in his close associates, family members and relatives and blamed for not flagging problems to the party leadership at the first instance, the charges against him said. Foreign observers view the intensification and continuation of anti-graft and disciplinary crackdown against the top brass of the military as aimed at unsettling the higher echelons and keeping them on tenterhooks. The PLA Daily editorial said the decision made by the CPC Central Committee to investigate Zhang and Liu has once again demonstrated the clear stance of the CPC Central Committee and the CMC that in the fight against corruption, no place is out of bounds, no ground is left unturned and no tolerance is allowed.

It shows the determination of the party to persevere in the fight against corruption and the firm stand that no matter who they are or what position they hold, anyone involved in corruption will be dealt with without leniency, it said. The editorial carried by state-run Xinhua news agency hailed the investigation as a major outcome of the anti-corruption fight and an important demonstration of the determination and strength of the party and the military, adding that it carries great significance for winning this tough, protracted and all-out battle in the military. Zhang and Liu, as senior officials of the party and the military, have gravely betrayed the trust placed in them by the CPC Central Committee and the CMC, and seriously trampled on and undermined the system of ultimate responsibility resting with the CMC chairman, the PLA Daily says. They have severely fuelled political and corruption problems that threaten the party’s absolute leadership over the armed forces and undermine the party’s governance foundation, according to the editorial. They have gravely tarnished the image and authority of the CMC leadership and severely damaged the political and ideological foundation of unity and progress among all military personnel, it said. They have inflicted grave harm on efforts to strengthen political loyalty in the military, the military’s political environment and overall combat readiness, posing a serious adverse impact on the party, the country and the military, it said. The investigation against Zhang and Liu will help the military undergo a thorough renewal, injecting powerful momentum into the development of a strong military, it said. It has been well demonstrated that the more the military combats corruption, the stronger and purer it becomes, with greater combat capacity. The more thoroughly corruption is eradicated, the more confident and capable the armed forces will be in achieving the centenary goals of the PLA, says the editorial.

Protesters demand immigration agents leave Minneapolis after man is shot and killed during crackdown



GNS News Agency, Oct 15

Minneapolis: Democrats demanded that federal immigration officers leave Minnesota after a US Border Patrol agent fatally shot a man in Minneapolis, drawing hundreds of protesters onto the frigid streets and increasing tensions in a city already shaken by another shooting death weeks earlier. Family members identified the man who was killed as Alex Pretti, a 37-year-old intensive care unit nurse who protested President Donald Trump’s immigration crackdown in his city. After the shooting, an angry crowd gathered and protesters clashed with federal officers, who wielded batons and deployed flash bangs. The Minnesota National Guard was assisting local police at the direction of Gov. Tim Walz, officials said. Guard troops were sent to both the shooting site and a federal building where officers have squared off with demonstrators daily.

Information about what led up to the shooting was limited, Police Chief Brian O’Hara said. Department of Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said in a statement that federal officers were conducting an operation and fired “defensive shots” after a man with a handgun approached them and “violently resisted” when they tried to disarm him.

In bystander videos of the shooting that emerged soon after, Pretti is seen with a phone in his hand but none appears to show him with a visible weapon. O’Hara said police believe he was a “lawful gun owner with a permit to carry.” DHS Secretary Kristi Noem said during a news conference that Pretti had shown up to “impede a law enforcement operation.” She questioned why he was armed but did not offer details about whether Pretti drew the weapon or brandished it at officers. The officer who shot him is an eight-year Border Patrol veteran, federal officials said. The president weighed in on social media by lashing out at Walz and the Minneapolis mayor.

He shared images of the gun that immigration officials said was recovered and said: “What is that all about? Where are the local Police? Why weren’t they allowed to protect ICE Officers?” Trump, a Republican, said the Democratic governor and mayor are “are inciting Insurrection, with their pompous, dangerous, and arrogant rhetoric.” Republican Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York was among several Democratic lawmakers demanding federal immigration authorities leave Minnesota. She also urged Democrats to refuse to vote to fund US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, saying via social media: “We have a responsibility to protect Americans from tyranny.” Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer later said that Democrats will not vote for a spending package that includes money for DHS, which oversees ICE. Schumer’s statement increases the possibility that the government could partially shut down January 30 when funding runs out. Pretti was shot just over a mile from where an ICE officer killed 37-year-old Renee Good on January 7, sparking widespread protests. Pretti’s family released a statement Saturday evening saying they are “heartbroken but also very angry” and calling him a kind-hearted soul who wanted to make a difference in the world

through his work as a nurse. “The sickening lies told about our son by the administration are reprehensible and disgusting. Alex is clearly not holding a gun when attacked by Trump’s murdering and cowardly ICE thugs.

He has his phone in his right hand and his empty left hand is raised above his head while trying to protect the woman ICE just pushed down all while being pepper sprayed,” the family statement said. “Please get the truth out about our son. He was a good man.” In a bystander video obtained by The Associated Press, protesters are heard blowing whistles and shouting profanities at federal officers on Nicollet Avenue. An officer shoves a person who is wearing a brown jacket, skirt and black tights and carrying a water bottle. That person reaches out for a man, and the two link up, embracing. The man, wearing a brown jacket and black hat, seems to be holding his phone up toward the officer. The same officer shoves the man in his chest and the two, still embracing, fall back. The video shifts to a different part of the street and then comes back to the two individuals unlinking from each other. It shifts focus again and then shows three officers surrounding the man. Soon at least seven officers surround him. One is on his back, and another who appears to have a canister in his hand strikes a blow to his chest. Several officers try to bring the man’s arms behind his back as he appears to resist. As they pull his arms, his face is briefly visible. The officer with the canister strikes him near his head several times.

A shot rings out, but with officers surrounding the man, it’s not clear where it came from. Multiple officers back off. More shots are heard. Officers back away, and the man lies motionless on the street. The police chief appealed for calm, both from the public and from federal law enforcement. “Our demand today is for those federal agencies that are operating in our city to do so with the same discipline, humanity and integrity that effective law enforcement in this country demands,” the chief said. “We urge everyone to remain peaceful.” Gregory Bovino of US Border Patrol, who has commanded the administration’s big-city immigration campaign, said the officer who shot the man had extensive training as a range safety officer and in using less-lethal force. “This is only the latest attack on law enforcement. Across the country, the men and women of DHS have been attacked, shot at,” he said. Walz said he had no confidence in federal officials and the state would lead the investigation into the shooting. But Drew Evans, superintendent of the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, said during a news conference that federal officers blocked his agency from the scene even after it obtained a signed judicial warrant. Demonstrations broke out in several cities across the country including New York, Washington and Los Angeles. In Minneapolis, protesters converged at the scene of the shooting in Minneapolis despite dangerously cold weather – by the afternoon the worst of an extreme cold wave was over, but the temperature was still -6 degrees (-21 Celsius). An angry crowd gathered after the shooting and screamed profanities at federal officers, calling them “cowards” and telling them to go home. One officer responded mockingly as he walked away, telling them: “Boo hoo.” Agents elsewhere showed a yelling protester into a car. Protesters dragged garbage dumpsters from alleyways to block streets, and people chanted “ICE out now” and “Observing ICE is not a crime.” As dark fell hundreds of people mourned quietly by a growing memorial at the site of the shooting. Some carried signs saying “Justice for Alex Pretti.” Others chanted Pretti’s and Good’s names. A doughnut shop and a clothing store nearby stayed open, offering protesters a warm place as well as water, coffee and snacks. Caleb Spike said he came from a nearby suburb to show his support and his frustration. “It feels like every day something crazier happens,” he said. “What’s happening in our community is wrong, it’s sickening, it’s disgusting.”

Hindu man burnt alive while sleeping in Bangladesh’s Narsingdi amid rising violence against minorities



GNS News Agency, Oct 15

Dhaka: A horrifying act of violence against a Hindu minority member has shocked Bangladesh, coming just weeks ahead of the national elections as a 23-year-old Hindu man, identified as Chanchal Chandra Bhowmik, was reportedly burned alive while sleeping in a garage in Narsingdi, around 50 km from Dhaka, raising renewed fears over the security of minority communities in the Muslim-majority nation. Bhowmik, son of Khokan Chandra Bhowmik and a resident of Lakshmipur village in Cumilla district, worked at a garage located in the Khanabari Mosque Market area near Narsingdi Police Lines. According to local media reports, he had finished his work on Friday night and fell asleep inside the garage when unidentified attackers set the premises

ablaze. With large quantities of petrol, engine oil, and other inflammable materials stored in the garage, the fire spread rapidly, leaving Bhowmik trapped.

Authorities have seized CCTV footage from nearby cameras that reportedly captured the attackers in action, but the culprits have not yet been identified. A police official said, “The police are conducting a thorough investigation, considering the seriousness of the case. We have recovered the body and seized the CCTV footage. Several police teams are working to identify and arrest the culprits.”

Bangladesh’s Hindu population is estimated at 13.13 million, accounting for nearly 8 per cent of the country’s total population, according to the 2022 census. In recent weeks, violence against Hindus has been rising, prompting India to express concerns over the safety of its minority community in the neighbouring country. The attack on Bhowmik comes shortly after several other incidents targeting Hindus. Last week, a Hindu sweetshop owner in Gazipur district was beaten to death while defending an employee from an assault. In the same period, a Hindu household was set on fire in Sylhet district, and a Hindu autorickshaw driver was stabbed to death in Feni district. These incidents underscore the growing fears of minority communities in Bangladesh, particularly ahead of the upcoming elections, as the government faces scrutiny over its ability to protect vulnerable populations from extremist violence.

Last 2 pandas in Japan are leaving for China as ties are strained



Tokyo: Japanese panda fans gathered on Sunday for the final public viewing at Tokyo’s Ueno zoo before twins Xiao Xiao and Lei Lei return to China this week. Their departure on Tuesday will leave Japan with no pandas for the first time in half a century, and the chances of getting a replacement are poor, with Tokyo’s relations with Beijing at their lowest point in years. China first sent pandas to Japan in 1972, a gift meant to mark the normalisation of diplomatic ties between the two wary neighbours. The cuddly black-and-white bears immediately won Japanese hearts, and a dozen successors have become national celebrities. The latest departing panda twins have attracted massive crowds despite a one-minute viewing limit per visitor in the panda zone set by the zoo. Visitors, many of them carrying panda-themed toys, call out the bears’ names and use smartphones to capture them as they nibble bamboo and stroll around. Many of those who couldn’t get panda viewing tickets still came to the zoo anyway to mark the last day. Longtime panda fan Michiko Seki, in a panda-patterned black-and-white shirt, said she was happy to see and photograph the twins looking healthy and eating well. She was using the same camera she had bought when she started taking photos of their elder sister Xian Xian, who left Japan two years ago.

Seki says she doesn’t want to see pandas stuck in the diplomatic row. “They are the animals that can provide tremendous comfort,” she said. “Japan needs pandas, and (I) hope politicians will work something out.” Beijing lends pandas to other countries but maintains ownership, including over any cubs they produce. Xiao Xiao and his sister Lei Lei were born in the Ueno zoo in 2021. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun, asked about China sending new pandas to Japan, said: “I know giant pandas are loved by many in Japan, and we welcome Japanese friends to come visit them in China.” A devoted panda fan takes millions of photos. Web engineer Takahiro Takaiji’s days revolve around pandas. It started 15 years ago when he visited the Ueno Zoological Gardens and fell in love with the twin pandas’ parents, Shin Shin and Ri Ri, soon after their arrival from China. “Their shape and the way they move are honestly so cute and funny,” he said at his home near Tokyo. “Sometimes they are baby-like; at other times they act like an old man.”

A daily zoo visit has since become essential. He has taken more than 10 million photos of the pandas and published a number of panda photo books. On a recent afternoon, Takaiji was among thousands who entered a competitive online booking system to see the pandas one last time. During the one-minute viewing session, Takaiji held

his camera high above the other fans and took as many as 5,000 still shots to capture every motion of Xiao Xiao and Lei Lei. Back at home, in a room adorned with dozens of panda mascots and ornaments, Takaiji carefully went through his fresh photos from the day and uploaded them to his blog, “Every Day Pandas.” Having seen the twins since birth, he considers them “just like my own children.” “I never imagined there would come a day when pandas would be gone from Japan,” he says.

Ties are strained between Tokyo and Beijing. Japan has faced increasing political, trade and security tensions with China, which was angered by Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi’s recent remarks that potential Chinese action against Taiwan, the self-governing democratic island Beijing claims as its own, could spark Japanese intervention. Ties between Japan and China have been fraught since the Japanese aggression in the 19th century. There are still territorial disputes in the East China Sea as China’s rise is accompanied by security threats and increasing economic influence in the region. Japan’s top government spokesperson, Minoru Kihara, acknowledged on Thursday that the Japanese Consulate in Chongqing has been without a consul for a month because China has delayed approval of a replacement. Pandas have long been part of Chinese diplomacy

Giant pandas, native to southwestern China, serve as an unofficial mascot. Beijing lends them to other countries as a sign of goodwill and as part of research and conservation programs. The first pair of pandas, Kang Kang and Lan Lan, that China gifted to Japan, arrived in Ueno on Oct. 28, 1972. It was one month after Japan’s prime minister at the time, Kakuei Tanaka, and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai signed a joint communique normalising ties between the countries. Japan noted it “fully understands and respects” China’s claim on Taiwan as “an inalienable part” of its territory. China also gifted the first giant pandas around that time to other Western nations, including the United States, France, Britain and Germany. China switched to leasing programs in the 1980s, with participating overseas zoos paying annual fees for habitat conservation or scientific research to benefit the species.

Japan has seen panda diplomacy turn political. A plan to bring a panda to Japan’s northern city of Sendai after the 2011 quake and tsunami disaster was shelved in the wake of a 2012 territorial dispute. Pandas are beloved in Japan. Panda images appear in and outside of the Ueno zoo on cookies and sweets, stuffed dolls, stationery and photo books. Panda statues sit outside a train station. A department store has a section dedicated to panda goods. “Pandas are a symbol of Ueno, a star,” said Asao Ezure, manager of a souvenir shop. “We worry how the pandas’ absence will affect us.” Showing a cartoon of Xiao Xiao and Lei Lei on a shop signboard, Ezure says he believes that pandas will come back. “So we are not going to change the signboard.” The absence of pandas at the zoo would cause an annual loss of about 20 billion yen (\$128 million), according to Katsuhiro Miyamoto, an economics professor at Kansai University. “If the situation continues for several years, the negative economic impact of having no pandas is expected to reach tens of billions of yen,” Miyamoto said in a statement. “For panda-loving Japanese, including myself, I hope they return as soon as possible.”

India decimates New Zealand in Under-19 World Cup



Bulawayo: Skipper Ayush Mhatre’s 27-ball 53 underlined India’s another dominant show as they notched a crushing seven-wicket victory via DLS method over New Zealand in the U-19 World Cup here on Saturday. An all-round India won a truncated game of 37-overs-per-side with complete ease, stamping their authority in the competition with another big victory. Chasing a revised target of 130, India made 130 for three in a mere 13.3 overs to record their third consecutive win and top Group B. RS Ambrish (8-1-29-4) and Henil Patel (7.2-1-23-3) led the bowling charge early for India who had asked New Zealand to bat first in damp conditions of the rain-truncated game.

New Zealand were reduced to 69 for 7 as Indian bowlers continued to strike right from the word go, and eventually bowled the Kiwis out for 135 in 36.2 overs. Snehi Reddy (10) was the only New Zealand batter among the top five to score in double digits. Even as the lower-order resisted, New Zealand never had enough runs on the board.

Jacob Cotter (23), Callum Samson (37) and Selwin Sanjay (28) added some valuable late runs for New Zealand but none of them could impose themselves against the Indians, for whom the trio of Khilan Patel, Mohamed Enaam and Kanish Chouhan claimed a wicket each. In reply, India lost Aaron George (7) early but Vaibhav Sooryavanshi (40 off 23 balls; 2 fours, 3 sixes) and skipper Mhatre led the response with a robust 76-run stand for the second wicket.

Both Sooryavanshi and Mhatre struck at over 150 to pulverise the New Zealand bowlers, who just did not have enough to defend. Sooryavanshi, however, missed his personal milestone when Jaskaran Sandhu had him caught by Mason Clarke. But Mhatre raised a fine fifty, falling for 53 off 27 balls with two fours and six sixes, caught by Flynn Morey off Selwin. The pair of Vihaan Malhotra (17 not out) and Vedant Trivedi (13 not out) then took India over the line halfway through the 14th over. “There was a simple plan because the ball was coming nicely on to the bat. There was nothing planned (on the weather), just reacted to the ball and there was a simple plan.

The Donroe Doctrine, Venezuela’s fragile pragmatism



Statecraft often rides on contradictions. None is more evident than in the aftermath of the U.S. military intervention in Venezuela and its abduction of sitting President Nicolás Maduro. On January 15, as Venezuela’s opposition leader María Corina Machado met U.S. President Donald Trump at the White House and handed over the Nobel Peace Prize she had won in 2025 for leading Venezuela’s movement against “autocracy”, CIA Director John Ratcliffe was in Caracas meeting with Delcy Rodríguez, Mr. Maduro’s former Vice-President and now the interim President of the beleaguered country. On January 14, Mr. Trump had described Ms Rodríguez as “a terrific person” with whom the U.S. was “getting along very well.”

This spectacle, where the architect of an invasion is embracing a key figure from the regime whose leader he had just abducted, captures the essence of what might be called the “Donroe Doctrine”: an extension of the Monroe Doctrine that represents a departure from earlier forms of U.S. imperialism. Unlike the neocon interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, which sought not only resource extraction but also “nation-building” and the installation of ideologically aligned regimes, the Venezuela operation is more nakedly transactional. Mr. Trump’s emphasis is on securing imperial control in order to maximise resource extraction, even while leaving in place a governing apparatus that is led by the very Bolivarians whose leader was snatched as “the head of the snake”, as long as it proves compliant.

Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah, writing in 1965, defined this arrangement presciently: “The essence of neo-colonialism is that the [s]tate which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside.” Venezuela today in a way fits this description. On January 15, Ms. Rodríguez delivered defiant rhetoric in her State of the Union address even as she had to negotiate the terms of her country’s economic subordination with the CIA director.

A case of ‘regime management’ The Trump administration’s preference for “regime management” over “regime change” is not out of any respect for Venezuelan sovereignty. The New York Times reported that senior policymakers explicitly discussed how removing the Bolivarian government would risk replicating the disastrous dissolution of Iraq’s army and bureaucracy. Mr. Trump has long criticised the military escalation in Iraq. Besides, his ‘Make America Great Again’ (MAGA) base, large sections of which opposed the interventions under the Bush, Clinton, and Obama administrations, do not want another quagmire.

In Ms. Rodríguez, Washington sees someone who can maintain equilibrium with the powerful armed forces led by Defence Minister Vladimir Padrino López and the ruling party’s ideologues such as Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello, who controls the PSUV party and the militant colektivios of the Bolivarian movement. The opposition, with its leadership having been driven underground and lacking institutional continuity, cannot offer this. Ms. Machado’s obsequious approval of Mr. Trump’s actions, including absurd claims about Mr. Maduro’s intervention in the 2020 U.S. elections, has so far earned her little. There has been considerable speculation about why the Bolivarians provided so little resistance to the U.S. actions, and why Ms. Rodríguez’s responses since the invasion have seemed like capitulation. Left-wing activist Tariq Ali, has in an interview put it bluntly: “I think Delcy has capitulated completely.” He concluded that “important sections of the Bolivarian state apparatus were prepared to let Maduro go”. While this account is outlandish, the current choices for Ms. Rodríguez are limited. The country has been under crushing U.S. sanctions since the late 2010s, targeting its oil sector — the lifeblood of its economy — and brought hyperinflation and economic collapse.

When can courts interfere in an ongoing investigation? | Explained

The story so far: The Supreme Court recently in State of U.P. & Anr versus Mohd Arshad Khan & Anr (December 2025) set aside the Allahabad High Court’s order and held that “directing a time-bound investigation must remain the exception rather than the norm”. The Court said that High Courts should intervene only “where delay itself begins to cause prejudice”. The Court also did not find any justification for granting protection from arrest (or coercive action) without granting the relief actually prayed for — quashing the First Information Report (FIR). Earlier in November 2025, the Delhi High Court in Satya Prakash Bagla versus State & Ors. held that the phrase “coercive measures” did not apply to freezing of bank accounts by the police during investigation. It said that the intent of the phrase “coercive measures” was not to restrain further investigation by the police, but was used in the context of only the petitioner’s personal liberty.

When can courts interfere?

A three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in Neeharika Infrastructure (P) Ltd. versus State of Maharashtra (2021) discussed the scope of the High Court’s powers to quash an investigation or pass interim orders staying an investigation. The Supreme Court said that the police have the statutory right and duty under the relevant provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) to investigate into a cognisable offence. The courts should not thwart any investigation into such offences. It is only in cases where no cognisable offence, or offence of any kind, is disclosed in the FIR, that the Court can stop an investigation. Thus, the power of quashing should be exercised sparingly with circumspection. Courts are barred from usurping the jurisdiction of the police, since the two organs of the state operate in two specific spheres of activity and one must not tread over the other, save in exceptional cases where non-interference would result in a miscarriage of justice.

What about using the phrase ‘coercive measures’?

The Supreme Court in Neeharika Infrastructure (supra) observed that the High Courts had passed interim orders to stay arrest and said that “no coercive steps [should]

To circumvent these sanctions, Venezuela redirected crude exports to China and other countries through a “shadow fleet” of aging tankers. It relied on Russia and Cuba. But now, with a naval blockade in place, ships carrying Venezuelan crude to Cuba and China have been seized and Chinese tankers have been denied access to Venezuelan waters. Neither China nor Russia has shown any willingness to confront the U.S. in its self-declared backyard. In this context, the regime’s adoption of pragmatism, negotiating with Washington to ease sanctions, even while the blockade remains, in order to keep the economy afloat and preserve what remains of the welfare state, appears less like capitulation than the only available strategy for survival. From all accounts, this has been a consensus among the different wings of the Bolivarian state.

The Bolivarians were never opposed to economic partnership with U.S. companies. They were opposed to the terms of partnership which led to the late Hugo Chávez’s 2001 Hydrocarbon Law allowing foreign companies to participate only as minority stakeholders in joint ventures with the state oil company, PDVSA, and ensuring that Venezuela received the lion’s share of profits. Those terms are now being rewritten under duress. But the alternative, attempting to maintain the old model in a sanctioned environment, with no access to world markets and no great-power protection, is equally untenable. The pragmatic calculation is to secure whatever economic breathing room is possible and wait for the geopolitical situation to turn.

As Vice-President overseeing the economy under U.S. sanctions, Ms. Rodríguez managed to bring down hyperinflation and achieve modest GDP growth from a low base. Oil production, which had collapsed below 4,00,000 barrels a day, recovered to 9,00,000 barrels under arrangements she promoted, including the 2020 Anti-Blockade Law that allowed greater private investment and ownership in the oil sector, effectively trading some sovereign control for economic survival. In her State of the Union address, she spoke of the U.S. crossing “red lines” and Venezuela’s willingness to “confront them diplomatically” while attacking the opposition for “[competing] to see who could grovel the most.” But in talks with Washington, she has sought to negotiate economic survival through the country’s key leverage: its oil. Under the Biden administration, companies such as Chevron enjoyed limited licences allowing them to export Venezuelan crude while depositing proceeds in private Venezuelan banks — an indirect way for the government to earn foreign exchange. The Trump administration halted this before the invasion and oil revenues now flow through accounts in Qatar, accessible to the Venezuelan state only with American approval. Imports from these proceeds must be from American manufacturers. Reports indicate that despite the blockade, commodities traders Vitol and Trafigura have received licences to move Venezuelan crude, with initial sales reportedly worth \$500 million. In essence, Mr. Trump is reversing the sanctions he initiated, but on his own terms. The country is being offered what it was denied under sanctions — U.S. investment and participation in oil extraction — but now as a subordinate partner.

Lessons beyond borders Yet, Washington’s leverage faces its own constraints. Venezuelan crude is predominantly heavy and extra-heavy oil, expensive to extract and refine. ExxonMobil’s chief executive publicly called Venezuela “uninvestable”. With oil prices relatively low, the profit margins that would justify such investments remain uncertain. This economic reality may ultimately require the administration to allow broader market access for Venezuelan crude including sales to China and India through licensed intermediaries and more favourable revenue-sharing terms. The present situation is neither the regime change that Ms. Machado and her supporters in the West champion nor the sovereign resource control that the Bolivarian project promised when Mr. Chávez first came to power. Ms. Rodríguez will seek to preserve what she can of the welfare state. But she will remain constrained. Venezuela’s travails offer a lesson for the developing world. Economic diversification could have mattered, but that alone is insufficient when a hegemon intervenes. The warning is about the limits of the emerging multipolar order: when the Trump regime moved against Venezuela, neither China nor Russia, for all their rhetoric about a post-American world, was willing to confront Washington in its declared sphere of influence. An alternative may only emerge if the Global South acts in concert rather than waiting for great-power rivalries to provide shelter.



be taken against the accused” without assigning any reasons. The Supreme Court held that the High Court is not justified in passing such orders either during the investigation or till the investigation is completed. It also dismissed the quashing of the petition under Section 482 CrPC (Section 528 BNSS) and Article 226 of the Constitution.

Whenever an interim order is passed by the High Court of “no coercive steps to be adopted”, the High Court must clarify what it means by that phrase as the term is too vague and broad, and can be easily misunderstood or misapplied. Therefore, while passing a ‘no coercive steps’ order, if the High Court intends to stay the investigation, it must specifically state so and must assign reasons thereof. Such reasons, however brief, must disclose an application of mind.

However, the Delhi High Court in Satya Prakash Bagla (supra) said that the expressions ‘coercive measure’ and ‘coercive steps’ derive their meaning, import and significance from the context and the nature of the proceedings in which they are used.

To ascertain the court’s intention in employing these expressions in a given order, it is necessary to examine the nature of the relief or protection that was sought, and what the court intended to grant to a party at the relevant stage of the proceedings. It would, therefore, be neither appropriate nor judicious for a court to attribute to these expressions any inflexible, or predetermined meaning.

The ‘f’ word



This was his reaction to the news of Kozhikode-native U. Deepak’s suicide after a video shot by Shimjitha Musthafa, a co-passenger, accusing Deepak of sexual harassment during a bus journey, went viral on social media. Since the news of Deepak’s death, people on social media seem to be baying for blood. Men are now walking out of houses wearing cardboard boxes covering their bodies. Much of this discussion, however, risks flattening a complex issue into a binary of victim and villain. A feminist lens urges us to resist this simplification — not to deny the devastating loss of life, but to ask harder questions about why social media became the site of justice in the first place, and whose voices are routinely ignored. For decades, women in India have navigated public spaces that are anything but safe. When I first began taking the bus by myself to school and sports meets, my mother asked me to hold onto a safety pin in order to poke those who chose to come too close. Sexual harassment on buses, trains, and streets is a daily reality, often minimised as misunderstanding or brushed aside as inconvenience. Police stations remain intimidating spaces where survivors are often questioned insensitively or shamed. It is why social media has emerged, although imperfectly, as an alternative forum for solidarity.

When a woman records or posts an allegation online, it is often not an attempt to become judge or jury, but a desperate act of being heard. To frame the Kerala case solely as reckless online behaviour risks obscuring this

deeper truth: women turn to digital platforms because institutions meant to protect them repeatedly fail to do so. This is what the #MeToo movement was. During a time when ‘feminism’ has become the big bad ‘f’ word, it is important to note that the movement does not celebrate public shaming or mob justice. Deepak’s death is a tragedy — and feminist ethics demand that we hold space for that loss without weaponising it against women’s speech. This incident in Kerala should not be used to discipline women into quietness or absolve institutions of their failures. Instead, it should let it force us to confront an uncomfortable reality: when systems fail everyone, social media fills the vacuum, often with irreversible consequences. The task ahead is not to mute voices, but to build structures where speaking out does not come at the cost of another life.

Wordsworth Son Meta-Preference Although frankly self-explanatory, son meta-preference refers to the number of married people up to 49, who want more sons than daughters versus the other way round according to the National Family Health Survey of 2022. This article in The Hindu speaks about how there were exuberant festivities when a 37-year-old woman gave birth to a boy after 18 years and 10 daughters in Haryana’s Dhani Bhojraj village.

Toolkit Women of Mathematics From Around the World’ is an exhibition showcasing 20 extraordinary mathematicians from various countries — from Congo to India — against a blackboard filled end-to-end with equations. Women in most parts of the world, particularly in STEM, are up against a formidable glass ceiling in the form of social pressure to have children or due to institutional apathy. This exhibition at Bengaluru’s International Centre for Theoretical Sciences, and the Raman Research Institute also features Neela Nataraj, the institute chair professor at the department of mathematics, IIT Bombay. She is now working on mathematical problems related to liquid crystals. The exhibit which opens a window into the lives of these famed mathematicians is on till March 15 and is open to the public. Ouch! Average Indian feminist girls: Won’t pay equal bills. Won’t marry a guy who earns the same. Won’t marry a guy who is unemployed. Cooking and household chores are slavery. Want a rich man with high income. Also want him to cook and do chores. Where is the equality?

Who was Alex Pretti? What we know about the ICU nurse killed by federal agents at Minneapolis protest



Alex Jeffrey Pretti, born in Illinois, was an avid outdoorsman who enjoyed going on adventures with Joule, his beloved Catahoula Leopard dog, who also recently passed away. He worked for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and participated in protests following the January 7, 2026, killing of Renee Good by an Immigration and Customs officer. A sign for 37-year-old Alex Pretti, who was fatally shot by a U.S. Border Patrol officer earlier in the day, is displayed during a vigil on January 24, 2026, in Minneapolis. Alex Pretti grew up in Green Bay, Wisconsin, where he played football and baseball and ran track for Preble High School. He was a Boy Scout and sang in the Green Bay Boy Choir. After graduation, he attended the University of Minnesota, graduating in 2011 with a bachelor’s degree in biology, society, and the environment, according to the family. He worked as a research scientist before returning to school to become a registered nurse.

What do we know about the shooting?

Videos from the scene verified and reviewed by Reuters showed Pretti holding a phone in his hand, not a gun, as he tries to help other protesters who had been pushed to the ground by agents. As the videos begin, Pretti can be seen filming while a Federal agent pushes away one woman and shoves another woman to the ground. Pretti moves between the agent and the women, then raises his left arm to shield himself as the agent pepper sprays him. Several agents then take hold of Pretti — who struggles with them — and force him onto his hands and knees. As the agents pin Pretti down, someone shouts what sounds like a warning about the presence of a gun.

A screengrab from a video shows law enforcement officers kneeling next to the body of a man who was shot when Federal agents were trying to detain him in Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S., on January 24, 2026. A screengrab from a video shows law enforcement officers kneeling next to the body of a man who was shot when Federal agents were trying to detain him in Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S., on January 24, 2026. | Photo Credit: Bring Me The News via Reuters Video footage then appears to show one of the agents removing a gun from Pretti and stepping away from the group with it. Moments later, an officer with a handgun points at Pretti’s back and fires four shots in quick succession. Several more shots can then be heard as another agent appears to fire at Pretti. Minneapolis shooting narrative and contradicting video evidence Following Alex Pretti’s death, contradicting accounts have emerged regarding what transpired before his death. In a bystander video verified by Reuters, multiple agents struggle on the ground with Pretti and appear to strike him before a shot is fired. Pretti falls down, after which multiple additional shots can be heard. However, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security stated that a Border Patrol agent fired at the man, who resisted the agents’ attempts to disarm him, but local leaders challenged that account.

Statements by President Donald Trump’s administration said agents fired “defensively” against Pretti as he approached them. Pretti can be seen with only a phone in his hand as he steps between an immigration agent and a woman on the street. No footage appears to show him with a weapon. A Federal Judge has already issued an order blocking the Trump administration from “destroying or altering evidence” related to the shooting, after state and county officials sued. Pretti’s death at the hands of Federal

agents took place less than three weeks another Minneapolis resident, Renee Good, was shot and killed by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent — on a street about 2 km (1.25 miles) away. Brian O’Hara, the Minneapolis police chief, told the CBS “Face the Nation” programme that “the ?videos speak for themselves,” calling the Trump administration’s version of events deeply disturbing. He said he had seen no evidence that Pretti brandished a gun. Federal authorities have refused to allow local officials to participate in their investigation of the incident.

Minnesota Governor Tim Walz called on Mr. Trump to pull Federal agents out of the state while Border Patrol Commander Greg Bovino accused Good and Pretti of creating the situations that led to their ?deaths. The civilian’s death has triggered outrage against U.S. President Donald Trump’s immigration policies. As a result, thousands of protesters have poured into the streets, demanding stringent action against errant officials.

“He cared about people deeply, and he was very upset with what was happening in Minneapolis and throughout the United States with Federal agents, as millions of other people are upset,” said Michael Pretti, Alex’s father. “He thought it was terrible, you know, kidnapping children, just grabbing people off the street. He cared about those people, and he knew it was wrong, so he did participate in protests.” “We had this discussion with him two weeks ago or so, you know, that go ahead and protest, but do not engage, do not do anything stupid, basically,” Michael Pretti said. A screengrab from a video obtained by Reuters shows a man identified as Alex Pretti walking backwards on the street while holding a mobile phone near a law enforcement officer, moments before he was fatally shot when federal agents were trying to detain him, as seen through the windshield of a vehicle, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S. on January 24, 2026.

A screengrab from a video obtained by Reuters shows a man identified as Alex Pretti walking backwards on the street while holding a mobile phone near a law enforcement officer, moments before he was fatally shot when federal agents were trying to detain him, as seen through the windshield of a vehicle, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S. on January 24, 2026. Family members said Pretti owned a handgun and had a permit to carry a concealed handgun in Minnesota. They stated that they had never known him to carry it.

“The sickening lies told about our son by the administration are reprehensible and disgusting,” the family’s statement said. They added that videos showed Pretti was not holding a gun when he was tackled by Federal agents, but holding his phone with one hand and using the other to shield a woman who was being pepper-sprayed.

Demands for justice grow louder Taking a sharp dig at Donald Trump administration, former U.S. President Barack Obama said the killing of Alex Pretti is a heartbreaking tragedy. “It should also be a wake-up call to every American, regardless of party, that many of our core values as a nation are increasingly under assault,” Mr. Obama’s post on X read. In his page-long statement, the Democratic leader stated that people across the country have been rightly outraged by the spectacle of masked ICE recruits and other Federal agents acting with impunity and engaging in tactics that appear to be designed to intimidate, harass, provoke, and endanger the residents of a major American city. This has to stop. I would hope that after this most recent tragedy, administration officials will reconsider their approach, and start finding ways to work constructively with Governor Walz and Mayor Frey as well as state and local police to avert more chaos and achieve legitimate law enforcement goals”, it mentioned. The fate of the enforcements led by U.S. Federal agents in Minnesota which has claimed the life of two officials would be decided by a Federal Judge on Monday (January 4) makeshift memorial at the site where a man identified as Alex Pretti was fatally shot by Federal immigration agents trying to detain him, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S. The state of Minnesota and the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul sued the Department of Homeland Security earlier this month, five days after protester Renee Good was shot by an Immigration and Customs officer. Meanwhile, U.S. Justice Department attorneys have called the lawsuit “legally frivolous” and stated that “Minnesota wants a veto over Federal law enforcement.”

SEBI to sharpen tech, AI oversight to stay ahead of market risks: Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey



With investor participation widening and markets becoming more technology-driven, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is sharpening its focus on upgrading its technological framework to enable more effective and proactive supervision, SEBI Chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey said on Thursday. Speaking at an event to mark the 40th anniversary of the BSE Sensex, Pandey said the regulator was strengthening both its technological and regulatory architecture to safeguard market integrity amid a rapidly diversifying investor base. “As participation widens and the investor base becomes diverse, our focus has also been on strengthening technological and regulatory architecture to uphold integrity,” he said. Pandey outlined the regulator’s key priorities, which include continuous improvement in corporate governance standards, promotion of sustainable finance and long-term value creation, encouragement of innovation with investor protection at the core, and responsible use of information and data in market operations and supervision. The changing landscape of the market, especially with the integration of AI, brings complexities alongside efficiencies, the chairman said. “The next frontier thus lies in anticipating risks before they surface,”

he said, underscoring the need for forward-looking regulation. To this end, SEBI has strengthened its regulatory framework while also deploying AI-driven tools and new cyber-security measures. Pandey highlighted Sudarshan, an AI-based model that identifies fraudsters impersonating investment advisers and research analysts on social media platforms to mislead investors. Another AI-powered system, R(AI)DAR (Regulatory AI-driven Advertising Reviewer), monitors and analyses advertisements issued by asset management companies to flag potential mis-selling and regulatory violations.

The regulator has also introduced a sentiment analysis system for corporate announcements, which helps identify disclosures that qualify as “material” and enables timely surveillance alerts. Pandey said SEBI is currently developing an AI-driven inspection tool for cyber health checks, which will analyse cyber audit reports, identify gaps and classify market entities based on their risk exposure. In addition to these measures, SEBI has been working to improve its broader technology architecture. He pointed to the introduction of instant verification of UPI IDs and bank accounts as a step aimed at preventing cyber fraud. These measures come after the market regulator has taken steps to make market infrastructure institutions (MIs) such as exchanges, depositories, and clearing corporations more accountable in a recent circular. “To ensure security, we have mandated external independent evaluation of MIs and their statutory committees every three years, alongside internal evaluations,” Pandey said. BSE Managing Director and CEO Sundararaman Ramamurthy also addressed the gathering, where he highlighted how the Sensex has seen a 13 per cent compounded annual growth rate since its inception in 1986, compared to the 9-10 per cent of other major global stock indices such as Hong Kong’s Hang Seng and the US’ Dow Jones Industrial Average.

Govt reprimands X over Grok AI generating objectionable pictures of women, seeks response within 72 hours



Taking note of Elon Musk-owned X’s artificial intelligence service Grok being abused to generate objectionable pictures and videos of women, without their consent, while increasing the risk of exposure and harm with “grave concern,” the Indian government has sent a missive to the company saying that it was not adhering to the country’s laws, raising red flags over “serious failure” of safeguards enforcement, and has sought information within 72 hours about technical details related to Grok’s actions.

“Grok AI developed by you and integrated and made available on the X platform, is being misused by users to create fake accounts to host, generate, publish or share obscene images or videos of women in a derogatory or vulgar manner in order to indecently denigrate them,” the IT Ministry said in the notice sent to the social media company’s chief compliance officer on Friday. The government said that the service was being used by people to target women who host or publish their images or videos, through prompts, image manipulation and synthetic outputs, and said that “such conduct reflects a serious failure of platform-level safeguards and enforcement mechanisms, and amounts to gross misuse of artificial intelligence technologies in violation of applicable laws”.

This is being viewed with “grave concern,” as it could violate the dignity, privacy and safety of women and children, “normalising sexual harassment and exploitation in digital spaces, and undermining the statutory due diligence framework applicable to intermediaries operating in India,” the IT Ministry said. The IT Ministry has directed X to submit a detailed action taken report within 72 hours, covering specific technical and organisational measures adopted by X in relation to Grok AI, the role and oversight exercised by its India chief compliance officer, and action taken by the company against offending content, users and accounts. It has also directed the company to undertake a comprehensive technical, procedural and governance-level review of Grok AI, including its prompt-processing, output generation, and image handling and safety guardrails, “to ensure that the application does not generate, promote or facilitate

content which contains nudity, sexualisation, sexually explicit or otherwise unlawful content”. 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.

The ministry has asked X to “strictly desist from the hosting, displaying, uploading, publication, transmission, storage, sharing” of such content, and any failure to do so could lead to the company losing its legal immunity from hosting third-party content. Users on X are increasingly tagging Elon 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 have 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 has promptly done. The AI-generated images appear publicly in the same threads, exposing the women to harassment without their approval or knowledge. Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi had earlier written to Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw raising concerns over the misuse of Grok AI to generate such images of women. “There have to be guardrails put in place by features like Grok so that they do not violate women’s dignity. Big tech firms need to take the onus,” she said. “It is not just limited to sharing photos through fake accounts but are also targeting women who post their own photos. This is unacceptable and a gross misuse of an AI function,” she said, adding that Grok was enabling such behaviour by adhering to such requests.

Vaishnaw told reporters that the issue makes a strong case for the government’s intervention, and added that the ministry was considering a law to regulate AI content on social media. “The Parliamentary Committee has recommended a strong law for regulating social media. We are considering it,” he said. In October, The Indian Express had reported how AI-generated clips and pictures of actors were widely available on platforms like Instagram and X, with the platforms seemingly failing in their responsibility to curb the spread of such content, jeopardising the safety and dignity of women, which could create barriers to their participation in digital spaces. In December, the IT Ministry had issued an advisory to online platforms, including social media companies, asking them not to host obscene, or vulgar content, calling for “greater rigour” in adhering to provisions of the law. The ministry has also directed platforms to carry out an immediate review of their internal compliance frameworks.

Nifty hits fresh all-time high, crosses 26,328; Sensex rises 0.67%

Indian indices closed higher on Friday, with the benchmark Nifty50 closing at a fresh record high, supported by optimism over strong third-quarter corporate earnings. The NSE’s Nifty50 rose by 0.70 per cent, or 182 points, to end at an all-time high of 26,328.55, surpassing its previous record high closing mark of 26,216.05 on September 26, 2024. The 50-share index also hit a record intraday high of 26,340 on Friday. It had previously touched an all-time intraday high of 26,325.8 on December 1, 2025.

The BSE Sensex gained 0.67 per cent, or 573.41 points, to close at 85,762.01 on Friday. The 30-share index finished the session near its record closing high of 85,836.12, achieved on September 26, 2024. “Markets extended their gains on Friday and reclaimed record-high levels, marking a strong start to the New Year. Sentiment was supported by positive sector-specific developments, particularly stronger auto sales trends and an improving demand outlook across cyclical sectors,” said Ajit Mishra – senior VP, Research at Religare Broking Ltd. Sectoral participation was broad-based, with all sectors except FMCG contributing to the advance. Energy, realty and metal stocks emerged as the top performers. “The Nifty extended its uptrend for the third consecutive session, breaking out of a symmetrical triangle pattern on the daily chart. It touched a fresh all-time high of 26,340, aided by broad-based short covering,” said Nilesh Jain, head – Technical and Derivatives Research Analyst (Equity Research), Centrum Broking Ltd. Turnover on the

NSE’s cash segment was robust, rising 28 per cent over the previous session, reflecting heightened market participation. “Nifty has now convincingly surpassed the previous swing-high barriers at 26,236 and 26,325, signaling a strong breakout from its earlier consolidation zone. With the index entering uncharted territory, the near-term upside opens toward 26,500 and beyond,” said Nandish Shah – deputy VP, HDFC Securities. On the downside, immediate support has shifted higher to around 26,100, which is likely to act as a near-term cushion on any dips, he said.

Broader market strength remained evident, with the Nifty Midcap100 advancing 1.01 per cent to close at all-time high of 61,365.90, while the Nifty Smallcap100 was up by 0.72 per cent to 17,832.05 at market closing on Friday. Market breadth stayed firmly positive for the third straight session, with an advance-decline ratio of 1.93 on the BSE. The Bank Nifty advanced 0.74 per cent to end at an all-time high of 60,150.95. Among the NSE lot, companies that gained the most included Coal India Ltd (7.15 per cent), NTPC Ltd (4.56 per cent), Hindalco Industries Ltd (3.53 per cent), Trent Ltd (2.39 per cent) and the State Bank of India (2.12 per cent). “We expect this positivity to continue into next week, supported by several companies announcing their pre-quarterly business updates,” said Siddhartha Khemka – head of research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd.

Zohran Mamdani sworn in as New York City’s mayor — with a touch of Assam silk



Right after the clock struck midnight in New York, Zohran Mamdani was sworn in as the 112th mayor of the city in an abandoned subway station near City Hall. With his hand on the Quran, held up by wife Rama Duwaji, Mamdani took oath and walked away to the groovy music of Sikh rapper Babbu Singh. Confetti shot up everywhere outside City Hall during the private swearing-in ceremony, with New Yorkers buzzing with excitement to welcome a new political era.

Decoding the outfits Like the rest of his campaign, Mamdani ensured there was a touch of India with him on stage. For the momentous occasion, he chose a black velvet suit paired with a white shirt, but it was his herringbone tie by designer Kartik Research that caught the internet’s eye. The custom accessory, embroidered in gold with four petal flowers, added a touch of understated chic elegance to the mayoral ensemble.

The label was founded by Kartik Kumra, a Delhi-based semi-finalist for the LVMH prize in 2023. “The tie is cut in an Eri silk fabric from Assam,” the designer said in the caption

of his Instagram post. mamdani swearing in New York Attorney General Letitia James administers the oath of office to mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani (Source: The New York Times via AP)

Next to Mamdani, wife Rama Duwaji and Gen Z’s favourite First Lady of New York, turned heads in a vintage Balenciaga woollen coat with an asymmetrical funnel neck, paired with wide-legged shorts from The Frankie Shop. The look was pulled together with Miista’s pointed lace-up boots. Funky sculptural earrings and gold bracelets from New York Vintage were her accessories of choice. The power couple was styled by fashion editor and stylist Gabriella Karefa-Johnson for the swearing-in and public inauguration ceremony outside City Hall. For the inauguration, while Mamdani kept it modest in a tailored black suit paired with a burgundy silk tie, Duwaji chose toasted-brown separates from Renaissance Renaissance, a label by Palestinian-Lebanese designer Cynthia Merhej. She completed her look with a woollen funnel-neck coat in coffee brown, with faux-fur embellishments at the cuffs and the hem, styled with statement boots and burnished silver hoops. Duwaji’s look drew a fair share of online criticism, especially after her Miista boots were recognised to be worth upwards of 600 dollars. Standing next to a Democratic Socialist husband whose entire campaign was hinged on providing affordable and accessible resources to the citizens of New York, she faced flak for her accessory of choice. During a recent conversation with The Cut, Duwaji had opened up about the criticism surrounding her fashion. “It’s nice to have a little bit of analysis on the clothes because, for instance, during the general-election night, it was nice to send a message about Palestinians by wearing a Palestinian designer,” she said.

From hearth to plate: The smoked meat traditions of northeast India



Thin blue smoke from a smouldering fire — kept alive for days — seeps into walls, woven bamboo mats, and the air itself. Above slow-burning hearths, strips of meat hang patiently, ageing until they grow darker and denser. Wild herbs, fresh greens, and hyper-local seasonal produce are foraged to complete the meal. Together, these rituals take on a deeper meaning during winter in northeast India, where smoked meat is the undisputed king.

A practice passed down through generations, smoked meat occupies a special place in homes across the region. A simple meal of dal (lentils), chawal (rice), and sabzi (vegetables) is transformed into something extraordinary. Here, smoking meat is not just a culinary technique — it is a way of life. “Smoking is not just a technique; it is a strong connection to the roots,” says Atul Lahkar, Chef Ambassador for Assam for India Food Tourism Organisation, and Vice President of the North East India Chef Association.

“Through smoking, we carry the wisdom of generations and hundreds of community recipes. Many of our social customs, rituals, and festive traditions revolve around smoked and fermented food. I have countless memories, from tasting freshly smoked pork in remote villages to learning the subtle differences in wood, fire, and time. Every smoked dish reminds me of where we come from.” Smoked pork Wood selection and time play a major role in how the flavour develops. One region, many techniques With more than 200 ethnic groups, northeast India is among the most culturally diverse regions in the country. Smoked meat is the common culinary thread that binds these cuisines together. Yet each community has its own way of preparing it, shaped by climate, landscape, local ingredients, and cultural practices. Wood selection and time play a major role in how the flavour develops. Diganta Saikia, who co-founded Manxho — a brand known for smoked meat and heritage food products — with Vardhan Saikia and Jitu Bora in 2017, says they use four types of wood to get the colour, texture, quality, and flavour right. “Meat can be smoked in various ways, and each method brings its own unique flavours. But broadly, there are two main techniques in northeast India. Either fresh meat is salted, cured, and smoked, or it is boiled first and then smoked, which gives it a different colour and texture,” says Saikia.

The best results, he adds, come from curing the meat and then smoking it slowly over a steady fire using the right wood and heat. Smoked pork While much of India relied on sun-drying, pickling, salting, or heavy spicing, the northeast leaned towards smoking and fermentation. (Credit: Chef Atul Lahkar) Much of northeast India receives heavy rainfall, and humidity lingers even in the plains. Before refrigeration, preserving food in such conditions posed a challenge. Smoking emerged as the most reliable solution — practical, sustainable, and well-suited to the region’s forested landscape.

While much of India relied on sun-drying, pickling, salting, or heavy spicing, the northeast leaned towards smoking and fermentation. “Humidity and forest ecology naturally pushed us toward smoking,” Lahkar explains. “Pickling and smoking are both preservation arts, but smoking became our ancestral technique because it suited our homes and our rhythm of life.” Traditional stilt houses, with hearths burning through the day, doubled as natural smoke chambers. Communities depended on seasonal abundance and shared cooking spaces.

“Every village I travelled to in the hills has its own method, but the philosophy is the same: smoke gives life to the ingredient long after the season ends,” says Lahkar. What began as an environmental adaptation gradually turned into a food and cultural identity. The idea was never to create a culinary impact; it was food security.

The smoking traditions of northeast India share deep similarities with Southeast Asian cuisines rather than with mainland India. Many communities in the northeast trace their ancestry to Tibeto-Burman and Austroasiatic groups who migrated from southern China, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Malaysia thousands of years ago. They carried with them preservation techniques such as smoking meat over hearths, fermenting bamboo shoots, pickling with salt or ash, and making dried meat stocks — techniques still common across China’s Yunnan, Myanmar’s Chin and Kachin regions, northern Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam.

For example, in China’s Yunnan province and Myanmar’s Chin Hills, pork is smoked above hearths and later cooked in simple broths and stir-fries. In Laos and northern Thailand, dried or lightly smoked meats and fermented bamboo shoots are a part of everyday cooking. These techniques closely mirror those found in Naga, Mizo, Khasi, and Assamese kitchens. Smoked pork The reliance on local ingredients, often difficult to find elsewhere, made wider recognition difficult.

Despite its depth, the northeastern cuisine has remained largely absent from mainstream conversations. The northeastern states — Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Manipur, and Sikkim — rarely feature in popular menus. Geography played a major role. Long before modern connectivity, the region remained on the margins of cultural exchange. Political isolation further reinforced this distance, limiting culinary and commercial interaction with the rest of the country. “While dishes like biryani, dosa, butter chicken, among others, gained popularity, northeastern cuisine remained rooted in local culture, with a huge lineage of indigenous food practices,” says Saikia.

The reliance on local ingredients, often difficult to find elsewhere, made wider recognition difficult. Social factors also shaped perceptions. Much of India’s food history is intertwined with religion and caste, where ideas of purity shaped diets. Food choices in the northeast, however, were guided more by ecology than theology. Over time, this created a quiet culinary divide. While much of India experimented with spices, the northeast refined the art of preservation.

Media representation compounded the gap. Indian food narratives in films, television, and popular writing have long prioritised Mughlai, Punjabi, and South Indian cuisines, leaving northeastern traditions largely invisible. The issue was never taste; it was visibility and access. That invisibility is now beginning to shift. Northeastern cuisine is finding a niche in Indian metros, with chefs, home cooks, and pop-up kitchens introducing diners to dishes like smoked pork with bamboo shoots. These flavours challenge the idea that Indian food must be spice-heavy.

In New Delhi, Hornbill has been a pioneer. Founded in 2015 by Khevit Elvis Lee, the restaurant opened at a time when food from the northeast was barely part of the city’s culinary conversation. A few Naga restaurants existed, but they were not budget-friendly, says Lee, who previously worked with Taj, Marriott, and Holiday Inn. His aim was simple: to make good Naga food accessible to students and professionals working in BPOs. Today, Hornbill has evolved into a family dining space, while continuing its tradition of a 10 per cent discount for students. “Northeastern food has become quite popular over the last few years. Thanks to major festivals back home, people from many states get to experience the tradition and cuisine,” says Lee, adding that many customers started visiting them after attending the Hornbill festival in Nagaland. “They wanted the same flavours they had enjoyed there.”

Smoked pork with Axone (fermented soybean), smoked pork with Anishi (dried yam leaves), and pork ribs are among the most popular dishes. Migration has also shaped this exchange. Students and professionals moving to mainland cities have introduced friends and colleagues to these flavours, spreading the cuisine among different groups — one circle at a time. A broader shift in the Indian palate has also helped. BBQ and grilled dishes are now mainstream, and these flavours naturally blend with smoked cuisine. “Earlier, the biggest barriers were awareness, communication, and availability of ingredients,” says Lahkar. “But today, more restaurants explore northeast flavours, and supply chains are improving. With the right storytelling, we can showcase smoked dishes across India without hesitation.” In Mumbai, northeast food curator Gitika Saikia launched Gitika’s PakGhor in 2014, seeing the absence of the cuisine as an “opportunity to create an identity” for it.

Bangladesh appeal cannot be heard by ICC’s DRC, Scotland likely replacement



GNS News Agency, Oct 15

New Delhi: A desperate Bangladesh Cricket Board has written to the Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) of ICC requesting it to overturn the governing body’s decision to hold the national men’s team’s T20 World Cup games in India. However, the appeal will not be heard as it is outside the remit of the sub-committee.Even as the ICC has kept Scotland on stand-by, the BCB under Aminul Islam Bulbul, after being cornered, decided to use its last resort — approaching the DRC headed by Englishman Michael Beloff (Kings Counsel).

“Yes, BCB has approached the DRC of ICC as it wants to exhaust all its options. If DRC rules against BCB, then the only body that can be approached is Court of Arbitration of Sports (CAS) in Switzerland,” a BCB source told PTI on condition of anonymity.Bangladesh’s interim government and its sports ministry advisor Asif Nazrul had announced that the team would not travel to India due to “security reasons” after senior pacer Mustafizur Rahaman was removed from the Kolkata Knight Riders squad on BCCI’s diktat.

Tata Steel Masters: Gukesh to face Abdusattorov in round six



GNS News Agency, Oct 15

Wijk Aan Zee (The Netherlands): Boosted by his win in the previous match, India’s world champion D Gukesh will meet joint leader Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan in the sixth round of the Tata Steel Masters chess tournament here.Gukesh, who defeated Thai Dai Van Nguyen of Czech Republic with black pieces in the fifth round, will again play with black. But if the form of the youngest ever world champion is any indication, the colour of the pieces should not matter.

Missing out on a superior position in the opening round against Javokhir Sindarov of Uzbekistan and then

According to the ICC’s Constitution and Terms of Reference for the DRC, the committee does not have the right to hear an appeal against a decision passed by the Board of Directors of the global body.The ICC Board of Directors voted 14-2 in favour of keeping Bangladesh’s matches in India after an independent security assessment cited the threat as “low to moderate.” Nazrul maintained that it was the government, not the BCB, mandated to take the decision.

As per clause 1.3 of the Terms of Reference of DRC: “The Committee shall not operate as an appeal body against decisions of the ICC or any decision-making body established under the ICC’s Memorandum and Articles of Association or under any rules or regulations of the ICC...”An ICC board source said: “Bangladesh can approach the DRC but if one looks at the rules, the case cannot even be heard as the committee does not have the remit to hear an appeal against the decision made by the Board of Directors.”It is understood that ICC chairman Jay Shah, who was in Namibia for the U19 World Cup, is now in Dubai and a formal decision on Bangladesh’s replacement will be announced by Saturday.The ICC’s DRC acts according to British law. One of its most recent verdicts under Beloff came in 2018 when it rejected Pakistan Cricket Board’s USD 70 million compensation claim against the BCCI for allegedly not honouring an agreement to play bilateral series in Pakistan.The DRC termed the so-called “Memorandum of Understanding” between the two boards as merely a “letter of intent” which was not binding on the BCCI.The DRC normally checks if the ICC Board has followed all rules as per its law and accordingly gives its verdict. It is not an appeals body.Apart from Beloff, members include Mike Heron (Kings Counsel), Justice Winston Anderson, Deon van Zyl (South Africa), Gary Roberts (Americas), Guo Cai (Asia), EAP Anabelle Bennett, Jean Paulsson (Europe), Peter Nicholson (Ethics Officer), Vijay Malhotra (Chair of Audit Committee) and Sally Clark (Management Support).

being slightly shaky against Dutch Grandmaster Jorden van Foreest, Gukesh conceded that the start might have been indifferent but said everything was fine now.With four draws and one victory, the Indian is sharing fourth spot with three points, half a point behind Abdusattorov, Sindarov and Hans Niemann of United States.Arjun Erigaisi started off with a win against R Praggnanandhaa and then had three draws. He lost to Vladimir Fedoseev, the Russian who is representing Slovenia.Erigaisi’s loss was disappointing as he went down amidst wild complexities, which is considered to be his forte. With 2.5 points, Arjun slipped to joint seventh spot from being a co-leader and will hope to make a strong comeback against Matthias Bluebaum of Germany in the sixth round.

Defending champion Praggnanandhaa has not performed up to expectations of his huge fanbase. With just 1.5 points, it is important for the lone Indian in the Candidates tournament to find his rhythm soon. Otherwise, it could be too late for a recovery. Praggnanandhaa meets Fedoseev in the next game.The other Indian in the fray, Aravindh Chithambaram, has matched Praggnanandhaa on points and will look forward to an improved performance as the tournament progresses.Now in its 88th edition, the Tata Steel Masters is being played on a round-robin basis with 13 rounds among 14 players. The prestigious tournament has been won by Viswanathan Anand five times in the past.

At four, I watched Kosteniuk become World champion; I felt I needed that crown: Assaubayeva

GNS News Agency, Oct 15

As a little girl learning chess from her grandfather, Bibisara Assaubayeva would always cry whenever her opponent captured her queen on the board. It is not easy to take her queen easily these days. And she is now the queen of the fastest format in chess. In Doha last month, she won her third World Blitz Championship in five years. In 2021, when she won her first World blitz title, she was also the runner-up in the World Rapid Championship. She was just 17 then. Last year, Assaubayeva became a Grandmaster, only the 43rd woman in history to earn the most coveted title in chess. Excerpts from an interview she gave The Hindu in Mumbai, where she played for American Gambits in the Global Chess League:This was your second GCL.

I like this tournament. It is a league you can enjoy playing. And it is really nice to play before so many chess fans. I like this format. It is very interesting. Every opponent is very strong and the team is mixed; apart from the world’s top male players, we have strong female and junior players. Last year’s league was in London. It is great that this edition came to India. I like to play in India. Here a lot of people like chess, and it is amazing. I think across the world, chess is most popular in India. You see a lot of children playing chess here. And you can feel the excitement.

When did you first play in India?

My first tournament in India was the World Junior Championship in New Delhi. It was in 2019, I was 15 then. Then I played the Chess Olympiad in Chennai, in 2022. My last tournament in India was the FIDE Women’s Grand Prix in 2023.How do you look back at finishing second in the women’s event in the last Olympiad at Budapest? Not many expected to see Kazakhstan in the runner-up position.We actually had a chance to be the champion. In the final round, I won on the first board in our match against the United States. And if we had some draws, we could have finished first. Unfortunately, at some important moments, one of the girls lost a game, but we also had a good match against India. But, okay, India [which went on to win the gold] is a strong team and I am happy that finally we took some medals from the Olympiad.Rare talent: Bibisara Assaubayeva was only the 43rd woman in history to earn the coveted Grandmaster title. ‘The GM title means a lot to me, I was getting a bit tired being just an IM,’ she says.Rare talent: Bibisara Assaubayeva was only the 43rd woman in history to earn the coveted Grandmaster title. ‘The GM title means a lot to me, I was getting a bit tired being just an IM,’ she says. | Photo Credit: Getty ImagesKazakhstan had started as the 10th seed.Our team is still young and very strong. And we have a good future. In our team, I am now the oldest one, but I am only 21. We will try to win the gold at the next Olympiad. But it could be tough, though we don’t know for sure if Russia will play in it. And we don’t know if China will be fielding their best team. If China comes with their strongest players, it will be impossible to take the gold. But



somehow China doesn’t send their best teams for the Olympiad, maybe because they have won so many medals from the previous events.

How much did completing the Grandmaster title mean to you?

I completed my GM title at the Sharjah Masters in May. I felt really good because now there was no pressure of having to score that final norm. I got my first norm when I was 17 and the second when I was 19. I was missing the final norm, getting close to it on several occasions. Finally I got my norm and also crossed the other requirement of crossing the 2500 Elo rating during the Sharjah Masters. The GM title means a lot to me, I was getting a bit tired being just an IM [International Master]. Even now, we have only two women in Kazakhstan with GM titles.You still hold the record of being the youngest women’s World blitz champion. That year, 2021, you were runner-up to Alexandra Kosteniuk, who won the World rapid title. You have spoken of how watching Kosteniuk becoming World champion in 2008, when you were little, inspired you.I had watched on television Kosteniuk being crowned the World champion by the then FIDE president [Kirsan Ilyumzhinov]. I felt I also needed that crown. I was four years old then. And that was how I became a chess player. I have played with Kosteniuk several times. I haven’t told her directly how her winning the World Championship inspired me, but I think she maybe knows it. Winning my first World Blitz Championship was really special. I had won age-group events before, but it felt really, really good, because it was my first big achievement at the senior level. Then I met our President for the first time, so it was amazing. And I felt happy when I defended my title in my home country.Now the classical World Championship must be a goal?Yes, and I also want to increase my rating.Speed queen: In Doha last month, Assaubayeva won her third World Blitz Championship in five years.

From Podcast co-hosts to face-off: How defending champion Madison Keys and Jessica Pegula are raring for another show-off



GNS News Agency, Oct 15

When defending champion Madison Keys and 2024 US Open runner-up and world number six Jessica Pegula face each other in the women’s singles fourth round of the Australian Open on Sunday, the duo will not only compete on court but will also be remembering the times they spent together hosting a tennis podcast. The duo currently act as co-hosts of The Player’s Box podcast along with fellow American players Jennifer Brady and Desirae Krawczyk, and world number six Pegula shared how there could be a trash-talk segment in the podcast before the two face each other to seal a quarter-final berth at the Australian Open.“We’ll see what kind of segments we can come up with—it could be a trash-talk segment before we play. It’s funny, but we’re so used to playing and being around each other, it’s not that big of a deal,” Pegula said after her 6-3, 6-2 win over Russian Oksana Selekhmeteva in the third round on Saturday.

World number ten Keys scored a 6-3, 6-3 win over former World No. 1 Karolina Pliskova to set up the fourth-round clash against Pegula. The duo have faced each other thrice till now, with Sunday’s clash being the fourth such meeting between the two. Keys leads the record 2-1, with her 6-3, 4-6, 6-1 win over Pegula in the Adelaide International in January 2025 being her latest win over Pegula. The duo faced each other for the second time in the US Open

Heat scale touching five, cramps and some extra coffee: How Australian Open stars are coping amid sweltering heat



GNS News Agency, Oct 15

On a day when Novak Djokovic faced Botić van de Zandschulp in the men’s third-round match, the Australian Open saw several matches postponed as the heat scale reached five during the contest between world number one Jannik Sinner and world number 85 Eliot Spizzirri.With over 100,000 fans expected to attend, Saturday saw matches suspended temporarily on outside courts, and organisers issued warnings for players and spectators to take care in the sweltering heat. Sinner battled back to secure a 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 win over Spizzirri, despite trailing 1-3 in the third set. The match began with a heat scale of 3.4, but Sinner benefited from a heat break when the scale reached five while he was still trailing in the third set. He returned to the court and advanced to the fourth round.

“It was hot today. I started to cramp a little in the third set, which gradually went away. I know my body better now with a bit of experience and try to handle situations better. I got lucky today with the heat rule. When they close the roof, it takes a little time, so I tried to loosen up. I also adjusted how I played certain points, which helped,” Sinner said after the match.The seventh day of the championship saw matches postponed as temperatures were expected to exceed 36°C in the afternoon. With the heat rules in place, players like sixth seed Jessica Pegula started her match

round of 16, where Keys scored a 6-1, 6-3 win. Keys spoke about the bond shared between the two and how they are back to being friends once the match is over. “We could literally be friends and laughing ‘til the moment we walk on the court. Then in that moment, we both want to win and we both are competitors. We’re going to do whatever we can to get the win. The moment it’s over, you’re back to being friends. I think those are one of those things that I actually really love about tennis, because it’s taught a lot of us how to just kind of manage our friendships and relationships and be able to genuinely love each other and be close and all of that, but also still be really competitive,” Keys said post her match.Keys’ win at the Rod Laver Arena on Saturday meant that the 30-year-old extended her unbeaten Australian Open record to ten wins. The American now has 125 wins at Grand Slam events, and her record is only second to Venus Williams’s record of 127 wins among active players. Pegula, who reached the 2024 US Open final before losing to Aryna Sabalenka, shared how she is looking forward to the match against Keys and how she is excited for the challenge. “She plays very well down here. Obviously we know that. She’s the defending champion. I think she’s kind of embracing that and has been playing some pretty good matches as well. Pretty straightforward. It will be interesting. I think I need to kind of go back to the drawing board and look at some things I need to change.

The last few times I’ve played her, I feel like I just—she played well, I think, in Adelaide last year. I do feel like I’m doing some things better this year, you know, in the last six months, where hopefully I can use those tools, and it will help me when I play her in a couple days. I kind of need to figure out some things that I need to do differently against her, because I’ve lost the last couple times. She’s the type of player, when she’s on, she can beat anybody. We know that. I’m just going to have to use some of the tools I think that I’ve gotten better at, and hopefully they work. We’ll see. But I’m excited for the challenge to kind of hopefully turn that around a little bit,” shared Pegula.

half an hour earlier than scheduled. The world number six faced Russian Oksana Selekhmeteva at Margaret Court Arena and won 6-3, 6-2 in 66 minutes.

Pegula commented on the challenging conditions: “Nice to be first on court and not have a super long match. The heat could zap you pretty quickly.” On the earlier start, she added, “It sounds funny, but 30 minutes feels so much earlier. Everyone panics a little thinking, ‘Oh my god, we have to be there early.’ But it was nice to be first and not have to push myself too hard in the heat.In another match, world number four Amanda Anisimova defeated compatriot Peyton Stearns 6-1, 6-4 in the third round. Wrapped in an ice towel post-match, she said, “Super-hot today. The conditions were really tough, so I’m just happy to get through. It’s important to keep fueling and stay calm, not wasting energy on emotions.”Women’s world number one Aryna Sabalenka also spoke about the heat and necessary adjustments: “The weather being crazy means a lot of adjustment on the strings and in your approach. It’s like a rollercoaster. We’ll see who adjusts better in the coming days.”With the Australian weather department predicting temperatures exceeding 40°C next week, Australian Open authorities have implemented strict heat rules. Matches start 30 minutes earlier than scheduled when the heat scale—ranging from 1 to 5—indicates extreme conditions. The scale considers air temperature, radiant heat, wind speed, and humidity, and officials can delay or suspend matches if thresholds are exceeded. The organisers also revised rules for ball boys and girls, reducing rotations to 45 minutes with 90-minute breaks between shifts. Additionally, 46 water refill stations, 56 misting fans, two high-powered typhoon misters, and hydration stations at every entrance were provided, along with 9,000 square meters of additional shade. “Temperatures are expected to climb into the low 30s°C by midday and peak in the late afternoon. Everyone at the AO should prepare for the heat and take advantage of the increased shade and cooling areas across the site,” the Australian Open stated.

When Novak Djokovic made 100 unforced errors in a match — and still won — at the Australian Open

GNS News Agency, Oct 15

Novak Djokovic has looked spectacularly flawless so far at Melbourne Park this week as he bids for a 25th Grand Slam on his most successful surface — his beloved “Happy Slam,” the Australian Open.The 24-time major champion, who earlier this week became the first man to reach 100 Australian Open wins, is pitted against Botić van de Zandschulp in the third round at Rod Laver Arena on Saturday. Things were far from smooth sailing at the same venue, exactly 10 years ago, on January 24, 2016. He would falter and flounder with an unusual century against his name and yet not surrender!

Djokovic dug a grave for himself that afternoon. Entering the 2016 Australian Open as the reigning champion and world No. 1, he had cruised through the first three rounds without dropping a set. Then came Frenchman Gilles Simon. What followed was a four-hour-and-32-minute war that pushed Djokovic to the brink. Simon’s relentless defence and Djokovic’s increasingly faulty batch of drop shots dragged the contest into a fifth set — and into the history books for all the wrong reasons.By the end of a gruelling marathon, Djokovic had committed a scarcely believable 100 unforced errors. Simon had extracted every ounce from the defending champion, who was chasing a record-equalling sixth Australian Open title.Watching from the sidelines was Djokovic’s great rival of the era, Roger Federer, who later summed up Simon’s suffocating effect.“He makes you miss. He makes you go for the lines and he runs down a lot of balls. A lot of points end in errors,” Federer said of Simon. “This was five sets. So, of course, there’s going to be a lot of unforced errors piling up. The question is if you have 50, 100, at the end of the day it doesn’t matter as long as you win.”Djokovic would squeeze through by doing exactly that, earning an eventual 6-3, 6-7 (1), 6-4, 4-6, 6-3 win after one of the more



grinding days in his career. A startling 100 unforced errors would stare back at him from the scoresheet. Djokovic had to bear one look and forget them all. Sorry, everybody is laughing. I just want to hear, what did you say?” Djokovic said, looking into the stands. “No more drop shots,” pat came the response.“OK, thanks buddy. I hate to say, but you are absolutely right.” Djokovic said acknowledging the spectator.“Brain Freeze”“I don’t think I’ve had any number close to 100. In terms of the level that I’ve played, it’s the match to forget for me.”Sometimes you have a brain freeze, if I can call it that,” Djokovic said as he explained his peculiar lack of rhythm.Again, I won it, so it’s pretty good. When you’re playing that bad and still manage to win — hopefully it’s going to get better next one.”The Serb would also appreciate his opponent’s tenacity.“Playing against a player like Gilles you can expect a lot of rallies, he’s always making you play an extra shot. He’s a counter-puncher, probably one of the best if not the best on tour ... credit and congratulations to him for a great fight and I wish him all the best.”Getting that sticky game out of his system held Djokovic solid for the second week of his title defence.

Mouni Roy alleges harassment at Haryana wedding, says elderly men put hands on her waist, made lewd gestures: ‘Made videos from low angle’



Mouni Roy recently took to Instagram to talk about an incident where she was harassed by elderly family men at a recent event in Karnal, Haryana, where she had gone to perform. Mouni alleged that elderly men touched her inappropriately under the pretext of taking photos and made lewd remarks and lewd hand gestures towards her. She wrote, “Had an event in Karnal last and I’m disgusted with the behaviour of the guests specially two uncles who are well aged to be grandparents. As the event

started and walked towards the stage uncles and family members (all men) put their hands on my waist to click pictures. Didn’t like it when I said ‘sir pl remove your hand’. On stage is even a better story. Two uncles stood right front making lewd remarks showing me lewd hand gestures, name calling I realised that and first politely gestured to them don’t do it to which they started throwing roses at me. Is when mid performance i walked towards the stage exit but immediately came back to finish my performance.”

Traumatised by the incident, Mouni further wrote, “They didn’t stop even after that and no family or organisers moved them from up front. If someone like me has to go through this I can only imagine what new girls starting to work and do shows must be. I’m humiliated traumatised and want the authorities to take action for these intolerable behaviour. We are artists trying to earn an honest living through our craft. Wonder what these men would do if their friends behaved the same with their daughters sisters or any family members shame on you!” Mouni also alleged that the elderly men made videos from a low angle while she was performing on stage. “Have to also mention that the stage was on a height and these uncles were making videos low angle. When someone asked them to stop they abused them. I love my country our people our traditions but this? The guts. The entitlement of being men.” She concluded her post by writing, “I never put up anything negative I go through. But this. Have no words. Have no expression or abuse that would make any sense for this behaviour. We as actors go to these events to wish the bride and the groom to add to their celebration. We are their guests and they Harrass us like this. Yuk.”

Border 2 movie review: Sunny Deol-Varun Dhawan-Diljit Dosanjh film keeps the flag flying high

Border 2 Movie Review & Rating: J P Dutta’s 1997 *Border* was equal parts a war film and a Bollywood film, with strong doses of action and emotion. Its strength came from Dutta’s penchant for patriotic cinema, and of course the elusive thing that no filmmaker knows beforehand — the fulsome embrace of the audience. Despite its occasional spurt of anti-Pakistan rhetoric, and the constant conflation of Ma and Dharti Ma, the original *Border* remains one of the most complete war films that Hindi cinema has made, and its musical sandese still echo in our movie memories.

My worry with this sequel was that it would be forced to drown the seriousness of the 1971 war and the valour of the armed forces with outsize jingoism, the flavour of the past decade. When it was made it ‘97, it was just another of Dutta’s films till it became his biggest blockbuster, a factor of time and place; this sequel comes in an atmosphere of heightened hostility amongst the two nations, when films are being greenlit and pushed into theatres to keep us in a constant state of unsettlement. And I’m relieved to report that *Border 2* holds on to the soul and spirit of the original, while giving us a much bigger canvas, showing conflict not just on land and air, but also water. It also brings back the biggest star of the original in Sunny Deol, introduced here as the ‘son of Dharmendra’ in the credits: he is far and away the biggest star of this one, towering over the rest of the ensemble, which includes Varun Dhawan, Diljit Dosanjh, Ahan Shetty (whose father Suniel had a major role in the original), and others. In the recreation of their domestic spheres, I’d say this one goes one better in giving us details of their home lives — the villages where the jawaans leave their families, waiting in dread and fear, holding on to hope that their men will return. One of the best parts of the film is a flashback spent not on the front but during their cadet-apprenticeship where the steel-like ties of friendship are forged amongst Major Hoshiyar Singh Dahiya (Varun Dhawan), Flg Officer Nirmal Jit Sekhon (Diljit Dosanjh), and Lt Cdr M S Rawat (Ahan Shetty), who then disperse to fight for their nation, protecting their borders on land, air and ocean. In a film which has men rattles their sabres, women don’t have much to do, but Mona Singh, as the wife of Sunny Deol’s Lt Col Fateh Singh Kaler, holds her own, as do the others — Sonam Bajwa as Manjit, Nirmal’s wife, Medha Rana as the unlettered Dhanvanti as Hoshiyar’s wife, Anya Singh as Rawat’s wife, leaving an impact in their brief roles. Of course Pakistan is still Enemy Number One, what else, and of course the jingoism is clear and present — no war film can be made without the ‘dushman’ being downsized and shown to be mean and small — but it is never allowed to overtake the film. And for that we have to now be grateful. Of course, that 30-year-old ‘Border’ could have an Indian soldier diving into a burning hut to save a Koran, with a man saying in wonderment, ‘par aap toh Hindu ho’, or a dialogue from a troubled newbie, played by a startlingly youthful Akshaye Khanna (revelling thirty years on in ‘Dhurandhar’), ‘woh bhi kisi maa ka



bachcha hai’ for his counterpart across the border. Of course, now those inclusions would be a stretch. But even so, *Border 2* makes sure that our intrepid soldiers let the enemy jawans off when the latter remind them of their humanity even if that humanity is reserved only for ‘our’ men, theirs are full of bombast and pettiness, and only capable of using words like ‘halaal’, and calling Indians ‘buzdil’. In a few places, you feel the length of the film, wishing it would have been crisper. But in most parts, the film keeps you with it, even with Varun Dhawan making his Haryanvi accent feeling like work, and Ahan Shetty showing his rawness. But the others, which include strong turns from Anurag Arora and Paramveer Cheema, keep the flag flying, with a special mention for the daredevil pilot Diljit Dosanjh, who works so well with director Anurag Singh. The futility and devastation of war is part of the script too, with the lives lost and the grieving all round: I was moved to tears in many places. Finally, who else do you want when Sunny Paji is around, even though he gets to give his vocals a bit of a rest as compared to the earlier film. One of the climactic iconic scenes from the original — him staring at a tank turret — is recreated in this one (as are remixed versions of the still-popular songs) and it is as much of a win: though he is shown a trifle weatherbeaten, the years have been kind to him, and the dhai kilo ka haath is up and running, single-handedly enough to keep the enemy at bay, and our borders safe and sound. Sandese ab bhi aate rahenge. *Border 2* movie cast: Sunny Deol, Varun Dhawan, Diljit Dosanjh, Ahan Shetty, Mona Singh, Sonam Bajwa. *Border 2* movie director: Anurag Singh. *Border 2* movie rating: 3 stars

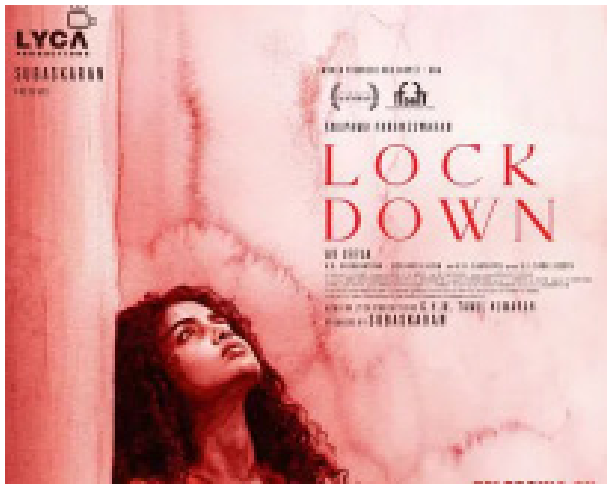
Sunny Deol’s ‘Border 2’ earns Rs 32.10 crore



Aman was quick to compliment the idea behind the company and their store in New Delhi. Anupam Mittal jumped into the conversation and asked about the company’s origins. Arjun replied, “I worked at JP Morgan in Australia, and I had worked on two different startups of my own.

Mumbai: Sunny Deol’s “Border 2” opened to a thunderous start at the domestic box office, collecting Rs 32.10 crore net on its first day, the makers said on Saturday.

Anupama Parameswaran-starrer ‘Lockdown’ to hit screens



It may be recalled that the film’s release had been postponed at least twice before. The release of the film, which was originally scheduled to happen on December 5 last year, was postponed the first time due to incessant rains that continued to lash Chennai and other parts of Tamil Nadu as a result of the deep depression caused by the remnants of cyclone Ditwah,

Chennai: The makers of director A R Jeeva’s gripping drama, ‘Lockdown’, featuring actress Anupama Parameswaran in the lead, announced on Friday that their film would now release on January 30 this year. Taking to its X timeline, Lyca Productions, the firm producing the picture, wrote, “Every pause had a purpose. #Lockdown in cinemas Jan 30. #LockdownInCinemasJan30.”

It may be recalled that the film’s release had been postponed at least twice before. The release of the film, which was originally scheduled to happen on December 5 last year, was postponed the first time due to incessant rains that continued to lash Chennai and other parts of Tamil Nadu as a result of the deep depression caused by the remnants of cyclone Ditwah, which wreaked havoc in neighbouring Sri Lanka. Lyca Productions, while announcing its decision to postpone the release of the film then, had said, “With the ongoing rains, the release of #Lockdown has been postponed. Your safety comes first. We’ll meet you in theatres

Kamaal R Khan arrested for firing at residential building in Mumbai, case registered under Arms Act

Kamaal R Khan (KRK), widely recognised for his outspoken criticism of Bollywood films and personalities on social media, has been arrested in connection with a firing incident in Mumbai’s western suburbs, as per PTI. The actor was arrested on Saturday after investigators linked him to a shooting at a residential complex in Andheri’s Oshiwara area. He was brought to the Oshiwara police station late Friday night for questioning, during which he allegedly admitted to discharging two rounds from his licensed firearm. Police officials stated that a case has been registered against Khan under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the Arms Act.

The incident reportedly occurred on January 18 at Nalanda Society in Oshiwara, where two bullets were fired. During the investigation, authorities recovered two bullets from within the society premises, one from the second floor and another from the fourth floor. Police said that one of the affected flats is owned by a writer-director, while the other belongs to a model. Initial investigation failed to yield results, as CCTV footage from the area did not provide any clear leads. However, a subsequent forensic examination suggested that the bullets may have originated from KRK’s bungalow located nearby. Official added that the motive behind the firing remains under investigation.

This is not the first time KRK has been entangled in legal controversies. In August 2022, he was arrested at Mumbai International Airport over allegedly derogatory social media posts and was subsequently remanded to judi-



cial custody. He was also arrested in connection with a molestation case registered in 2021, in which he was later granted bail. KRK first rose to prominence following his appearance on Bigg Boss Season 3 in 2009 and his film *Deshdrohi*. He later made a cameo appearance in Mohit Suri’s *Ek Villain* in 2014. In recent years, he has primarily been known as a self-proclaimed film critic, where his personal remarks about industry figures have frequently drawn both public backlash and legal scrutiny.

Aman Gupta snaps at Kunal Bahl on Shark Tank India, says ‘don’t make decisions on my behalf’: ‘I’m fine alone’



The new season of *Shark Tank India* is underway and in the latest episode, the show saw the Indian footwear brand Gully Labs, who were looking for their fourth round of investment. The brand already has a strong foothold on social media and is looking to expand their business. The ‘sharks’ fought extra hard while trying to secure a place in the company’s future. Founders Arjun Singh and Animesh Mishra started the pitch with a couple of dance numbers, where traditional dance forms were performed by dancers wearing the Gully Labs shoes. The

sharks were impressed by this display and were all very appreciative of the designs that were being showcased. Aman Gupta and Kunal Bahl slowly revealed that they know the founders from before, as the two had pitched this brand to them during the initial stages of the company. Exclusive | Shark Tank India pitcher sold wife’s jewellery, took loan for kids’ brand; Aman Gupta told him to shut it down, he says he won’t Aman was quick to compliment the idea behind the company and their store in New Delhi. Anupam Mittal jumped into the conversation and asked about the company’s origins. Arjun replied, “I worked at JP Morgan in Australia, and I had worked on two different startups of my own. I came back to India in 2022, and I realised that India has a lot of stories and design languages to create very elevated and aspirational brands. We didn’t start with a business pitch; all of this purely came from a feeling.” Animesh added that they started the brand with just an Instagram page and two craftsmen and have now grown that number to 100 craftsmen. Kunal also pointed out that the idea Arjun and Animesh had pitched to him during the initial stages had been executed very well. After discussing the numbers, the sharks focused on the demand that the founders had made, Rs 1 crore for 0.5%, valuing the business at Rs 200 crore. At first most of the sharks remained at Rs 1 crore for 1%, but Kunal suggested that the founders could benefit if all the sharks pooled together. Before he could even complete his proposal, Aman intervened and said, “No no, wait a second. Please don’t make take decisions on my behalf. Mai nahi aa raha aap logon ke saath. Mai individual theek hoon (I am not coming with you guys. I am fine alone.)” After a lot of back and forth, Aman offered the founders Rs 1 crore for 0.57% equity, changing the valuation to Rs 175 crore. Aman celebrated while wearing the shoes given by the founders, as the rest of the sharks congratulated them for closing a deal.