

INDIAN CHRONICLE

3 December, 2024 | Tuesday | Volume No:12 | Issue No:251

Pages: 8+8

www.indianchronicle.com

Published from : Ranga Reddy (Telangana State)

₹ 3

Photographer killed on the spot as van mows down bike in Asifabad

Kumram Bheem Asifabad: A 32-year-old photographer, Beemanadham Jeevan, was killed when a van mowed down the motorcycle which he was riding near the TGSRTC bus stand in Kagaznagar town on Monday.

Kagaznagar Sub-Inspector Deekonda Ramesh said Jeevan from Old Colony in the town, received serious head injuries and suffered profuse bleeding when he fell off the bike after van hit the two-wheeler. Death was instant for him. Some onlookers informed local police about the accident. Police rushed to the spot and shifted the body to a government hospital in Sirpur (T) mandal centre for post-mortem.

Telangana HC asks police to preserve bodies of Maoists killed in encounter

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

Hyderabad: The Telangana High Court on Monday directed police to preserve the bodies of seven Maoists killed in an alleged exchange of fire with police in Mulugu district on Sunday. The police were also directed to allow the family members and relatives of the Maoists to see the bodies. The court issued the orders on a petition by a civil liberties group, which alleged that the Maoists were killed in a fake encounter, and adjourned further hearing on the petition to Tuesday. The petitioner alleged that Maoists were captured by police after their food was mixed with sedatives. He claimed that they were tortured and killed in cold blood. The counsel for the petitioner told the court that the bodies of the slain Maoists bore grievous injuries. The court was also told that police shifted the bodies for postmortem without allowing the family members to see them. The government, however, informed the court that forensic experts from the Kakatiya Medical College conducted a postmortem on the bodies and it was video recorded. The court was told that the police had to shift the bodies immediately for postmortem examination due to a threat. Seven Maoists, including a state committee member of the outlawed CPI-Maoist, were killed during an encounter by the anti-Maoist force Greyhounds in Chalpaka forests in Eturanagaram mandal of Mulugu district early Sunday. The Greyhounds force engaged with the group during combing operations. The slain extremists include Bhadrhu alias Kursam Mangu, 35, commander of the Yellandu-Narsampet area committee and a member of the CPI-Maoist's Telangana State Committee. The other six Maoists were identified as Egolapu Mallaiah, 43, Mussaki Deval, 22, Mussaki Jamuna, 23, Jai



Singh, 25, Kishore, 22, and Kamesh, 23. District Superintendent of Police Sabari said the encounter occurred in the early hours of the day when Maoists, upon spotting security forces, opened fire. In retaliation, the Greyhound forces engaged in a gun battle lasting half an hour. Upon securing the area, the forces recovered the bodies of seven Maoists. The forces recovered an AK-47, an INSAS rifle, .303 rifles, and other firearms. SP Sabari commended the efforts of the security forces and reiterated the district police's commitment to eliminating Maoist influence. Investigations are ongoing to trace further links and disrupt their activities, he said. This was the first major encounter in Mulugu district in recent years and it took place amid attempts by the banned outfit to revive its activities in the region. The district had recently seen the presence of Maoists. On November 21, the extremists hacked to death two persons on suspicion of being police informers in Mulugu district.

Centre should ensure release of Bengal fishermen jailed in B'desh: Mamata Banerjee

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Monday that the Union government should ensure the release of the state's 85 fishermen who have been detained in neighbouring Bangladesh after they crossed the international coastal borders. "Some fishermen from our state inadvertently crossed the international coastal borders and now they have been detained in Bangladesh. We have appointed advocates for them. The Union government has also been informed about the matter but nothing has happened as of yet. The Union government to look into the matter seriously," the Chief Minister said while addressing the state Assembly on the sixth day of the winter session of the House. She added that the Union government should initiate the process and ensure that these fishermen come back to their respective homes. The Chief Minister also pointed out that a fishing trawler from Bangladesh similarly crossed the international coastal borders inadvertently and entered the waters in West Bengal. "But since they had the valid documents along with them they were allowed to go back," said the Chief Minister. She also explained to the House why her government has decided to ban the export of potatoes and onions to other states. "Some people



are exporting potatoes outside the state for extra profit. But the motto of our government is to ensure that first the internal demands in West Bengal are met and then only the surplus can be exported to other states. I will not tolerate exports of onions and potatoes to other states keeping our government in the dark," she said. She added that the internal production of onions in West Bengal meets only 75 per cent of the internal requirement. "So exports of onion from that internal production to other states can never be allowed," the Chief Minister said.

Supreme Court raises eyebrows over re-induction of Senthil Balaji in TN Cabinet



GNS News Agency, Dec 2

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday raised eyebrows over the immediate induction of senior DMK leader V. Senthil Balaji in the Tamil Nadu Cabinet headed by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin after he was granted bail in connection with a money laundering case linked to an alleged cash-for-jobs scam. A bench of Justices Abhay S. Oka and A.G. Masih was hearing an application seeking recall of its decision which had enlarged Balaji on bail on the ground that he may influence the case witnesses in his capacity as a minister in the Chief Minister M.K. Stalin-led Cabinet.

"We grant bail and the next day you go and become a minister! Anybody will be bound to be under the impression that witnesses will be under pressure," the bench remarked. It asked Balaji's counsel to seek instructions on the issue of influence on witnesses in the trial of predicate offences, while clarifying that the September 26 judgment granting bail required no interference on merits. Balaji, who walked out of jail after spending over 450 days behind bars, was sworn in as minister on September 29 and assigned the portfolios of Electricity, Excise and Prohibition in the Tamil Nadu government. Serving as the Minister of Transport from 2011-2015 in the AIADMK government, he was elected as an MLA again from the Aruvarkurichi constituency in 2016.

After the split in the AIADMK, he left the party and joined the DMK on December 14, 2018 and became the DMK district secretary. He contested by-polls from Aruvarkurichi in 2019 and later in the 2021 Assembly elections and became a minister for Electricity and Excise in the Stalin-led cabinet. On June 14, 2023, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) raided Senthil Balaji's house and other places in Chennai, Karur and Coimbatore and interrogated him about a job for a cash scam while he served as the Transport Minister in the AIADMK-led government. After several hours of interrogation, Balaji was arrested and sent to judicial custody. Balaji complained of chest pain and a medical investigation found that he had three blocks in his coronary artery. Subsequently, he was subjected to an angioplasty at a private hospital. He continued in the private hospital for a few more days and was later shifted back to the Puzhal Central Prison.

Air Commodore Vikasheel Singh Saini takes over as Air Officer Commanding of Air Force Station

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

Hyderabad: Air Commodore Vikasheel Singh Saini took over as the Air Officer Commanding of Air Force Station, Hakimpet from Air Commodore Pankaj Jain on Monday, December 2, over an impressive parade to mark the handing/taking over ceremony. Air Commodore Vikasheel Singh Saini was commissioned into the fighter stream of the IAF on 20 Jun 1998.

The Air Officer is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy and a graduate of Defence Services Staff College (DSSC). Post completion of the Higher Air Command Course at College of Air Warfare (CAW) Secunderabad, the Air Officer had done a tenure as Directing Staff at this premier institution.

Former BRS MLA denied entry into residential school, taken into custody

Sangareddy: The Narayankhed police took former Narayankhed MLA and BRS leader MBhupal Reddy and other leaders into custody when they visited a BC Residential School to check the quality of the food being served to the students on Monday. The police said they could not visit the hostel without prior permission. The BRS leaders were released later. Speaking to the media, the two-time Narayankhed MLA said the BRS government under the leadership of former chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao had built several residential schools in the Narayankhed area. However, the current Congress government could not even run them properly.

Telangana Congress Govt. achieves milestones in first year under Revanth Reddy

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

In a remarkable first year of governance, the Congress-led government in Telangana, under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, has set numerous records and implemented significant initiatives that promise to reshape the state for future generations. From historic loan waivers to comprehensive welfare programs, the government has made strides in various sectors, demonstrating a commitment to both development and social justice. One of the most significant achievements is the implementation of the highest farm loan waiver in Independent India, providing relief to countless farmers across the state. Additionally, the government has announced the highest number of government job allocations in the history of free India, a move aimed at reducing unemployment and enhancing livelihoods. The administration has also prioritized agriculture by offering the highest bonus for fine rice, achieving record paddy production since 1947. In a bid to promote environmental sustainability, the government halted all lake encroachments, marking a restoration effort after over 40 years of neglect. Furthermore, the Musi river, long plagued by pollution, is now undergoing rejuvenation, prioritizing clean water access for the residents of Hyderabad.

Hyderabad has taken a pioneering step as the first city in India to undergo a complete structural overhaul to address climate crisis challenges, ensuring sustainable growth for the next 50 years. This initiative complements the establishment of India's first comprehensive industry-led skill university and South India's largest sports university. To enhance women's welfare, the government has executed several schemes resulting in savings of nearly ₹10,000 per month for women through free bus transportation, assistance in cooking gas costs, and free electricity for households consuming below 200 units. Farmers, too, have benefited from the provision of free 24x7 power supply, significantly aiding agricultural activities. As part of an ambitious move towards greener transportation, Hyderabad has begun replacing all petrol and diesel buses with over 3,000 electric buses. Furthermore, the city has commenced the construction of the world's largest Gandhi statue at Babu Ghat, along with the creation of a 200-acre Gandhian pilgrimage site. Water supply has seen a transformative uplift with drinking water now sourced from the Godavari River to meet the needs of Hyderabad's population. The govern-



ment is also in the process of finalizing future city master plans to develop modern, future-ready urban spaces, reinforcing its commitment to smart urban planning. In education, the government has increased food and well-being budgets for residential school children after a decade of neglect and is working towards creating world-class facilities for Dalit, tribal, OBC, and minority students. A caste survey has been initiated for a comprehensive review of policies and resource allocations. In a bid to restore trust and transparency, the administration has handed over the corrupt Dharani portal to the National Informatics Centre for a complete overhaul. Public access to government officials has also been restored, along with the reinstatement of media freedom and the ending of censorship. On the economic front, Telangana witnessed the highest investments in a single year across various categories, including foreign institutional investments and domestic public funding. Major infrastructure projects, such as the Regional Ring Road and Ring Rail, have been launched, with additional metro rail expansion phases underway, contributing to the region's development. Warangal, designated as the second capital, is set to receive massive development projects, while the Indiramma Illu housing initiative has sanctioned 400,000 houses in the first year alone. The state has also launched a universal healthcare scheme, Rajiv Aarogyashri, offering ₹10 lakh coverage per person. Noteworthy advancements have been made in governance transparency with over half a million public grievances received and addressed through the Praja Vani platform. Payroll consistency has also improved, with salaries and pensions for government employees now paid promptly on the 1st of every month.

SS(UBT) MP asks PM, EAM to draw plans to rescue persecuted Hindus from Bangladesh

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

Mumbai: Shiv Sena (UBT) MP, Priyanka Chaturvedi, on Monday drew the attention of Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar to the plight of Hindu minorities in strife-torn Bangladesh and sought plans to rescue them if needed. In separate letters to PM Modi and EAM Jaishankar, Chaturvedi has urged them to "engage bilaterally with Muhammad Yunus, the head of the Bangladesh caretaker government," to hold his administration accountable for the targeted violence against the minority Hindus there. "Additionally, plans for potential rescue and support operations for Hindus in Bangladesh should be considered to safeguard their lives and dignity," exhorted the SS(UBT) Rajya Sabha MP in her letter.

Justifying her contentions, Priyanka Chaturvedi said that since August, India has witnessed the widespread attacks on Hindus and other minorities in Bangladesh, targeting their places of worship, homes and business establishments. "Despite the Indian government raising the issue, the situation has deteriorated alarmingly. The crisis has intensified with the arrest of Vaishnavite leader and ISKCON member Chinmoy Krishna Das who has been denied bail by the Bangladeshi authorities followed by attacks on three Hindu temples," Priyanka Chaturvedi pointed out. Moreover, attempts to ban the ISKCON in Bangladesh, along with the



arrest of at least two more Brahmacharis, have further escalated tensions, and these developments have fostered a climate of fear and panic among the Hindu minority in that country, she said. Further exacerbating the matter, the Bangladeshi authorities have reportedly frozen the bank accounts linked to ISKCON, and citing security concerns,

barred more than 63 Brahmacharis from entering India, though they hold valid visas and travel documents, added Priyanka Chaturvedi.

"Such actions are not only discriminatory, but also appear to be deliberate attempts to restrict the Hindu religious community and undermine their rights," said Priyanka Chaturvedi, ex-

pressing concern. She called upon the PM and EAM to treat the matter with the utmost seriousness and solicited their prompt response and action on it, even as the predicament of Hindus and other minorities like Christians and Buddhists in Bangladesh continues to perturb the Indian polity plus the masses for the past five months.

CM Revanth Reddy Inaugurates Coca-Cola Greenfield Plant

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

Hyderabad : Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy inaugurates the new Coca-Cola Greenfield Plant today at the Band Timmapur Food Park. The plant, set up by Hindustan Beverages, produces popular drinks like Coca-Cola and Thums Up. With an investment of ₹1,000 crore, the facility significantly boosts production capabilities in the region. The inauguration ceremony is set for 12 PM, with CM

Revanth Reddy joined by Minister Sridhar Babu. The new plant creates employment opportunities for around 400 individuals, providing a boost to the local economy. Authorities have made all necessary arrangements for the CM's visit. Along with the plant inauguration, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy conducts a review of the plans for the new Osmania Hospital, which is to be built at the Goshamahal Stadium. The Telangana government has approved the construction,

and the CM gives specific instructions regarding the hospital's infrastructure and planning. He explains the need for immediate surveys and detailed plans for managing essential services like drinking water, electricity, and sewage. CM Revanth Reddy appoints Dan Kishore as the nodal officer to coordinate between all departments involved in the hospital's construction. He urges officials to ensure the hospital is equipped with all necessary facilities to provide high-quality medical care to the public.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Beyond bans

THE move by Australia to ban social media access for children under 16 has reignited global discussions on safeguarding young minds. While a similar ban in India might seem appealing, implementing it would be a logistical nightmare. Instead, a more balanced approach is essential to protect children from the psychological and social harms of excessive social media use. Studies, including those from the American Psychological Association, highlight the negative impacts of unregulated social media usage on adolescents, such as anxiety, depression and poor self-esteem. The rise in cyberbullying, body image issues and sleep disorders further exacerbates the problem, affecting millions of young users. However, imposing an outright ban may inadvertently push children towards unsafe, unregulated platforms, as experts warn. India must instead focus on promoting healthy social media habits. First, schools can play a pivotal role by incorporating digital literacy into the curriculum, teaching children to navigate the online world responsibly. Second, internet service providers should offer parental controls at the network level, making it easier for parents to manage their children's online exposure without constant supervision. Moreover, tech companies must be held accountable. Stricter regulations should mandate social media platforms to enforce age verification and provide age-appropriate content. Partnerships between the government, civil society and technology providers can also create awareness campaigns highlighting the risks of excessive screen time and encouraging offline activities. India can also learn from global examples by setting up an independent regulatory body to monitor and address digital safety concerns. Such a framework would not only protect children but also preserve their creative outlets and support networks, which are crucial for their development. In the face of rapid digital transformation.

Canada stops private refugee sponsorships to tackle backlog



GNS News Agency, Dec 2

Canada has announced a temporary pause on private refugee sponsorships by groups of five or more individuals and community organisations to address a backlog of applications. The pause, effective immediately, will remain in place until December 31, 2025, according to a notice published by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). The government said demand for private sponsorships far exceeds the number of available spaces. Under the 2025-27 immigration plan, Canada aims to admit 23,000 privately sponsored refugees annually, while next year's overall refugee target is set at over 58,000. The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada reports more than 85,000 pending refugee claims as of October.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau acknowledged the federal government could have acted more swiftly to address challenges within immigration programmes. In a YouTube video released on Sunday, Trudeau discussed recent reductions in permanent resident admissions and changes to the temporary foreign worker programme.

Over the next two years, the permanent residency stream will be reduced by 20 per cent, reaching 365,000 by 2027. Trudeau explained that post-pandemic immigration increases were aimed at bolstering the labour market, a move he said helped avert a recession. However, he criticised "bad actors," including large corporations and some educational institutions, for exploiting the system. He also condemned scams targeting vulnerable immigrants with false promises of citizenship. Trudeau admitted the government could have acted faster to adapt immigration policies as economic conditions shifted. He said the revised immigration plan focuses on stabilising population growth while addressing housing shortages, with a view to gradually increasing immigration rates in the future.

Meanwhile, opposition leader Pierre Poilievre criticised Trudeau's handling of immigration, accusing him of reversing his own policies. Poilievre reiterated his support for a system that fosters legal pathways for newcomers and enables them to pursue opportunities in Canada.

Immigration Minister Marc Miller has indicated plans to reform the refugee system, including measures to expedite refusals of claims deemed unlikely to succeed. Statistics Canada reported over 265,000 non-permanent residents arrived in the country during the second quarter of 2024, with many refugee claims coming from international students. The evolving immigration policies have created confusion among newcomers, leaving them vulnerable to scams, migrant advocacy groups warned. Cases include deepfake videos impersonating a Toronto-based lawyer, defrauding immigrants during a period of heightened uncertainty around Canada's immigration rules.

Delhi Court issues conditional stay on attachment of Bikaner House

A Delhi Court Friday granted a conditional stay on the attachment of Delhi's Bikaner House owned by Nokha Municipal Council of Rajasthan. The court, however, directed the civic body to deposit within two weeks an arbitral award of Rs 50.31 lakh that it owes a company. "Considering the overall facts and circumstances of the case and keeping in view the submissions made on behalf of both the sides, as also the submissions made on behalf of JD (Nokha Municipal Council in Rajasthan) that it is willing to deposit the decree amount in the court, further proceedings pursuant to warrants of attachment executed in respect of said immovable property, i.e., Bikaner House is kept in abeyance till disposal of such objections," said Vidya Prakash, District Judge (Commercial), in her order.

Sambhal district administration prohibits entry of outsiders till Dec 10



GNS News Agency, Dec 2

In a bid to maintain peace and order in the district, the Sambhal district administration on Saturday prohibited the entry of outsiders till December 10. "No outsider, any social organisation or any public representative can enter into the borders of the district without seeking the permission of the competent authority till December 10," Sambhal District Magistrate Rajendra Pensiya in a statement issued here.

The move assumes significance as it came on a day when a 15-member delegation of the Samajwadi Party (SP) was to visit Sambhal to gather information about the violence that broke out after a survey in the Shahi Jama Masjid complex. Leader of Opposition in Uttar Pradesh Assembly Mata Prasad Pandey, who was to lead the 15-member SP delegation, told reporters outside his residence in Lucknow that Home Secretary Sanjay Prasad had called him up and requested him to not visit Sambhal. "The DM Sambhal had also called me up telling me that the ban on entry of outsiders has been extended till December 10. So I will now visit the party office and discuss the issue before deciding on our next action," said Pandey. "The government perhaps wanted to prevent me to hide its wrongs in Sambhal as our visit would have exposed its several mistakes," he added. Heavy security was deployed outside Pandey's resi-

How Tata Memorial's ImPaCCT foundation reduced treatment abandonment to 2% from 25%

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

Tata Memorial Hospital's ImPaCCT Foundation, established in 2010, has reduced treatment abandonment rates in paediatric cancer care, from 25 per cent in 2008 to just 2 per cent in 2023. By integrating advanced medical treatments with socio-economic interventions such as housing, education, nutrition, and counselling, the foundation has tackled financial constraints, gender bias, and cultural misconceptions, significantly improving outcomes for children with cancer. This approach, supported by real-time patient tracking, has raised survival rates to 58 per cent.

ImPaCCT's mission began by identifying and addressing barriers preventing families from completing treatment. Under the leadership of Shalini Jatia, officer-in-charge, and Dr Shripad Banavali, director of Academics at TMC, said the foundation conducted an in-depth survey of paediatric patients admitted between 2009 and 2011. The study revealed a complex set of challenges, including financial difficulties, lack of accommodation, inadequate transfusion support, gender bias and a widespread belief that cancer is incurable. "These conversations were eye-opening. We realised curing paediatric cancer wasn't just a medical challenge—it was a societal one," said Jatia. One of ImPaCCT's key interventions was providing affordable and accessible housing for families. Before 2010, many families were forced to sleep on the streets near the hospital due to Mumbai's high accommodation costs. By partnering with NGOs and private donors, the foundation secured free or subsidised housing, ensuring that no family lacked shelter during treatment. "For the past decade, no patient's family has had to sleep on the footpath," Jatia noted. Education became another cornerstone of ImPaCCT's efforts. Recognising the disruption to schooling caused by long hospital stays, the foundation introduced scholarships for active patients and survivors, disbursing over ₹1.17 crore between 2021 and 2024. Older survivors and their families also benefited from vocational training and skill-building workshops. "Our aim is to give these children not just a chance to survive, but a chance to thrive," said Dr Banavali.

Nutrition was another critical focus area. Many families struggled to afford basic meals while managing medical expenses. ImPaCCT implemented mid-day meal programmes, distributed monthly rations, and provided nutritional supplements for children. "A well-nourished child has a far better chance of fighting cancer. This simple inter-

E-rickshaw driver arrested in Delhi for murdering man in Mukherjee Nagar



GNS News Agency, Dec 2

A case was registered at the Mukherjee Nagar police station under Section 103(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita based on an eyewitness's statement. A case was registered at the Mukherjee Nagar police station under Section 103(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita based on an eyewitness's statement. The Delhi Police on Friday arrested an e-rickshaw driver for allegedly murdering a man by stabbing him at his house in Mukherjee Nagar after an altercation.

The incident took place at Indira Vikas Colony on Thursday. Abhishek Dhania, Deputy Commissioner of Police (North-West Delhi), identified the deceased as Chhote Lal, 25, and said he was stabbed multiple times by Deshraj, 26. The police rushed to Lal's house after his sister-in-law alerted them that a man had entered their house and stabbed him. Lal was shifted to Babu Jagjivan Ram Memorial Hospital where he was declared brought dead, the police added. A case was registered at the Mukherjee Nagar police station under Section 103(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita based on an eyewitness's statement. Subsequently, Deshraj was arrested by a joint team led by Inspectors Rajeev Shah, the Station House Officer of the Mukherjee Nagar police station, and Brijesh Kumar under the supervision of Jai Narayan, Assistant Commissioner of Police, Model Town. The police said they learnt during interrogation

dence since Friday night. SP state president Shyam Lal Pal had said earlier on Friday that a party delegation will go to Sambhal on Saturday on the instructions of party chief Akhilesh Yadav. The team will submit the report to the party chief after taking detailed information about the violence that took place there, he said.

A note shared earlier on 'X' by the SP state president had said that the delegation includes Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly Mata Prasad Pandey, Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council Lal Bihari Yadav, SP state president Shyam Lal Pal, MPs Ziaur Rahman Barq, Harendra Malik, Ruchi Veera, Iqra Hasan and Neeraj Maurya. Ziaur Rahman Barq has been booked in connection with the November 24 violence for allegedly committing "provocative acts". MLAs Kamal Akhtar, Ravidas Mehrotra, Nawab Iqbal Mahmood and Pinky Singh Yadav will also be part of the delegation, the note said. The Samajwadi Party had earlier postponed the proposed visit of its delegation after getting assurance from the Director General of Police of a fair investigation into the violence. Pandey had said in a press conference last Tuesday: "I was supposed to leave for Sambhal at 10 am today, but in the meantime I spoke to the Director General of Police. We told him that our people are being framed, even FIRs have been lodged against those who were not present there." Pandey said the DGP assured him of a fair investigation and asked them to visit Sambhal after three days. Meanwhile, Congress state president Ajay Rai told PTI that a party delegation will go there on December 2. The situation in Sambhal has been tense since the first survey of the city's Jama Masjid was conducted on November 19 on the orders of a local court. The petitioner has claimed that Jama Masjid stands on a previous Harihar temple. Violence erupted earlier on November 24 as the protesters gathered near the mosque and clashed with security personnel, leading to stone pelting and arson.



vention has saved countless lives," remarked Dr Banavali. The foundation also tackled cultural challenges, particularly gender bias, which often led to prioritising male children for treatment. Through counselling and community outreach, ImPaCCT worked to shift these perceptions, ensuring equitable access to care. "We've shown families that paediatric cancers are not a death sentence—early and consistent treatment can achieve cure rates as high as 80%," emphasised Dr Banavali. ImPaCCT's use of technology has been vital to its success. The time responsive electronic abandonment tracking (TREAT) system, launched in 2010, monitors patients in real time, enabling timely interventions for families at risk of dropping out. This innovative approach helped reduce abandonment rates from 25 per cent in 2008 to 5 per cent by 2015, and further to just 2 per cent by 2021. Between 2019 and 2024, TMC recorded a significant increase in paediatric cancer admissions across its network. In 2019, as many as 2,981 new paediatric patients were registered, with 2,089 cases at Tata Memorial Hospital in Mumbai. Despite a decline in 2020 due to Covid-19 pandemic, admissions rebounded, reaching 3,448 in 2023. The success of ImPaCCT has inspired its replication across TMC's nine hospitals and beyond. With support from public-private partnerships and corporate social responsibility (CSR) funding, the model has expanded, benefiting thousands of families. "This approach proves that addressing both medical and socio-economic challenges can transform outcomes," said Jatia. Looking to the future, ImPaCCT aims at scaling its operations nationwide, adapting its strategies to other centres. "Every child battling cancer deserves the best chance at a cure," Jatia said.

Take note! New power connections in Telangana to cost more

Hyderabad: New power connections in Telangana will now cost more with the State-run power distribution companies — South Telangana Power Distribution Company (TGSPPDCL) and North Telangana Power Distribution Company (TGNPDCL) — increasing the minimum load capacity for domestic and commercial use and accordingly, the connection fee as well. The power distribution companies have recently issued instructions in this regard to Integrated Consumer Service Centers (ICSC) asking it to increase the minimum load capacity for single phase and three phase connections. According to the latest directives, those who want single phase household electricity connection have to apply for 2 kilowatt instead of 1 kilowatt. Three phase residential and commercial connections will be sanctioned only on application for a minimum load of 5 KW. Officials said the new norms would be initially implemented in Hyderabad and Warangal cities and extended to other places in a phased manner. Till now, a consumer had to pay Rs 1,425, including deposit, charges and application fee for a kilowatt household single phase connection. Henceforth, consumers have to pay Rs 2,825 for 2 KW and Rs 7,025 for a three phase 5 KW domestic connection. Similarly, for commercial connections, Rs 4,045 will be charged for 2 KW single phase and Rs 10,050 will be charged for 5 KW three phase connections.

Class 7 boy falls from balcony of Noida apartment while playing, dies



GNS News Agency, Dec 2: The incident occurred at the 18-storey Paramount Emotions housing society, in Greater Noida's Sector 1, around 3 pm. The incident occurred at the 18-storey Paramount Emotions housing society, in Greater Noida's Sector 1, around 3

A 14-year-old boy died after he allegedly slipped and fell from his balcony on the 14th floor of a high-rise building in Greater Noida on Friday afternoon. The incident occurred at the 18-storey Paramount Emotions housing society, in Greater Noida's Sector 1, around 3 pm, said Manoj Kumar Singh, Station House Officer (SHO), Bisrakh. The boy who studied in Class 7 lived with his family in the apartment and was alone in the house at the time of the incident, the police said. "We are still trying to speak to the parents as to what happened but they are in a state of shock and have not been able to give more details," said the SHO, adding that the post-mortem of the body was conducted. The police have launched a probe into the cause of the death. "Prima facie, we do not suspect any foulplay or suicide," said Kumar.

Air quality remains 'very poor' as Delhi records season's second lowest temp

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

Delhi's air quality settled in the 'very poor' category on Saturday morning and the city witnessed the season's second-lowest minimum temperature of 9.8 degrees Celsius, officials said. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'. The weather department has predicted mainly clear skies during the day. The maximum temperature is likely to settle around 26 degrees Celsius, it said. The humidity level at 8.30 am was 97 per cent. Continuing the trend of warmer-than-usual months, November this year emerged as the warmest in the last five years, with the highest day and night temperatures. The average minimum temperature for November has been 14.9 degrees Celsius, nearly 2 degrees Celsius above the Long-Period Average (LPA) of 13 degrees Celsius. Similarly, the average maximum temperature stood at 29.5 degrees Celsius, 1.1 notch above the LPA, marking this as the warmest November since 2019.

Amazon fake returns' scam: Karnataka HC refuses to quash case against duo accused of Rs 69 lakh fraud



GNS News Agency, Dec 2

Sourish Bose, 39, and Deepanvita Ghosh, 54, are accused of defrauding Amazon between 2016 and 2017 by ordering expensive electronic products like televisions and mobile phones and carrying out fake returns while keeping the original products with them. Sourish Bose, 39, and Deepanvita Ghosh, 54, are accused of defrauding Amazon between 2016 and 2017 by ordering expensive electronic products like televisions and mobile phones and carrying out fake returns while keeping the original products with them. The Karnataka High Court has refused to quash a case against two people accused of defrauding e-commerce company Amazon Seller Services Pvt Ltd to the tune of Rs 69 lakh through a fake returns system where 104 high-end products were bought online and returned for a refund after replacing the original item with a cheaper one.

Sourish Bose, 39, and Deepanvita Ghosh, 54, are accused of defrauding Amazon between 2016 and 2017 by ordering expensive electronic products like televisions and mobile phones and carrying out fake returns while keeping the original products with them.

8 guns smuggled from Pak seized in Amritsar, 2 arrested: Punjab Police

The Punjab Police has arrested two people after eight sophisticated pistols smuggled into the country from Pakistan were found in their possession, a top officer said on Saturday. They were held from Nurpur Padhri in Amritsar, Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said.

"In a major blow to illegal arms smuggling networks, Counter Intelligence, Amritsar apprehends 2 persons from Nurpur Padhri, near Gharinda, Amritsar while they were waiting for another operative to handover the weapon consignment smuggled from Pakistan," Yadav said in a post on X.

A case under the Arms Act has been registered in Amritsar, police said, adding that investigations were underway to establish backward and forward linkages.

Cracking whip at workplace doesn't justify 'bullying': HC upholds abetment to suicide charge against senior



GNS News Agency, Dec 2

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has said that cracking the whip on the staff by superiors at workplace should not be at the cost of "bullying" and "humiliating" them. The Punjab and Haryana High Court said that cracking the whip on the staff by superiors at workplace should not be at the cost of "bullying" and "humiliating" them. Dismissing a plea seeking quashing of an FIR registered against a government servant for allegedly abetting his junior colleague to commit suicide by "insulting" him (including swearing at him and giving him a slap) during working hours on the office premises while "reprimanding" him, the Punjab and Haryana High Court has said that cracking the whip on the staff by superiors at workplace should not be at the cost of "bullying" and "humiliating" them.

The high court said, "It is true that administration of the department or an office requires certain hold and control of the employees by superiors but it does not require humiliation and bullying at workplace." A bench of Justice Karamjit Singh was hearing the petition filed by Balwan Singh, who sought to quash the FIR registered against him in 2015 under Section 306 (abetment to suicide) of IPC at Kaithal (Haryana).

As per the case, the FIR was registered on a statement made by Manoj Kumar (brother of deceased) who stated that his elder brother Joginder Singh was working as a Class IV employee in Animal Husbandry Department and was posted at veterinary hospital in Rohera village. According to Manoj Kumar, on October 14, 2015, he received a telephonic message that "his brother Joginder Singh has committed suicide by hanging from a fan in a room of the hospital". On receiving the message, he went to the Rohera hospital. The checking of the body led to recovery of a "suicide note" on his person (from deceased's trouser pocket). He read the suicide note wherein it was written that on that day Balwan Singh (accused) - posted as a Veterinary Livestock Development Assistant (VLDA) in government veterinary hospital, Rohera, - had "insulted Joginder Singh" (the deceased) and called him "dishonest" and "uttered bad

words" and also "gave a slap on his face". Joginder Singh "could not bear the insult" and due to this he was compelled to end his life, alleged Manoj Kumar in his complaint. The FIR was thus registered against Balwan Singh.

Balwan Singh's counsel contended that Joginder Singh (the deceased) was working under his client (Balwan Singh) and there were allegations that Joginder Singh was charging extra money from the general public to provide treatment to cattle. Also, Joginder Singh used to issue medical prescriptions without having any authority to do so. On this, Balwan Singh (the petitioner) reprimanded him and also advised him (Joginder Singh) not to demand bribe from the villagers who come to the hospital for treatment of their cattle, the counsel contended. However, the state counsel and the counsel for complainant (Manoj Kumar) submitted that the petitioner not only reprimanded Joginder Singh but also abused and slapped him and used offensive language against him. He could not bear the insult and ended his life by committing suicide, it was submitted, adding that he (Joginder Singh) left behind a suicide note wherein he specifically "blamed the petitioner for his death". Referring to a Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) report, the state counsel also apprised the court that the handwriting and the signature appearing in the suicide note were found to be matching with the standard handwriting and signature of the deceased. On hearing the matter, the high court said, "It is true that administration of the department or an office requires certain hold and control of the employees by superiors but it does not require humiliation and bullying at workplace. In case, petitioner herein got complaints regarding working or corrupt practices adopted by the deceased, he should have reported the same to his seniors so as to proceed against the deceased in accordance with law. However apparently, no such complaint in writing was received by the petitioner with regard to working of the deceased, prior to the occurrence in question." In case, the petitioner was unhappy with the working of the deceased, he should have verbally reprimanded the deceased, but there was no occasion or reason for the petitioner to slap the deceased or to use abusive language against him, as is recorded in the suicide note in question, and the deceased took the drastic step as he was unable to bear the said humiliation, said the high court. The court noted that all this happened on the premises of the hospital during working hours on October 14, 2015, and thereafter, Joginder Singh committed suicide on the very same day and left behind a suicide note. "Thus, there was positive action on the part of the petitioner proximate to the time of suicide" which prima facie led him to end his life. While dismissing the petition, the high court also noted that "no material is available on the record that the deceased was frustrated or feeling depressed on account of work pressure or was facing some family problem".

Registration for AAP govt's aid for women to begin soon: Kejriwal

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

The registration process of the financial aid scheme for women in Delhi under the 'Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana' will begin soon, AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal announced during a padayatra in Burari ahead of the upcoming Assembly polls Friday. "We will start the registration process very soon... Once the registration begins, we will register all the mothers and sisters. The only condition is that you must have a voter ID," Kejriwal announced before a cheering crowd.

He listed down the developmental works carried out in unauthorised colonies as he urged the residents to vote. "Once I come back to power, the sewer work will be completed, and the water issues will also be resolved," he promised. As he went on, Kejriwal was interrupted by a bus marshal from the crowd, pleading for his reinstatement. The AAP chief paused and invited the man to the stage. The bus marshal approached the former chief minister with folded hands and the duo were seen talking on the stage. Resuming his speech, Kejriwal said, "I and my party are the ones fighting for you, no one else will. In Gujarat, even the police officers are on temporary contracts. The BJP never makes anything permanent," he said, blaming the Opposition BJP.

After the address, the former chief minister decided to



take a walk along the dusty lanes and the half-pakka and half-kutcha roads as the party workers stayed back, making way for local residents to approach him with their issues - irregular water supply, lack of hospitals nearby, domestic violence at home. Nitin Chauhan, a resident, said, "Undoubtedly, the condition of the road is better, but other than that I do not see any progress." Manoj Chaurasiya, a tea stall owner, said, "The street vendors would benefit if the AAP comes to power because they do not stop anyone from earning. That is not the case with the BJP from my experience... They have also provided free bus travel which helps because there is no metro connectivity here."

Punjab stands its ground on 3% RDF, returns with assurance from Centre

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

The source added that the Punjab ministers informed Joshi that it was a legal right of the state government to levy any amount of tax on its produce. The source added that the Punjab ministers informed Prahlad Joshi that it was a legal right of the state government to levy any amount of tax on its produce. A meeting between Punjab Cabinet ministers and Union Food Minister Prahlad Joshi over the Rural Development Fund pending with Centre failed to yield the desired result for the state with both sides yet to reach consensus on the levy rate.

While Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema and Food Minister Lal Chand Kataruchak, continued to demand the RDF at 3 per cent - the rate levied by the state on foodgrain it procures for central pool - Joshi reiterated the Centre's stand of paying the levy at 2 per cent. The Punjab ministers also urged Joshi to release at least some of the pending amount. Joshi, however, told them that he will take up the matter with Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and get back to the state. "Joshi told Punjab ministers that the union finance ministry had issues with Punjab levying 3 per cent RDF as the neighbouring Haryana was charging only 2 per cent. He told them that the objection on releasing 3 per cent RDF was raised by the finance ministry only," said a source privy to developments.

The source added that the Punjab ministers informed Joshi that it was a legal right of the state government to levy any amount of tax on its produce. The ministers, sources said, had gone prepared to tell the Centre that for carrying out two massive procurement operations worth over Rs 60,000 crore annually, the state needed infrastructure. The state has invested hundreds of crores on setting up mandis and connecting these with link roads. A lot of money is required to repair and maintain this infrastructure. The state has over 1,700 mandis and a rural road network of 36,000 km that have not been repaired for three years as the Centre has not released RDF that has now ballooned to



well over Rs 6,767 crore. This is for the first time that the AAP led government has softened its stand and resorted to engage in a dialogue with the Centre. Earlier, it had moved the Supreme Court against the Centre for non payment of RDF. The case is pending hearing in the top court. Kataruchak said that they raised the issue strongly with Joshi. "The meeting took place in a cordial environment. We told the union minister that it was Punjab's right to seek its RDF. We will not tolerate any slashing of tax. We will work towards getting it. They assured us that they will consider it sympathetically". He added, "We used to get 3 per cent RDF and 3 per cent MDF. They reduced it to 2 per cent each. We hope that the issue is sorted out soon. We had to go to SC as the Centre was not agreeing to our demands. If the dialogue moves further, we can think of withdrawing the case from the SC". After the meeting, Joshi, a post on X said that he "discussed with Punjab ministers ways to further strengthen collaboration in the food and public distribution sector". Cheema expressed gratitude to Joshi "for a detailed discussion on various matters (RDF)". He further hoped that with Joshi's guidance and support from Union Finance Minister "all pending issues will be resolved soon". Punjab levies RDF on foodgrain it procures for central pool.

Stricter safety norms for buses soon, Bengal transport dept drafts SoP



GNS News Agency, Dec 2

To enhance road safety and prioritise passenger security, the transport department has drafted a standard operating procedure (SOP) for bus operators. The SOP is aimed at sensitising all stakeholders, including passengers, drivers, conductors, pedestrians and vehicle owners/operators, about road safety measures, officials said. To achieve this, the transport department will collaborate with police authorities, bus operators, worker unions, associations, and civil society members. Key initiatives include verifying the antecedents and credentials of drivers and conductors, implementing strict safety protocols and promoting awareness campaigns to educate both passengers and operators about traffic rules and regulations. "To enhance safety and efficiency, all bus drivers must download the official monitoring app and scan their bus's unique QR code before each journey. This enables real-time tracking of location and route adherence, ensuring compliance with speed limits and operational timings. Any deviations will trigger alerts to the driver and authorities. Drivers are obligated to strictly follow traffic rules and regulations, cooperate with law enforcement, and maintain a positive working environment. They must treat all passengers with respect, regard-

less of background or ability, and provide assistance to vulnerable groups," said an official.

Bus operators have been asked to adhere to scheduled routes and timings, with minimal delays to ensure reliable service. In a significant move towards modernising public transportation, the West Bengal government has launched a digital bus ticketing service through the Yatri Sathi app. Initially available on 12 routes connecting the airport, this service will soon be expanded to cover the entire West Bengal Transport Corporation (WBTC) network in Kolkata. This feature allows commuters to book bus tickets directly from their smartphones, eliminating the need for cash transactions and reducing crowding at bus stops. By embracing digital payments, the government aims to promote a cashless economy and simplify the overall commuting experience.

Transport minister Snehasis Chakraborty emphasized the transformative potential of this initiative, stating, "The introduction of digital ticketing through Yatri Sathi is a game-changer for public transport in Kolkata. It reflects our commitment to leveraging technology to improve accessibility, simplify travel, and enhance the overall commuter experience." Dr. Saumitra Mohan, secretary of the department of transport, said, "This collaboration with Yatri Sathi marks a pivotal step in Kolkata's journey toward becoming a truly smart city..." Beyond bus ticketing, Yatri Sathi offers a range of services, including direct-to-driver cab rides, real-time bus tracking, and journey planning. The app's vision is to become a one-stop solution for all transportation needs in West Bengal, including cities like Siliguri, Durgapur, and Asansol. The West Bengal Transport Corporation (WBTC) is the primary public operator responsible for managing bus and ferry services in West Bengal. By adopting digital ticketing, WBTC aims to enhance the overall public transportation experience and contribute to the state's sustainable development goals.

Teen killed by cow vigilantes in Haryana's Palwal: Chargesheet says accused chanced upon deceased and friends, mistook them for cattle smugglers

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

On August 23 night, when 19-year-old Aryan Mishra was killed allegedly by cow vigilantes while he was out on a drive with his friends in Haryana's Palwal, the men arrested in the case were patrolling the roads "to ensure cattle smugglers do not transport cows". Near then Badkhal MLA Seema Trikha's residence, the accused chanced upon the speeding Renault Duster occupied by Aryan and his friends and mistook them for cattle smugglers. These are some of the allegations mentioned in the chargesheet submitted by the Haryana Police to a Faridabad court on November 21. Four of the accused - Varun, Saurabh, Adesh and Krishna - were arrested on August 28 and the fifth, Anil Kaushik, on August 30. Police have said Anil runs an outfit called 'Live for Nation' that advocates cow protection. As per police, the accused, who were in a Maruti Swift, chased the vehicle for 30 km before Anil allegedly opened fire, killing Aryan, a Class 12 student. The accused are Faridabad residents. The chargesheet contained the statements of 40 witnesses and the five accused. Moreover, two new Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) sections 61(2) (criminal conspiracy) and 238 (causing disappearance of evidence) were added to the FIR. The initial FIR was registered under BNS sections like murder and rioting, among others, and under the Arms Act.

According to Anil's disclosure statement, who allegedly fired at Aryan with his illegal pistol around 11.45 pm, Saurabh arrived at his house on a motorcycle. Shortly thereafter, Adesh arrived in his Swift car along with Krishna and Varun. The chargesheet quoted Anil's statement to the police: "(Anil) received information... about the deaths of two bulls near Parvatiya Colony, Faridabad, due to electrocution, which had caused a public blockade... all boarded Adesh's car and went to the spot... there, we managed to convince the crowd to clear the blockade... To ensure that cattle smugglers do not transport cows, we regularly patrol the area at night in (Adesh's) car. Adesh had installed red and blue police style lights in his car so that cattle smugglers, upon seeing the car, would flee..."

According to the chargesheet, the accused reached the intersection near then MLA Seema Trikha's house when they saw the Renault Duster. "Upon seeing our car, the



Duster reversed and fled. We suspected they were cattle smugglers. As soon as they turned their car, I fired a shot into the air. After that, we began chasing their car. They sped off through the route near MLA Seema Trikha's house... heading toward Palwal. We followed closely behind," the statement added. Anil said that when the car did not stop, he fired shots at them "with the intention to kill". "They broke through the Gadpuri toll plaza and reached Bhagola village in Palwal, where they stopped. Even then, I fired at the man sitting in the conductor's seat with the intention to kill him," he added.

Anil has claimed in his statement that he came in touch with the other four accused via Live for Nation. He added that they frequently travelled in Adesh's car or other vehicles to serve cows in Faridabad city and other locations. Initially, Anil had said he got the pistol for Rs 10,000 from a person named Salim in Etah. But during his extended police remand, he said it was purchased from one Pawan from Palwal. In his complaint, Aryan's father Siya Nand Mishra had alleged that his son had gone for a drive with his friends Harshit Gulati and Sagar Gulati - both brothers. They were reportedly accompanied by Harshit and Sagar's mother, Sujata Gulati, and a neighbour, Kirti Sharma. The Renault Duster was owned by Harshit. Aryan and his family are the Gulatis' tenants. The chargesheet stated, "During investigation... Harshit Gulati, Sujata, Harshit's mother, and neighbour Kirti Sharma, along with other family members, were also questioned. However... no evidence was found implicating them in the crime... they were declared government witnesses..."

AQI at 331 in Capital, 'very poor' for 6th day: Vehicular pollution plagues Delhi despite dip in farm fires

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

Notwithstanding the official end of the stubble-burning season in Punjab and Haryana, Delhi continued to reel under 'very poor' air quality for the sixth consecutive day Friday with the transport sector being the leading contributor. Delhi recorded an average Air Quality Index (AQI) of 331 Friday, slightly worse than the 325 reported a day before. The data from the Decision Support System (DSS) developed by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, shows a decline in stubble-burning contribution to Delhi's particulate matter pollution. While stubble burning accounted for 5.8 per cent of the pollution on November 26, no data was provided for it on Wednesday or Thursday. In Punjab and Haryana, the farm fire season comes to an end on November 30. The state governments track the farm fire counts until November 30 after which they stop recording the numbers as only sporadic events take place. Yet, the AQI in the Capital continued to remain in the 'very poor' category (see box) with the transport sector contributing the highest of 21.36 per cent. In its pre-winter analysis of DSS data from October 12-27, the Centre for Science and Environment found local sources, led by vehicular pollution, to be the major cause of the rise in pollution in the Capital, despite a dip in farm fire counts during the same phase.



On Friday, 576 crop residue-burning events were detected by satellites, as per data from the Indian Agricultural Research Institute. The cases were the highest in Madhya Pradesh at 311, followed by 215 in Uttar Pradesh. Punjab and Haryana reported 32 and nine cases, respectively. The wind direction also influences stubble-burning's contribution to Delhi's PM2.5 levels. According to weather experts, the contribution remains high on days when the wind direction is predominantly Northwesterly. The lowest visibility reported in Delhi increased gradually from 300 metres on November 23 to 900 metres on November 27, stated the India Meteorological Department. It has forecast mainly clear skies with smog or shallow fog likely in the morning or evening or night. Owing to low wind speed, the pollutants will remain trapped close to the surface.

Yogi meets ministers, Maha Kumbh & development outreach on agenda



GNS News Agency, Dec 2

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday held a meeting with his ministerial colleagues at his residence to discuss the Maha Kumbh preparations and the need to reach out to the public with the message of "development and unity". This was first such meeting by the CM at his residence, BJP leaders said. BJP state president Bhupendra Chaudhary and other party functionaries were also present in the meeting, it is learnt.

The meeting was held after the CM addressed BJP workers at the party office where he felicitated the newly elected MLAs in the recently held by-elections. There he assured the gathering of the BJP's bigger victory in the 2027

Assembly elections and credited the party's organisational leadership for chalking out a successful strategy for the bypolls. He also stressed on co-ordination between the party organisation and the government. "Impossible can be made possible by working with team spirit and unity. The Opposition parties are scared due to the BJP's massive victory in the by-elections. Our party will achieve an even bigger victory in the 2027 Assembly elections," Adityanath said.

"Under the guidance and leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the NDA scored a hat-trick in Haryana, won a huge majority in Maharashtra. We won seven of the nine seats in the UP bypolls. He also described the victory on difficult seats like Kundarki and Katehari as a result of the party's strategy and the collective efforts of the workers and office-bearers. "The record-breaking victory by 1.45 lakh votes in Kundarki is an example of this," said Adityanath. The victory will create a fear in the mind of the Opposition ahead of the 2027 assembly elections, he claimed. "We have to live up to the expectations of people and the government's schemes will have to be taken to each and every person. This will make our success even bigger in 2027," he added. Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya said the by-election was the defeat of "fake PDA" (Pichhuda, Dalit and Alpsankhyak) "The Samajwadi Party's foundation has been shaken. The BJP will win in Karhal and Sisamau also in 2027," said Maurya.

UP Govt starts process to assess damages in Sambhal violence

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

The Uttar Pradesh government has initiated the process of assessing the damages caused to properties during the November 24 violence in Sambhal which erupted when a large number of protesters gathered near the Shahi Jama Masjid and clashed with police following a court-ordered survey of the sixteenth-century mosque. Four people were killed, and more than a dozen, including police personnel, were injured in the clashes. During the unrest, both government and private vehicles were damaged, with some set on fire. Besides, stones were thrown at buildings and the police. Barricades and other items used for crowd control were also damaged.

To assess the extent of the damage, detailed reports have been requisitioned from the Transport, police, and other departments concerned. Moradabad Divisional Commissioner Aunjaneya Kumar Singh said that the damage assessment process is underway. Once the assessment is over, notices will be issued to those responsible for the damages, asking them to pay for the cost of repair, another official said. In August this year, the state government passed the Uttar Pradesh Recovery of Damages to Public and Private Property Act, 2020. In connection with the November 24 violence, the police have registered 12 FIRs, including seven on the complaints by their own personnel. The four



FIRs are related to the deaths during the violence. A total of 29 persons have been arrested and sent to jail in connection with the violence so far. The police have also released posters featuring the photographs of around 250 suspects for identification. These images were obtained from footage of CCTV cameras installed near the spot, as well as from videos and photographs captured by those in the area. The process of identifying the suspects is on, a senior police official said, adding that raids are being conducted to arrest the absconding accused. Three four-wheelers and five two-wheelers were damaged or set on fire during the violence, it is learnt.

Ayushman Bharat insurance scheme: Meeting 2 weeks ago, expenditure data; behind AAP govt's change of heart on central scheme



GNS News Agency, Dec 2

Ayushman Bharat Atishi on Thursday had also said that the AAP government has been ready to implement Ayushman Bharat in-principle, but was facing problems due to the "contradictions between the Centre's and Delhi health welfare schemes" A meeting that took place nearly two weeks ago between Chief Minister Atishi, Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj and Health department officials - where data presented showed significant expenditure cuts for Delhi government if it were to adopt the Centre's Ayushman Bharat insurance scheme - is when the AAP government first softened its stance against the Union government-run scheme, sources have told The Indian Express. Atishi said that officials have been directed to find a way to adopt the central scheme while ensuring that the Delhi government's own universal free healthcare scheme is not impacted. Another reason behind the change of heart, sources said, was the recent inclusion of all those above the age of 70 getting universal coverage under the Ayushman Bharat scheme. "The health department has been sending files regarding the implementation of the Ayushman Bharat scheme to the minister for the last one year. But it went unheard for the last one year," said a senior official.

"But in the recent meeting, the department presented detailed data of the last two years on the expenditure on its own schemes. It turned out that of around 7,000 patients who had surgeries in private hospitals for free under the state's scheme, the final bill of only one patient was over Rs 5 lakh. This means that had the government adopted the Ayushman Bharat scheme, most of the patients would have been covered under it. The CM then directed the department to explore ways to implement it in Delhi without withdrawing the state's existing schemes," the official added. Atishi on Thursday had also said that the AAP government has been ready to implement Ayushman Bharat in-principle, but was facing problems due to the "contradictions between the Centre's and Delhi health welfare schemes". As per Delhi government's schemes, treatment in any government hospital is free of cost. If surgery or testing is being delayed inordinately, or is not available in the government set-up, the doctor can refer a patient to a private hospital, where all costs will be borne by the government. This is over and above the Delhi Arogya Kosh scheme for poor patients. Sources said the department has suggested that the government implements the Ayushman Bharat scheme while continuing with its own schemes. "A team of officials from the Health department was also sent to Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan earlier to study the scheme on its successful implementation... Congress was in power at that time. If Ayushman Bharat is implemented, it will save money, which can be spent on infrastructure development... The government doesn't have access to around Rs 2,400 crore in the scheme," the official said. Asked about the status of the scheme after the CM's directions, sources said that the directions issued were verbal and written orders are awaited. Another senior official from the Health department said that after the adoption of the Ayushman Bharat scheme, if a patient's bill amount is over Rs 5 lakh, the state can cover the remaining amount.

Man arrested for sharing info on Indian Coast Guard ship with Pakistan agent

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

The Gujarat Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) on Friday arrested a man for allegedly "spying for the Pakistan intelligence agency" and putting "national security at risk" by sharing sensitive information regarding the movement of Indian Coast Guard (ICG) ships anchored at Okha Jetty in Devbhoomi Dwarka district of Gujarat, said the police. The accused, identified as Dipesh Batuk Gohel, is a resident of Arambhadi in Okha taluka of the district. The ATS had been keeping a tab on Gohel after receiving a tip-off that he was allegedly in touch with an agent of Pakistan intelligence agency, ISI, and was passing on sensitive information through WhatsApp.

"Dipesh Gohel, who worked as a welder-cum-labourer at Okha jetty, shared sensitive information about ICG ships coming to the jetty with a Pakistan-based woman for a payment of Rs 200 per day," said Superintendent of Police (ATS) K Siddharth. "About seven months ago, he came in contact with a Facebook account by the name 'Sahima',"

said a statement from ATS. "The person operating the Facebook account allegedly told Gohel that she was a woman and worked for the Pakistan Navy. The account operator then started talking to him on WhatsApp. The person then asked him about his job; in reply, Gohel shared his profile," said the statement. "This account operator then told Gohel that if he shared details of the names and numbers of Coast Guard vessels anchored at the Okha Jetty, he would receive a monthly payment at the rate of Rs 200 per day," said the statement. "After this, Gohel started working for 'Sahima' and shared the sensitive information (regarding the ships)," said the statement. Since Gohel did not have a bank account of his own, he gave account details of three of his friends. "Till date, he has allegedly received Rs 42,000 through the UPI linked accounts of his friends," said the ATS statement. Deputy Superintendent of Police VK Parmar, who was heading the probe in the case, confirmed the details. Parmar said that during the probe, the police also found a WhatsApp number which was attributed to 'Sahima' and was being operated from Pakistan.

Ahead of Business Summit next year, Bengal govt holds meets in Delhi, Kolkata



GNS News Agency, Dec 2

AS A prelude to the coming Bengal Global Business Summit (BGBS) 2025, the West Bengal government, in partnership with FICCI, hosted a Diplomats' Roundtable on Friday in New Delhi in the morning as well as in Kolkata later in the day. A senior official with the industries department said, "Two meetings were conducted in a warm environment and consul generals of eminent countries were present. In Kolkata, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addressed the gathering and all the stakeholders talked about the scope of investment in this state."

Former Indian cricket team captain Sourav Ganguly, industrialist Harsh Neotia, Sanjay Budhia and others were present during the meeting. According to a government release on the Delhi meeting, "The session witnessed participation from Ambassadors, High Commissioners, and Senior Diplomats representing over 42 countries, showcasing growing global interest in West Bengal as a vibrant investment destination."

The Government of West Bengal will be organising the eighth edition of the flagship Summit Bengal Global Business Summit 2025 on February 5-6 in Kolkata. Amit Mitra, while virtually addressing the session said West Bengal is transforming into a hub for manufacturing and logistics, creating jobs and enhancing exports. With forward-thinking policies and dynamic leadership, the state is shaping a ro-

burst, job-intensive economy. Highlighting the state's strengths, state finance minister Chandrima Bhattacharya, emphasized that West Bengal offers seamless connectivity for international trade, abundant natural resources, robust infrastructure, and a skilled workforce, making it a prime destination for investments across diverse sectors.

Vandana Yadav, Managing Director, West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation, and Principal Secretary, Department of Industry, Commerce & Enterprises delivered the opening remarks. P. Mohan Gandhi, IAS, Secretary, Department of Industry, Commerce & Enterprises, Government of West Bengal made a presentation showcasing the investment opportunities in West Bengal. Mr. Manab Majumdar, Senior Advisor, FICCI delivered the Vote of Thanks. Diplomats from Europe, CIS, SAARC, Arab & Middle East, Africa, ASEAN, LAC, OCEANIA, North America, East Asia & Southeast Asia and several other regions also shared their perspective on the possible areas of mutual collaboration to strengthen bilateral ties. BGBS 2025 will bring together policymakers, corporate leaders, business delegations, entrepreneurs, academia, and think-tanks from around the globe to form strategic and business alliances.

This will be a unique opportunity to learn about the industrial ecosystem and business friendly initiatives of West Bengal. The Summit will have Plenary Sessions, Sectoral sessions on focus sectors, Country sessions with partner countries, B2Bs and B2Gs meetings and avenues of collaborations are spread across a multidimensional spectrum of sectors. Over the years, BGBS has observed a growing international presence. BGBS 2023 was attended by over 400 International delegates from Europe, UK, CIS, SAARC, Middle East, Africa, ASEAN, LAC, Central & East Asia and several other regions. 17 countries including Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Fiji, France, Germany, Japan, Kenya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Nepal, Netherlands, Poland, Rwanda, Slovak Republic, Republic of Korea and the United Kingdom joined BGBS 2023 as Partner Countries. 15 Ambassadors and High Commissioners joined the Summit.

Panchsheel Park murder: Accused wanted to impress woman, assumed bizman stayed alone, say police

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

Abhay Sikarwar, who had come to Delhi in 2019 with dreams of making it big, fell for a woman a few months ago. However, unimpressed with Sikarwar, who worked as a cook, the woman asked him to ensure he earns more before starting a relationship, police said. How Sikarwar went ahead with his plan to earn the big bucks is what landed him in police net Thursday for the murder of 64-year-old businessman Rohit Kumar Alagh at his Panchsheel Park residence early Monday. Sikarwar, who came from a middle class family in Gwalior, move to Delhi in search of a job after finishing his schooling. He would soon land a job with Bunkmates, a backpacker hostel for travellers, as a caretaker. The hostel was located on the 3rd floor of Alagh's three-storeyed house. In 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, the business shut down and Sikarwar found himself without a job.

The police said Sikarwar had recently met a woman who works at a South Delhi mall. "He soon developed feelings for her. However, she has a well-paying job and was not very impressed with Sikarwar," said an officer. The officer added, "Sikarwar said the woman told him that she would consider starting a relationship with him but on the condition that he starts earning more." "Fuelled by this ambition, he decided to burgle the house of a well-to-do family. He considered Alagh's house to be an easy target because he not only knew the layout of the house but also assumed that he stayed alone... When Sikarwar entered the house on Sunday night, he did not know that his sons stayed with him," the officer said. On Sunday, sources in the police said



Sikarwar had snuck into the compound of Alagh's house around 9 pm and hid for at least six hours before entering it. "He entered the house late at night. When he was trying to steal the articles, the deceased woke up, resulting in a scuffle between them. He attacked the deceased with a knife, which resulted in his death," said DCP (South) Ankit Chauhan.

A source in the police said Sikarwar planned to open his own business with the money stolen from Alagh's house. "Before the burglary attempt, Sikarwar would also gamble money online," the source added. Sikarwar, who hails from Madhya Pradesh, was arrested from West Delhi's Moti Nagar where he was working as a cook. He allegedly stabbed Alagh around 25-30 times on his face, chest, neck and abdomen. Alagh was found dead in a pool of blood on the floor of his bedroom Monday by his son.

Gujarat Governor bats for natural farming, says over 9.75 L farmers opted for it

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

Over 9.75 lakh farmers have switched to natural farming in Gujarat, which is an increase of over a lakh compared to last year, according to data shared by Gujarat Governor Acharya Devvrat. In a media interaction on Friday, Governor Devvrat, who practises natural farming in his home state of Haryana, said that as part of the Centre's mission to onboard farmers in the natural farming mission in Gujarat, he has put in place a cluster each of five villages where one practising farmer along with a member of the "sakhhi mandal" "handhold" other farmers and women in the village, enabling them to make the switch. Explaining the process, Devvrat said, "The farmer working on the cluster should have at least one desi cow and a model natural farm. Along with the farmer, we are also working on handholding the women in the village through krishi-sakhhi (agriculture friend)." Last year, the Gujarat government had shared data on the percentage of farmers practising natural farming increasing from 35,000 in 2019 to 8,71,316 in 2023, which is now up to 9,75,761 - the last figure shared by the Governor.

According to Governor Devvrat, times had changed since the father of the green revolution, Dr MS Swaminathan, emphasised on organic farming to bring about food security. He said the need now was to spread the use of natural farming, at the centre of which is the "desi Indian cow". He said, "During those days, the spread of agricultural land was less as there were more forests. But now (agricultural land) has increased as has technology, availability of irrigation and power supply." Detailing the benefits of indigenous cows, he said, "One gram of dung of the desi cow has the potential to produce 300-500 crore of microorganisms, while Holstein breed's single gram could produce 18 lakh microorganisms." Praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi for launching the National Mission on Natural Farming, Governor Devvrat said, "Use of pesticides and chemicals is not only destroying human health but also the earth where, in the natural process, the microorganisms and the earthworms till and nourish (the soil)."

Showing videos of his 180-acre farm in Kurukshetra, Haryana, swarming with "earthworms the size of snakes", Governor Devvrat said once the farmers adopt natural farming, "these earthworms, which are dormant in the soil, will rise again." Sharing his concoction for natural manure, the Governor said he prepares it with a mix of cow dung, jaggeri, gram flour and soil taken from the base of a large tree in a 200-litre drum. "Within 72 hours, the microorganisms in the mix doubled... and in seven days, the manure is ready to



feed one acre of farmland," said the Governor. According to him, under the organic farming process, an acre would require 300 quintals of dung, "which would also produce more methane" that contributes to global warming. Devvrat took charge as the Governor in July 2019 and is currently the chancellor of the Gujarat Vidyapith, where he recently tweaked the scope of the annual 'padyatra' undertaken by the students to cover all 18,000 villages of the state and spread the message of natural farming.

ED attaches assets worth Rs 5.3 crore of private medical colleges under PMLA

Hyderabad: Directorate of Enforcement (ED), Hyderabad Zonal Office has provisionally attached assets worth Rs 5.34 crore, belonging to private medical colleges under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), in connection with a case of cheating by private medical colleges by indulging in blocking of seats for PG medical admissions.

ED initiated investigation on the basis of FIR registered by the Matwada Police Station, Warangal, filed on the basis of complaint of Registrar, Kaloji Narayana Rao University of Health Sciences (KNRUHS) alleging that candidature of certain students with high NEET PG ranks were being used to block seats for PG Medical admissions under the Management Quota. In response to warning of legal action given by KNRUHS to such suspected seat blockers, some candidates claimed they had not applied for registration under the Management Quota at KNRUHS.

Hindus flee Bangladesh locality after temples attacked, cops turn blind eye



GNS News Agency, Dec 2

Extremist groups in Bangladesh attacked two temples and assaulted members of the minority community in Chittagong, forcing Hindus living in the area to flee to safer shelters. Several shops were also targeted near the Kotwali Police Station in Chittagong after Friday prayers. Sources said the Radha Govinda and Shantaneswari Matri Temple were targeted by extremists from the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). The incident happened while a march was being held in the area demanding a ban on the Hindu religious outfit Iskcon. The police and the Army personnel did not come to the rescue of the Hin-

Indus and remained mute spectators, eyewitnesses said. The locality is predominantly Hindu, with 90% of the population belonging to the community. Several members of the community have fled the locality fearing an escalation of violence. There has been a string of incidents of desecration and damage to Hindu temples and deities in Bangladesh since the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government in August. Over 200 temples have been targeted, as per reports. The arrest of a Hindu monk, Chinmoy Krishna Das, for sedition has only added fuel to the fire. Chinmoy Das's arrest has triggered massive protests from the Hindu community and led to clashes with security personnel. Iskcon has also been targeted, with a petition in the High Court demanding its ban. The Bangladesh government has called it a "religious fundamentalist organisation". However, the court has declined to ban the global organisation. Noting the increasing incidents of violence against minorities, the Indian government said it was the responsibility of the Muhammad Yunus-led interim government to protect the life and liberty of Hindus in Bangladesh. "India has consistently and strongly raised with the Bangladesh government the threats and targeted attacks on Hindus and other minorities. We are concerned about the surge of extremist rhetoric. We call upon Bangladesh to take steps for the protection of minorities," the Ministry of External Affairs said on Friday.

Days before deadline, plastic treaty draft highlights disagreement

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

With just two days before negotiators are due to agree on the world's first deal to curb global plastic pollution, a new draft text released on Friday (November 29, 2024) showed deep differences remain. Nearly 200 countries are gathered in South Korea's Busan with the goal of cobbled together a deal by Sunday (December 1, 2024), capping two years of negotiations on a landmark agreement. Just 48 hours before the talks are scheduled to end, a new synthesis text released by the diplomat chairing the process emerged, littered with competing visions and ongoing disagreements. There are eight possible definitions for plastic alone, and five options for the meaning of plastic pollution. No text at all is proposed on "chemicals of concern" that are known or believed to be harmful to human health, and an article on health remains virtually bare, along with an option for it to be scrapped altogether — a request made earlier by Saudi Arabia.

The draft also suggests production remains a key sticking point. Many countries have rallied around a proposal led by Panama for nations to agree on a reduction target after the treaty is signed. But the draft includes an option that would delete the article on supply entirely, a suggestion also previously made by Saudi Arabia. The text suggests more convergence on the thorny issue of finance, with apparent agreement on linking the implementation of the deal to resources available to countries. However there is still disagreement on whether a separate fund should be established to support developing countries and how money might flow into it. Diplomats emphasised the positive ele-



ments in the text. "We have to compromise in order to reach a consensus," said Panama's Juan Carlos Monterrey Gomez, welcoming the inclusion of the language on plastic production, proposed by his country. "Now the battle will be based on defending that article," he told AFP. "We are not here to negotiate a greenwashing and recycling treaty." "It's not perfect, but I think it could be a good base," added a European diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity. Environmental groups were more cautious, and warned the text was worrying. "We are calling on countries to not accept the low level of ambition reflected in this draft," said Eirik Lindebjerg, global plastic policy lead at WWF. "It does not contain any specific upstream measures such as global bans on high-risk plastic products and chemicals of concern... without these measures the treaty will fail," he said. Greenpeace warned that any final treaty must include a target to reduce new plastic production, calling it a "red line for any country serious about ending plastic pollution."

Singapore hangs 4th person in three weeks

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

Singapore hanged a 35-year-old Singaporean-Iranian man for drug trafficking on Friday (November 29, 2024), its fourth in less than a month, despite appeals from Tehran to "reconsider" his execution. The United Nations and rights groups say capital punishment has no proven deterrent effect and have called for it to be abolished, but Singaporean officials insist it has helped make the country one of Asia's safest. Masoud Rahimi Mehrzad, a Singaporean citizen born in the city-state to a Singaporean mother and an Iranian father, was convicted in 2013 for drug trafficking.

Appeals against his conviction and sentence, as well as petitions for clemency from the President, had been dismissed. After he was informed of his impending hanging, Masoud filed an 11th-hour appeal to stay his execution, which was dismissed by the Court of Appeal on Thursday (November 28, 2024). Calling him "an Iranian citizen", Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi also appealed to his Singaporean counterpart Vivian Balakrishnan on Thursday to halt the execution. Iranian, Singaporean top diplomats talk bilateral ties. Iran's Foreign Minister, Seyed Abbas Araghchi, held a telephone conversation with his Singaporean counterpart, Vivian Balakrishnan. They discussed bilateral relations and explored avenues for enhancing cooperation between them. Araghchi expressed Iran's respect for Singapore's legal framework but appealed to Singaporean authorities to reconsider the execution of Masoud Rahimi, emphasizing humanitarian considerations, Iran's Foreign Ministry said on X.

However, Singapore's Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) announced "the capital sentence of death imposed on



Masoud Rahimi bin Mehrzad... was carried out on 29 November 2024". "Masoud... was convicted of having in his possession for the purpose of trafficking, not less than 31.14 grams (1.1 ounces) of diamorphine, or pure heroin," CNB said. Under the country's tough drug laws, the death penalty applies for any amount above a 15-gram threshold for heroin. It added that "capital punishment is imposed only for the most serious crimes, such as the trafficking of significant quantities of drugs which cause very serious harm". His execution was the fourth in three weeks in Singapore. Rosman Abdullah, 55, was hanged on November 22 and two men — a 39-year-old Malaysian and a 53-year-old Singaporean — were hanged on November 15 all for drug offences. So far this year, there have been nine executions by the Singaporean government — eight for drug trafficking and one for murder. According to an AFP tally, Singapore has hanged 25 people since it resumed carrying out the death penalty in March 2022 after a two-year halt during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sweden asks for China's cooperation over Baltic Sea cables cut while Chinese ship was nearby

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

Sweden has formally asked China to cooperate in explaining the recent rupture of two data cables on the Baltic Seabed in an area where a China-flagged vessel had been sighted, Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said. The two cables, one running from Finland to Germany and the other from Lithuania to Sweden, were both damaged in Swedish waters last week, in an area where the Yi Peng 3, a China-flagged bulk carrier, was seen. The Yi Peng 3 has been moored in international waters between Sweden and Denmark. Mr. Kristersson told a news conference in the town of Harpsund that Sweden would like the vessel to move to its own waters to allow for an inspection within the ongoing international investigation. "As I had said before, Sweden has expressed our desire for the ship to move to Swedish waters and we are in contact with China from Sweden," Mr. Kristersson said. "Today I can also tell you that in addition to that Sweden has also sent a formal request to China to cooperate with Swedish authorities in order to create clarity on what has happened." He was speaking after a security meeting of government leaders of the Baltic Sea region. In



the same news conference, Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk expressed "full solidarity and full support" and trust in Sweden's reliability as it acts in the interest of all countries in the Baltic region. Finnish, Swedish and German authorities have launched investigations into the rupture of the two cables. Germany's defence minister said that the damage appeared to have been caused by sabotage, though there is no proof at present.

Indian consular officials in Canada told they were under audio, video surveillance: Ministry of External Affairs



GNS News Agency, Dec 2

Consular officials at the Indian consulate in Vancouver were recently informed by the Canadian authorities that they have been and continue to be under "audio and video surveillance" and that their "private communications" have also been "intercepted", the Centre informed Parliament Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh in a written response in Rajya Sabha also said "respect for each other's concerns, territorial integrity and sovereignty are essential for a stable bilateral relationship". Mr. Singh was asked whether there are any instances of cyber surveillance or other forms of surveillance targeting Indian diplomats in Canada. "Yes. Recently, consular officials at the Indian Consulate in Vancouver were informed by the Canadian authorities that they have been, and continue to be under audio and video surveillance and that their private communications have also been intercepted."

"Government of India lodged a strong protest with the Canadian High Commission in New Delhi on this issue vide its note verbale dated November 2, 2024 as these actions were a flagrant violation of all diplomatic provisions," Mr. Singh said in his response. The Minister in his response also quoted a response of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson in his weekly briefing to the media recently in New Delhi.

"By citing technicalities, the Canadian Government cannot justify the fact that it is indulging in harassment and intimidation. Our diplomatic and consular personnel are already functioning in an environment of extremism and violence. This action of the Canadian Government aggravates the situation and is incompatible with established diplomatic norms and practices," the spokesperson had said. Mr. Singh was also asked the details and the steps taken to ensure the safety of Indian diplomats. "On the question of safety and security of Indian diplomats in Canada, the Government of India remains continuously engaged with the Ca-

nadian side to ensure that adequate protection is offered at all times to our diplomatic personnel and properties," he said.

The Minister also said the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, in its biennial National Cyber Threat Assessment (NCTA) report for 2025-2026 released on October 30, "placed India under 'Section 1 - Cyber threat from state adversaries'". The MEA had responded to the report on November 2, stating that it was yet another example of Canada's "negative" approach to ties with India. "As on other occasions, imputations have been made about India "without any evidence", the Minister said, quoting MEA's response. In a separate written response, Mr. Singh also replied to queries on the steps taken for resolving issues with Canada and whether it is a fact that the Government of Canada has "expressed its inability" to provide minimum security to our embassy, consulates and diplomats. "The two governments are in touch regarding the state of their bilateral ties. Respect for each other's concerns, territorial integrity and sovereignty are essential for a stable bilateral relationship. In this regard, Government of India has repeatedly urged the Canadian Government to take prompt and effective action against anti-India elements operating from its soil. This includes preventing secessionist and extremist elements from glorifying the assassination of our leaders issuing threats to our current political leadership and diplomats disrespecting and vandalising places of worship and espousing for the balkanisation of India by holding so-called 'referendums'," he added.

Mr. Singh further said while the Canadian authorities have been able to provide "security protection to our diplomats and diplomatic properties," they have recently "expressed their inability to provide security cover to our consular camps from the violent acts of secessionist and extremist elements." "With nearly 1.8 million Indo-Canadians (accounting for about 4.7% of Canada's population) and another one million comprising non-resident Indians including approximately 4,27,000 Indian students, Canada hosts one of the largest Indian diasporas abroad," he said.

"As such, the welfare, safety and security of Indian nationals in Canada is of utmost importance to Government of India," the Union Minister said. The relations between the two countries came under severe strain following Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in September last year of a "potential" involvement of Indian agents in Khalistan extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar's killing. New Delhi rejected Mr. Trudeau's charges as "absurd". India has been maintaining that the main issue between the two countries is that of Canada is giving space to pro-Khalistan elements operating from Canadian soil with impunity.

Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov visits North Korea to talk with military, political leaders

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

"Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov arrived in North Korea on Friday (November 29, 2024) for talks with North Korean military and political leaders," the Ministry said. The TASS news agency report citing the Ministry didn't specify who Mr. Belousov would be meeting or the purpose of the talks. North Korean state media didn't immediately confirm the visit. North Korea and Russia agree to expand their economic cooperation. Mr. Belousov, a former economist, replaced Sergei Shoigu as Defence Minister in May after Russian President Vladimir Putin started a fifth term in power. Photos released by Russia's Defence Ministry showed Belousov walking alongside North Korean Defence Minister No Kwang Chol on a red carpet laid out at a Pyongyang airport. North Korean military officials were seen clapping under a banner that read: "Complete support and solidarity with the fighting Russian army and people."

The visit came days after South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol met with a Ukrainian delegation led by Defence Minister Rustem Umerov and called for the two countries to formulate unspecified countermeasures in response to North Korea's dispatch of thousands of troops to Russia in support of its war fighting against Ukraine. Russia gave North Korea oil, anti-air missiles in exchange for troops: officials. The United States and its allies have said that North Korea has sent more than 10,000 soldiers to Russia in recent weeks and that some of those troops have already begun engaging in combat. North Korea has also been accused of supplying artillery systems, missiles and other military equipment to Russia that may help Russian President Vladimir Putin further extend an almost three-year war. There are also concerns in Seoul that North Korea in exchange for its troops and arms supplies could receive Russian technology transfers that could potentially advance the threat posed by leader Kim Jong Un's nuclear weapons and missile programme. Mr. Yoon's national security adviser, Shin Wonsik, said in a TV interview last week that Seoul assesses that Russia has provided air defense missile systems to North Korea in exchange for sending its troops.

Mr. Shin said Russia has also appeared to have given economic assistance to North Korea and various military technologies, including those needed for the North's efforts to build a reliable space-based surveillance system, which Mr. Kim has stressed as crucial for enhancing the threat of his nuclear-capable missiles targeting South Korea. Mr. Shin



didn't say whether Russia has already transferred sensitive nuclear weapons and ballistic missile technologies to North Korea. Mr. Yoon's office hasn't said whether the two governments discussed Seoul's possible weapons supply to Ukraine during his talks with Umerov. Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, South Korea has joined U.S.-led sanctions against Moscow and provided humanitarian and financial support to Kyiv. But Seoul has avoided directly supplying arms, citing a longstanding policy of not giving lethal weapons to countries actively engaged in conflicts. Mr. Yoon has said his government will take phased countermeasures, linking the level of its response to the degree of Russian-North Korean cooperation. It wasn't immediately clear whether Belousov would meet Mr. Kim, the North Korean leader. Last year, Mr. Kim hosted a Russian delegation led by then-Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and gave him a personal tour of a North Korean arms exhibition, in what outside critics likened to a sales pitch.

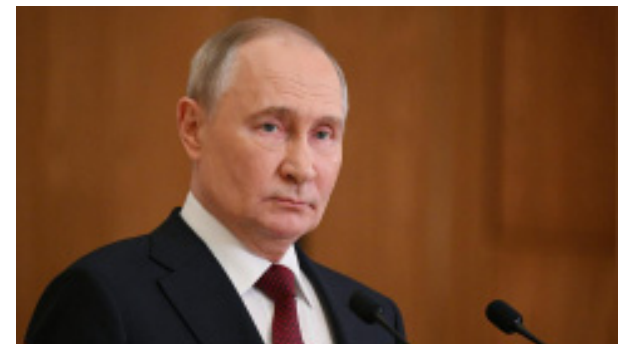
That event came weeks before Mr. Kim travelled to Russia for a summit with Mr. Putin, which sped up military cooperation between the countries. During another meeting in Pyongyang in June this year, Mr. Kim and Mr. Putin signed a pact stipulating mutual military assistance if either country is attacked, in what was considered the two countries' biggest defence deal since the end of the Cold War.

The Russian report about Belousov's visit came as South Korea scrambled fighter jets to repel six Russian and five Chinese warplanes that temporarily entered the country's air defence identification zone around its eastern and southern seas, according to the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff. The joint chiefs said the Russian and Chinese planes did not breach South Korea's territorial airspace.

Putin does not think Trump is safe after assassination attempts

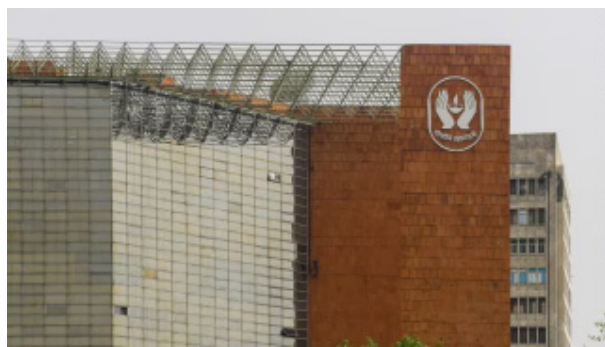
GNS News Agency, Dec 2

Russian President Vladimir Putin praised U.S. President-elect Donald Trump on Thursday (November 28, 2024) as an experienced and intelligent politician, but said he did not believe Mr. Trump was safe after attempts on his life. Mr. Trump was wounded in an assassination attempt in Pennsylvania in July. In a separate incident in September, a man was charged with attempted assassination after allegedly positioning himself with a rifle at one of Mr. Trump's Florida golf courses. Speaking to reporters in Kazakhstan after a summit, Mr. Putin said he had been shocked by the way the U.S. election campaign had unfolded. He cited "the absolutely uncivilised methods used to battle against Mr. Trump, up to and including an assassination attempt — and more than once." "By the way, in my opinion, he is not safe now," said Mr. Putin. File picture of Russia's President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President-elect Donald Trump in 2019. Unfortunately, in the history of the United States various incidents have happened. I think he (Trump) is intelligent and I hope he's cautious and understands this. "Shocked at Trump criticism Mr. Putin, who is himself heavily protected, said he had been even more shocked



though by how Mr. Trump's family and children had been criticised by political opponents during the U.S. election campaign. He called such behaviour "revolting" and said in Russia not even "bandits" would resort to such methods. Talking about what he described as the Biden administration's decision to escalate the war in Ukraine by allowing Kyiv to strike Russia with Western missiles, Mr. Putin speculated that it could be a ploy to either help Mr. Trump by giving him something to roll back or a way of making his life more difficult with Russia.

Union govt proposes increase in FDI limit in insurance sector to 100%



At present, there are 25 life insurance companies, including the state-run Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), and 34 general insurers in the country. (Express archives) At present, there are 25 life insurance companies, including the state-run Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), and 34 general insurers in the country. The Union Finance Ministry on Friday released a consultation paper proposing to raise the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) limit in the insurance sector from 74 per cent to 100 per cent. The FDI limit in the insurance sector was previously increased from 49 per cent to 74 per cent in February 2021.

The government stated that the proposal to amend certain provisions of insurance laws aims to ensure accessibility and affordability of insurance for citizens, foster the expansion and development of the insurance industry, and streamline business processes. "In this regard, a comprehensive review of the legislative framework governing the sector has been conducted in consultation with the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDAI) and

the industry. The proposal includes raising the FDI limit in Indian insurance companies from 74 per cent to 100 per cent, and enabling an insurer to carry on one or more classes of insurance business, as well as activities related or incidental to insurance," an office memorandum dated November 26 stated.

The proposal further mentioned that the requirement of Net Owned Funds for foreign reinsurers is also proposed to be reduced from Rs 5,000 crore to Rs 1,000 crore. Additionally, IRDAI is being empowered to specify lower entry capital (not less than Rs 50 crore) for underserved or unserved segments on a special-case basis. Notably, the Chairman of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), Debasish Panda, had earlier this month also advocated for 100 per cent foreign direct investment in the sector, citing the need for significant capital to meet the ambitious "Insurance for All by 2047" vision. The sector regulator is making efforts to attract more capital to this capital-intensive industry. According to the IRDAI Chairman, the insurance sector needs to infuse approximately ₹50,000 crore annually to double insurance penetration in the country. Insurance penetration refers to the ratio of insurance premiums written in a particular year to the gross domestic product (GDP). As per the Economic Survey 2023-24, overall insurance penetration in the country moderated slightly to 4 per cent in FY23, from 4.2 per cent in FY22. During the same period, insurance penetration in the life insurance segment declined from 3.2 per cent in FY22 to 3 per cent in FY23, while it remained flat at 1 per cent for the non-life insurance segment. At present, there are 25 life insurance companies, including the state-run Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), and 34 general insurers in the country.

The implications of CCI's investigation into Google over real money gaming

Google has complained of the "fragmented nature" of gaming legislations in India, where various state governments can have different laws. (Reuters file) Google has complained of the "fragmented nature" of gaming legislations in India, where various state governments can have different laws. The Competition Commission of India has launched a probe into Google for alleged abuse of its dominant position in the real money gaming (RMG) ecosystem, and has tasked its director general to carry out a "thorough probe" into the matter within the next two months.

The decision comes in response to a complaint filed by real money gaming (RMG) platform Winzo, which argued that a pilot project introduced by Google to allow some fantasy sports apps like Dream11 and rummy games on its Play Store were discriminatory towards other companies in the industry, and created unfair market distortion. "User acquisition and marketing costs constitute more than 60-70% of businesses' expenditures. When the margins for these players increased significantly due to cheaper distribution from Google Play Store, the margins for non-DFS and rummy players did not improve proportionately. This policy has a far-reaching impact on disrupting the market and throwing many early stage ventures out of business. Innovation and creation thrives on fair market conditions, which is what we are fighting for as a business," said Saumya Singh Rathore, Winzo's co-founder.

Prima facie, the CCI said that prolonged pilot programmes and preferential policies distort competition, and a lack of transparency in policy enforcement raised red flags about Google's conduct. In 2022, Google updated its policies under which it commenced a pilot programme to test hosting of two types of RMGs on its Play Store - Daily Fantasy Sports (DFS) and rummy in India for a period of one year. Winzo said that the decision to limit the pilot's scope to only DFS and rummy apps and disallow all other RMGs, was "devoid of any reason" and "discriminatory and arbitrary". It alleged that its competitor Dream11, "had gained additional user traction of about 1.7 crores within two months from the launch of the pilot programme". Winzo also alleged that in 2022, Google restricted its advertisements policy by only allowing DFS and Rummy app advertisers to host advertisements, and given the "unprecedented potential" to increase business by accessing users through



Google advertisements, restricting its ads was an abuse of Google's dominant position. Winzo also claimed that after a user sideloaded its app (from its website), and proceeded to make an in-app payment through Google Pay, the application showed warning messages like: 'This person might be flagged as risky. Check again or cancel this payment' and 'This is an unusually high amount. Check again before sending money'.

Google told the CCI that since there was no "objective" definition of games of skill in India, with such determination dependent on the specific format, features, rules of the game, it requires a case-by-case consideration. The company also said that the online gaming rules notified by the IT Ministry, which required setting up of self regulatory bodies to determine what was kosher to be allowed on online gaming intermediaries such as the Play Store, were hanging fire. Google also complained of the "fragmented nature" of gaming legislations in India, where various state governments can have different laws. Increasing scrutiny. The CCI's investigation comes just days after it fined Meta, the parent company of WhatsApp, Rs 213.14 crore for "abusing" its dominant position in relation to the messaging platform's controversial 2021 update to its privacy policy - showing the growing antitrust scrutiny on tech giants in India. The Commission also issued cease-and-desist directions and directed Meta and WhatsApp to implement certain behavioural remedies within a defined timeline. As per the CCI's order, WhatsApp will not be allowed to share user data collected on its platform with other Meta Companies for advertising purposes, for a period of five years.

India GDP growth slumps to a seven-quarter low of 5.4% on 'sluggish' manufacturing, mining

Q2 GDP India Q2 GDP Growth: Manufacturing, which accounts for over 17 per cent of the total Gross Value Added (GVA) output, grew by just 2.2 per cent in July-September as against 7 per cent growth in April-June and 14.3 per cent growth in the corresponding period last year. India Q2 GDP Growth Rate: India's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth slumped to a seven-quarter low of 5.4 per cent in July-September, coming in much lower than the consensus estimate of 6.5 per cent. A "sluggish growth" in manufacturing and mining, along with continued slow pace of government expenditure and weak private consumption weighed on the economic growth, data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Friday showed. The country's GDP growth was 6.7 per cent in the April-June quarter and 8.1 per cent in the year-ago period.

Manufacturing, which accounts for over 17 per cent of the total Gross Value Added (GVA) output, grew by just 2.2 per cent in July-September as against 7 per cent growth in April-June and 14.3 per cent growth in the corresponding period last year. Mining and quarrying seem to have been sharply hit by the extended rainfall as it recorded a contraction of 0.1 per cent in July-September compared with 7.2 per cent growth in the previous quarter and 11.1 per cent in the year-ago period. Among the primary sectors, agriculture was the only bright spot with 3.5 per cent growth in July-September as against 2 per cent in the previous quarter and 1.7 per cent in the year-ago period. Construction sector recorded a growth of 7.7 per cent in Q2, slower than 10.5 per cent in Q1 and 13.6 per cent in the year-ago period.

Services sector grew slower than expected at 7.1 per cent in Q2 as against 7.2 per cent in Q1 and 6 per cent in the corresponding period a year ago. Private final consumption expenditure, an indicator of consumption demand, grew by 6 per cent to Rs 24.82 lakh crore in July-September as against 7.4 per cent growth in Q1 and 2.6 per cent a year ago. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation said that despite "sluggish growth" in manufacturing and mining, growth in the first half came in at 6.2 per cent. "Despite sluggish growth observed in 'manufacturing' (2.2%)

and 'mining & quarrying' (-0.1%) sectors in Q2 of FY 2024-25, real GVA in H1 (April-September) has recorded a growth rate of 6.2%," the MoSPI statement said.

Estimates from 12 economists had shown GDP growth slowing to 6.5 per cent in Q2. Slow pace of capital expenditure has been a concern even as it picked up in Q2 after the model code of conduct-induced slump during the Lok Sabha elections earlier, remaining below the year-ago levels for both states and Centre. Services growth was expected to lose some momentum due to a pullback in credit growth. "GDP growth dipped much sharper than expected to a tepid 5.4% in Q2 FY2025, with a number of sectors throwing up negative surprises, especially the anaemic outturn of manufacturing growth and the marginal contraction in mining, as well as a slower than projected growth of the services sector," Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA said.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has projected GDP growth rate for FY25 at 7.2 per cent and 7.1 per cent for FY26. Last week, Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth had said there is "no significant downside risk" to the 6.5-7 per cent growth projection for the ongoing financial year 2024-25, as detailed in the Economic Survey, despite a likely slowdown in the September quarter.

Some economists still maintained that despite the Q2 number, growth will pick up in the second half due to improvement in agricultural output and rural demand. "Following today's downbeat data release, the outlook for H2 FY2025 is decidedly mixed. We foresee a likely improvement in rural demand owing to the robust growth in kharif foodgrain output and upbeat outlook for rabi crops amid replenished reservoir levels, as well as expectations of a back-ended pick up in the Government of India's capex. However, ICRA remains watchful of the impact of a slowdown in personal loan growth on urban consumption as well as geopolitical and tariff-related developments on commodity prices and external demand. On balance, ICRA expects GDP growth to pickup in H2 FY2025, on the back of Government capex, agri output and rural consumption, resulting in a full-year expansion of 6.5-6.7%," Nayar said.

As Australia becomes first country to ban social media for kids under 16, a psychologist reflects on the move



Here's a breakdown of the effects of social media on different age groups, as explained by Vatsa, and why this ban may be a step in the right direction. Here's a breakdown of the effects of social media on different age groups, as explained by Vatsa, and why this ban may be a step in the right direction. Australia is taking a bold step in child safety by introducing a social media ban for children under 16. By restricting access until children are 16, the goal is to foster healthier online habits, encourage more face-to-face interactions, and reduce exposure to harmful content. The move has received mixed reactions. Supporters argue that it prioritises child well-being, while critics question how effectively such a ban can be enforced and its impact on children's ability to learn digital literacy skills. Counselling psychologist Sriшти Vatsa unequivocally supports the fact that "social media does more harm than good to children at an impressionable age." Here's a breakdown of the effects of social media on different age groups, as explained by Vatsa, and why this ban may be a step in the right direction. At this age, the benefits of social media are extremely limited, even with access to educational content. According to Vatsa, "Children can quickly become addicted to screen time, leading to reduced physical activity and disturbed sleep or eating patterns." These factors are crucial for healthy growth. Research also suggests that

excessive exposure at this age can hinder impulse control, social behaviour, and emotional regulation. Pre-teens are at a critical stage of self-discovery, and while social media may offer creative outlets and a way to connect with friends, it also brings increased risks.

Vatsa warns of the dangers of cyberbullying and online predators, especially as children in this age group begin to develop more independence and may hide their online activities from parents. "Unhealthy screen habits can interfere with emotional and social development, putting them at a disadvantage in forming real-world relationships," she adds. Social media kids By restricting access until children are 16, the goal is to foster healthier online habits, encourage more face-to-face interactions, and reduce exposure to harmful content. Teenagers gain the most from social media in terms of social connections and access to supportive communities, especially during their formative years of understanding their bodies and sexuality. However, these benefits often come at a cost. Vatsa notes that "teens are more susceptible to anxiety, depression, and body image issues, often exacerbated by online relationships and the pressure to maintain a curated digital persona." Sleep deprivation, another common consequence of excessive screen use, can further harm their mental health and academic performance. What parents can do Vatsa suggests that parents use this ban as an opportunity to instill better offline habits. She recommends: Encouraging physical activities and hobbies to reduce screen dependence. Discussing the potential dangers of social media openly. Supervising children's online activities to ensure safe internet use. Promoting family time to build stronger connections outside the digital world. While Australia's ban may not be a universal solution, it sheds light on the growing need to address the adverse effects of social media on young minds. As Vatsa aptly concludes, "The digital world offers many opportunities, but children need to be guided to ensure it doesn't do more harm than good."

As pre-wedding festivities begin, bride-to-be Sobhita Dhulipala reveals the key ingredient for a happy marriage

Actor Sobhita Dhulipala, who is set to tie the knot with Naga Chaitanya on December 4 at Annapurna Studios in Hyderabad, recently shared her thoughts on what she believes is the perfect ingredient for a happy marriage. While trust and shared goals are often considered the foundation of a strong relationship, she emphasised the vital role of humour in maintaining a sense of lightness and resilience. "For me, it's humour... moments of lightness. That's what binds it together," she shared during an interview with Galatta India. The host added a personal note, revealing the actor's witty side: "A lot of people might not know this, or maybe they do, but you are very funny." According to reports, the couple's pre-wedding festivities have begun, with pictures and videos from the couple's Mangala snanam (haldi ceremony) doing the rounds on social media. But, how important is humour in maintaining a healthy marriage?

Sonal Khangarot, licensed rehabilitation counsellor and psychotherapist, The Answer Room, says, "Humour plays an important role in a relationship — it adds to the playfulness, diffuses tension and enhances intimacy. Shared moments of laughter helps individuals navigate difficult times, find each other during a fight, strengthen their bond."

Most critical factors — besides humour — that contribute to a happy and lasting marriage Khangarot highlights, "Marriage, like any other relationship, is a full-time commitment. The promotions and demotions within it are often subtle but can significantly impact family dynamics, sometimes shifting them completely." Trust is the foundation of a happy relationship, she says, ensuring that both partners feel supported and secure. "Effective communication is another crucial factor in a successful partnership — the ability to express one's feelings and be receptive to a partner's perspective is essential," she tells indianexpress.com. Shared values and goals provide a common ground, helping couples navigate challenges during difficult times. While trust and shared goals are often considered the foundation of a strong relationship, Sobhita emphasised the vital role of humour in maintaining a sense of lightness and resilience. While trust and shared goals



are often considered the foundation of a strong relationship, Sobhita emphasised the vital role of humour in maintaining a sense of lightness and resilience. Can humour cross the line into being harmful?

The psychologist asserts that there is a fine line between a 'laughing with me' and a 'laughing at me' approach. When humour comes at the cost of mocking someone, being sarcastic, or belittling, it can erode a relationship, break trust between partners, and weaken the bond. If one partner feels disrespected by a joke, Khangarot says, it is important to "address the issue to prevent such behaviour from being repeated." Sobhita Dhulipala, Naga Chaitanya Pictures and videos from the couple's Mangala snanam (haldi ceremony) doing the rounds on social media Advice for couples on balancing lightheartedness with deeper emotional connection in their marriage Life is filled with daily hassles and significant events that can drain a person, says Khangarot. "If you find someone who feels like your soulmate, someone who feels like home, cherish them, celebrate them, and ensure they remain by your side through the good, bad, and challenging times of life." "Ultimately, a happy marriage thrives on mutual understanding, respect, and shared joy. By thoughtfully integrating humour and prioritising trust, communication, and shared values, couples can build a relationship that withstands life's challenges and grows stronger over time," she mentions.

Prepare to face the Winter season with top picks from Amazon.in's Winter Wellness store

With the cold weather knocking on our doors, it is time to nurture ourselves and our families. Winters can be challenging for our health, particularly when it comes to boosting our immunity and reducing discomfort. However, the right products can help make this season more comfortable and enjoyable. With Amazon.in's Winter Wellness Store, sponsored by Dabur, discover a wide selection of winter wellness essentials from top brands like Baidyanath, Kapiva, Kofol, Kwick and Horlicks, among other winter favorites so that you stay warm, healthy, and active. Here are some of the top picks for you to enjoy the winter season with ease: A strong immune system is your best defense against the winter woes. For adults looking to boost their body's natural defence, Dabur Chyawanprash Awaleha and Baidyanath Asli Ayurved Chyawanprash Special are the perfect options for them. These traditional Ayurvedic formulas, enriched with herbs and antioxidants not only strengthen the immune system but also keep your energy levels up. Similarly, the Little Joys Immunity Kit is an excellent choice for children which keeps kids protected throughout the season. During the winter season, many of us find ourselves looking for comfort foods that can warm both our bodies and souls. Horlicks Strength Plus is a very good choice for those looking to add essential nutrients while also supporting strong bones and muscles. To kick off your mornings with warmth and energy, you can enjoy the rich flavours of NESCAFÉ Roastery or the robust Tata Tea Gold Premium Assam Teas. If you are in the mood for a delightful treat, Hershey's Cocoa Powder and Betty Crocker Choco Fudge Instant Cake Mix Powder provide a delicious way to indulge.

Along with holidays and excitement, the season can also bring joint pain, body aches, and muscle stiffness. Products like BBETTER OrthoUrja and KERALA Ayurveda Myaxyl Ayurvedic Pain Relief Oil are perfect for relieving this discomfort. These Ayurvedic oils are designed to soothe joint pain and inflammation, making them a must-have for

anyone who struggles with winter stiffness. Other than that, Kofol Roll On provides convenient, targeted pain relief with its easy-to-use applicator, allowing direct application to affected areas. For muscle pains, OZONE KWIK Pain Relief Oil offers a cooling formula to alleviate aches and reduce inflammation. Winter can leave your skin feeling dry and your energy levels low, which makes it very important to stay hydrated and enjoy nutritious snacks. Kelzai Natural Rejuvenator Volcanic Mineral Rich Still Water is a great way to hydrate from within as it is rich in minerals which nourish and revitalize your skin. When it comes to snacks, Happilo 100% Natural Premium California Dried Almonds make for a wholesome, nutrient-packed option that boosts energy and supports immunity. For the times when you crave something sweet, Kinder Joy Milk Chocolates and Ferrero Rocher chocolates provide the perfect indulgence to warm you up and satisfy your sweet tooth. With these simple yet effective choices, you can nourish your skin, stay energized, and enjoy delightful treats throughout the winter season. Amazon.in makes winter wellness shopping seamless with convenient and reliable delivery, ensuring your essential products arrive effortlessly at your doorstep. At Amazon.in, customers can explore exceptional winter care offers from top local and international brands like Dabur, Kapiva, Kofol, Kwick, Baidyanath Asli Ayurved, Horlicks, and Kerala Ayurveda, with discounts of up to 40% on selected healthcare and grocery essentials. You can conveniently browse a wide selection of products, from immunity boosters and pain relief options to delicious treats, all in one place. This content is sponsored and does not reflect the views or opinions of IE Online Media Services Pvt Ltd. No journalist is involved in creating sponsored material and it does not imply any endorsement whatsoever by the editorial team. IE Online Media Services takes no responsibility for the content that appears in sponsored articles and the consequences thereof, directly, indirectly or in any manner. Viewer discretion is advised.

Dia Mirza recalls being protected by Salman Khan when hundreds of fans gathered around them in Rajasthan: 'He made sure I was safe'



gether, I would just look at him everyday and think to myself that I can't believe I am actually working with this person whose films I have watched over and over again."

Dia Mirza recalled shooting with Salman Khan in Rajasthan where hundreds of people surrounded them but Salman made sure that Dia was safe and secure. She shared, "The kind of gender balance you see on sets today, didn't exist in those days. Unless there were female dancers on set, there were hardly any women. It was a male dominated space. And I remember him being extremely protective and extremely caring." Dia then recalled the shoot of a song on the outskirts of Jaipur where they needed extra security. "We were shooting a song in Rajasthan, 'Bindiya chamke choodi khaanke.' One day, while we were coming back, hundreds of people were following us. They were screaming and whistling and it was quite a lot. Salman and I were sent in one car with security so that we'd be safe because the place we were shooting was very crowded. And I will never forget how he made sure that I was put into the car first," she said and added, "That for me is his distinct trademark that I will never forget. I think there are very few actors who are this giving and this protective." Dia added that the Salman she knew was very "light". She mentioned, "I don't think I ever remember seeing him carrying any of the burden of the weight that he had. He was always light, playful, happy, peaceful and fun to be around."

Dia Mirza, who has been receiving a lot of love from the re-release of her debut film *Rehnaa Hai Terre Dil Mein*, recently shared that if her film with Salman Khan, *Tumko Na Bhool Paayenge*, re-released in theatres, it could get a lot of love from audiences. In an interview, Dia recalled her memories of working with Salman and shared that he was extremely caring and protective of her at the time as she was quite new in the film industry. In a chat with Connect Cine, Dia shared that she had "very special" memories from the shoot of the film and said, "I was a big Salman Khan fan when I signed that film and when we started to work to-

Jimmy Shergill recalls falling off the chair when Gulzar offered him a role in *Maachis*: 'Gulzar sahab knew me as Jasjeet Sheirgill'



character. I said, 'If given an option, I will choose Jaimal Singh.' He asked, 'Why?' I said, 'His name is Jimmy and so is my pet name. Until now, Gulzar sahab knew me as Jasjeet Shergill. He said, 'Oh, okay, do me a favour, grow your beard and hair because you are doing that role.' I almost fell off the chair. That is how it all started." After *Maachis*, Jimmy Shergill starred in films like *Mohabbatein*, *Dil Vil Pyar Vyar*, *Munna Bhai MBBS*, *Tanu Weds Manu*, and *My Name Is Khan*, among others. Currently, the actor's new film *Sikandar Ka Muqaddar* is streaming on Netflix.

Jimmy Shergill made his acting debut with the 1996 film *Maachis*, starring Tabu, Chandrachur Singh, Om Puri, Kulbhushan Kharbanda and Kanwaljit Singh, among others. The movie, directed by Gulzar, opened to positive reviews and was a commercial success. The film even bagged two National Film Awards – Best Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment Award and Best Actress Award for Tabu. While the movie found takers across India, the casting of Shergill came as a surprise to many, including the actor himself.

Jimmy, along with his *Sikandar Ka Muqaddar* co-stars Tamannaah Bhatia and Avinash Tiwary, attended the second edition of SCREEN LIVE on Thursday. During the conversation, the actor recalled his struggling days. Jimmy shared how he went to Gulzar in the hope of bagging the job of an assistant director. However, the director had different plans. Jimmy Shergill, who was convinced that one has to work as an AD for at least seven years before getting his first break, fell off his chair when Gulzar offered him a role in his film *Maachis*.

The actor said, "I think its called hustle now. It was struggle in our times. So the hustle is on. When I first met Gulzar sir, I thought he would hire me as his Assistant Director, but he had other plans. He asked me which part do you think is the best among these three roles? I said all three of them are great. He said, 'But, if you will have to pick one, who will that be?' It was like a dream to be seated before a legendary director and being able to choose one

Ed Sheeran to perform in six Indian cities in 2025; here's when and where to buy tickets



will conclude his India Tour 2025 in Delhi NCR on February 15. He will be performing at Leisure Valley Ground. Exclusive pre-sale of tickets for HSBC Credit and Debit cardholders will begin on December 9, 2024 at 12 pm IST on BookMyShow, with a special discount on limited tickets. General on-sale of tickets for the Ed Sheeran:

Ed Sheeran is all set to return to India after his electrifying performance in Mumbai earlier this year. In March, the singer had promised his fans to return to the country soon. On Friday, Sheeran took to his Instagram handle to share the new dates of his India Tour 2025. This time, the singer will cover six Indian cities. This will mark his most extensive tour in the region to date.

Sharing the details, Sheeran wrote, "Coming back to India for my biggest ever tour of your beautiful country. Also coming to play Bhutan for the first time, coming back to Qatar for the first time in a decade and playing that beautiful amphitheatre in Bahrain again. What a way to start 2025, can't wait to see you all there. India on sale Dec 11th. Bhutan on sale Nov 30th. Qatar & Bahrain on sale Dec 6th x."

Ed Sheeran's record-breaking + = x Tour will kick off in Pune on January 30 at Yash Lawns. The performance will be followed by a concert in Hyderabad on February 2 at Ramoji Film City. Sheeran's next stop will be Chennai, where the singer will perform on February 5 at YMCA Ground. On February 8, the singer will perform in Bengaluru's NICE Grounds. Sheeran will also perform in Shillong on February 12 at JN Stadium. The "Perfect" singer

Adil Hussain gets a cheque for Rs 5 lakh every couple of months for doing three episodes of *Star Trek Discovery*: 'Crazy, no?'



for me. Can you believe it? I'm just a nobody from India. In comparison to what happens in our country, you're a guest actor somewhere from Assam..."

But contrary to how he is treated in his own country, Adil said that the cast and crew welcomed him warmly, and the director introduced him to everybody. Adil even made a little speech, "I was born in a town where newspapers used to come three days after they were published, and today,

Actor Adil Hussain, who has worked in several international projects, opened up about working on *Star Trek: Discovery*. The actor said that while he wasn't paid much for his guest appearance on the science-fiction series, he earns thousands of dollars in 'residuals', which means that every time the network earns money from the programme, he gets a 1% cut. Adil also spoke about his memorable first day on set, when the cast and crew gave him a special welcome and made him feel special. Appearing on Cyrus Broacha's *Cyrus Says* podcast, the actor said, "I auditioned, I got the part, and I was called in. Of course, I had done a big Hollywood film called *Life of Pi*, but that was long ago. I went there, to the Pinewood Studios in Toronto, and the sets were huge. I was asked to come in 10 days before shoot, and for 10 days, the only thing they did was take my measurements for my costume." He continued, "It was a three-episode guest appearance. They paid me little money, but the good thing is that I keep getting residuals every two months. If they are earning money, I earn money, 1%. So every three or four months, I get \$5000 or \$6000 (around Rs 5 lakh). Crazy, no?" Recalling his first day on set, Adil Hussain said, "I reach set, get my makeup done, and they escorted me to the shooting floor. I see all the heads of department, and my three co-stars, including the main actor Sonequa Martin-Green, all standing in a circle waiting

Kalki Koechlin didn't get any film roles for 2 years after *Dev D*; lived on vada pao, traveled in local trains



etary benefits.

In a chat with *After Hours with All About Eve*, Kalki said that her first major low in her professional career happened right after *Dev D*. "Right after *Dev D*, I didn't have another film for about two years. I think the next film was *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*." Kalki shared that for those two years, she did a play that she put together after winning a prize of Rs 1 lakh. When asked how she managed her finances during this time, Kalki said that she lived on vada pao and traveled in local trains.

... 'Kalki Koechlin shared that she has the image of a successful person when in fact, she is a lot less successful than what people think. "People know me and see my face and everyone is really familiar with me but then they are really surprised to see me on public transport. They say, 'How can you not be with a bodyguard?' Like it's this weird dichotomy where somehow I have an image which is bigger than who I really am," she said.

Kalki Koechlin made her debut in the movies with Anurag Kashyap's *Dev D* and her performance in the film was quite appreciated. But despite the appreciation that she received at the time, along with some fame, Kalki did not get another acting gig for the next two years. Kalki opened up about this phase of her life in a recent chat and also spoke about choosing certain kinds of work just for its mon-

Kalki then shared that she has come a long way since her early days in the movies and she is fully aware when she takes up a job just for money, and those, she said, are normally corporate gigs. "There are things that I do just for money," she said and added, "Mostly like corporate gigs. Things where you know it's an exchange, where they want your face and you want the money."

AR Rahman and Saira Banu's divorce lawyer says reconciliation is still possible: 'It's a long marriage and a lot of thought has gone...'

Since the time AR Rahman and Saira Banu announced that they have filed for divorce, people have been curious about the further proceedings in the matter. And now, the couple's divorce lawyer Vandana Shah has opened up about a possibility of reconciliation and custody of their three kids. In a conversation with Vicky Lalwani on his YouTube channel, Vandana opened up about the divorce of the duo, which left fans stunned worldwide. In the interview, when asked about the custody of Rahman and Saira's children, she replied, "That's not decided yet... It is yet to be decided... But some of them are adults, they are free to choose who they stay with." She was also questioned if a huge alimony would be paid in the case, to which Vandana said she doesn't want to comment on the same but defended Saira Banu, claiming she is not a money-minded woman.

Interestingly, Vandana Shah doesn't rule out reconciliation between AR Rahman and Saira Banu. She said, "I have not said that reconciliation is not possible. I am an eternal optimist, and I always talk about love and romance. The joint statement is quite clear. It talks about pain and separation. It's a long marriage and a lot of thought has gone into coming to this decision, but nowhere have I said that



reconciliation is not possible." Earlier this month, AR Rahman and Saira Banu announced their separation after 29 years of marriage. They reasoned it with 'significant emotional strain in their relationship.' The couple tied the knot in 1995 and have three children together – Khatija, Raheema, and Ameen.

Tamannaah Bhatia feels she didn't give her best to 'Kaavaalaa', reveals it took a minute to give nod to 'Aaj Ki Raat'

Tamannaah Bhatia has been on a roll since her two dance numbers, "Aaj Ki Raat" from *Stree 2* and "Kavaalaa" from *Jailer* released. The actor was praised by the audience for her charm and moves in the songs. Ahead of the release of her new film, *Sikandar Ka Muqaddar*, Tamannaah was joined by her co-stars Avinash Tiwary and Jimmy Shergill in the second edition of SCREEN LIVE, which is one of the flagship events of the newly relaunched SCREEN, the one-stop shop for quality journalism in Indian entertainment space.

During the candid conversation, Tamannaah revealed that she took her sweet time to make the decision of doing the song "Aaj Ki Raat" from Amar Kaushik's *Stree 2*, starring Rajkumar Rao and Shradha Kapoor. She shared, "It took me a minute to figure out whether I want to do Aaj Ki Raat or not because I just had a song (Kaavaalaa) that came out."

The actor went on to share that back then, she felt that she could have given a better shot to the Rajinikanth starrer's track. "To be honest, I really felt that I hadn't given Kaavaalaa my best. I felt like I could have done something better. When Aaj Ki Raat came along, Amar explained the whole story to me and said that I have to play and dance like Shama. He said, 'You are playing a character, this is not going to be just another song.' That gave me a little bit of food for thought, because I was like, 'Yes, I can play this differently,'" she said. Tamannaah Bhatia also shared that she never imagined that "Aaj Ki Raat" would be this successful and receive so much love from the audience. She added, "But



definitely, there was no imagination of what's happening right now. I could not have imagined that this would be the most amazing thing to ever happen to me. I thought it would be like just a song that people would like. Nobody can imagine how much. So, I think I am blessed to get so much love from you guys."

Talking about her next *Sikandar Ka Muqaddar*, it is a heist film doubling up as an intense cat-and-mouse chase that spans almost twenty years. The movie stars Jimmy Shergill as the relentless cop Jaswinder Singh who chases three suspects — Mangesh Desai (Rajeev Mehta), Kamini Singh (Tamannaah Bhatia) and Sikandar Sharma (Avinash Tiwary). Helmed by Neeraj Pandey, the film is currently streaming on Netflix.

Raghu Ram says he'd rather nail himself to 'burning building' than do *Roadies* again, says angry avatar is Hulk: 'I'm Bruce Banner'

Raghu Ram, best known as the creator of the hit reality show *MTV Roadies*, spoke about the persona that he cultivated on the show. Raghu became synonymous with loud outbursts and foul-mouthed rants as a judge on the show, leading his future mother-in-law to become concerned about giving her daughter away to him. In an interview, Raghu said that he has shed that version of himself, which he has named 'Roadies Raghu'. Comparing his alter-ego to the Incredible Hulk and calling himself Bruce Banner, Raghu said that he would never consider doing *Roadies* again because he cannot put himself through that turmoil. Appearing on the *Unfiltered with AminJaz* podcast, he said, "I know that people have an expectation from me that I get very worked up. That was true. But a lot happened in my life that changed me. I'm not the guy that you've seen, at all. I call him Roadies Raghu. He was amazing. There was a reason he was born, and that reason was justified. But later, it became unmanageable. I couldn't live with it, so I had to let him go."

Raghu continued, "In my life, there have been ups and downs. Rock-bottoms a few times. A rock-bottom hap-

pened. Now, I'm very different. I live my life very differently. For example, I don't consume content online. I don't consume the news, at all. No religion. No politics. All these things really f**k me up. When people say that I should do *Roadies* auditions again, I say, 'I would rather nail my d**k to a burning building than put myself through that again.' Elaborating more about *Roadies Raghu*, he said, "When he comes out, it's entertaining for everybody. But you have to understand, he's Hulk, I'm Bruce Banner. He comes and goes, leaving me to pick up the pieces of the devastation that he's left behind. I'm talking about him in the third person not because I'm a megalomaniac, but because I've had to dissociate myself from him." Asked what his relationship with his alter-ego is, Raghu said, "I love that person. The reason he was there is because he protected me. He protected me at a time when I couldn't. He expressed when I couldn't. I'm an introvert, and I'm a non-confrontational guy. In my relationship, there is no argument that has ever happened. I don't do it. This guy is confrontational. He picks fights. He's like a bull in a china shop."

Novak Djokovic says Andy Murray was not expecting coaching call: 'It's still a shock decision'



GNS News Agency, Dec 2

Novak Djokovic announced Andy Murray as his coach for next year's Australian Open on Novak Djokovic announced Andy Murray as his coach for next year's Australian Open. Novak Djokovic has revealed the thinking behind the decision to bring his long-time rival, Andy Murray, into his team as his coach for a short-term agreement that will continue at least until the 2025 Australian Open. "I was going through a process of thinking about next season and trying to figure out what I need at this stage of my career," Djokovic told Sky Sports. "Because I stopped with my coach Goran Ivanisevic, that I was very successful with for many years, in March." "So I took about

six months to really think about if I really need a coach, and if yes, who that's going to be and the profile of the coach." The 24-time Major winner, currently on a lean run having gone through the 2024 season without winning a single Major, said that Murray was not expecting the call, but his former experience meant he fit the bill. "We were going through different names and I realised the perfect coach for me at this point would be someone that has been through the experiences that I'm going through, possible multiple Grand Slam winner, former No 1. I was thinking about different people and then an Andy Murray discussion appeared on the table with me and my team," Novak Djokovic added. "It was still a shock decision... It caught him a little bit off guard as well because he wasn't expecting it, so we connected really fast and he accepted after a few days." Novak Djokovic said the partnership is exciting for tennis: "I couldn't be more excited about it. This collaboration is a surprise to me as well, to everyone. But it's exciting for tennis. He's been one of my greatest rivals. We're the same age. We've played in all the biggest stadiums in our sport. So I can't wait to get out on the court and prepare for next season." He stressed that the decision is about maximising the tennis left in his body, which has been mostly healthy even through his lean patch. The desire to create more history remains. "That's one of the biggest reasons why I asked Andy to work with me. Because I still have big plans. So as long as that's the case, I'll keep going," Novak Djokovic added.

How Cricket forged the idea of Australia and gave it a national identity

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

Relentless rain forced an early abandonment of the opening day's play of the two-day pink-ball game between the Indians and the Prime Minister's XI at Manuka Oval in Canberra. India had a photo-op with the Australian PM, Anthony Albanese, gave him a floppy sun-hat with their autographs, and soon left the arena. The setting – the game and the capital city – though allows us to dwell on the importance of cricket to Australians. Canberra is a city of compromise. A city that was birthed, constructed, designed as a balm to developing wounds in the Australian political society. More than hundred years ago, in 1913, due to political rivalries between New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, and Victoria, the fight was one to where to have the capital and to locate the parliament house.

Once it was deemed that the capital had to be at least 100 miles (160 kms) away from Sydney, the Canberra region, inhabited by the Ngunnawal people for thousands of years, was finally chosen. A worldwide designing contest too was undertaken, and the American architect couple Marion Mahony Griffin and her husband Walter Burley won, and dreamed up the capital in their imagination. The Manuka Oval celebrated its 100th year anniversary this July, turning from a park to a fenced cricket oval, and later to this picturesque arena with open-stands with flood-lights. It's not a surprise that the idea to host a Prime Minister's XI fixture at this ground stuck to the then prime minister Robert Menzies in 1953; it's a surprise that it didn't strike earlier as cricket and politics in not only entwined in Australia, it can be even said that very idea of Australia was forged by cricket. Such was the importance of the summer game to this country.

Cricket gave Australia a sense of national identity. A lovely little story captures the pre-nationalism era in Australia. A ship carrying a motley lot of Australian cricketers to England hit a storm in the seas in 1877. When Alec Bannerman was asked by Fred Spofforth, Australia's premier fast bowler nicknamed the 'Demon', who would he save if the ship sank, the reply came swiftly, "First my brother Charles and then you". Spofforth queried, "What about the Victorians?" and Alec went, "I would let them drown!" It was a period of parochialism in Australian cricket and society but things were to change soon. Cricket played a huge role in it. That period also reflected Australia's affinity with England. It was the days when Britannia ruled Australian culture. In his retirement speech, Spofforth said it would be a privilege if England gave him a chance to play. Billy Murdoch, who captained Australia in the match where the Ashes legend originated, later represented England against South Africa and on his death, was buried in England. Albert Trotter too played for England. Australia hadn't yet cut the umbilical cord with England. It was around the end of 1880's that cricket helped shape the idea of Australia. The colonies which never did anything together were beginning to assemble under the umbrella of cricket. In 1878, in their cricketing tour of England, they had a Tasmanian, and then in the follow-up tours they had three South Australians and six New South Welshmen and five Victorians. Would Australian nationalism have suffered if they had lost in those early games?

Gideon Haigh, a cricket historian and a writer, thinks so. "Every country tends to value those things they are successful at. If we hadn't been a not so successful cricket country, if we had lost the Oval Test of 1882, if we had lost the Ashes series of 1897, perhaps we wouldn't have regarded cricket as fundamentally important as we do," Haigh



had told this newspaper. "It's amazing and significant how early victories can be when you are searching for a sense of nation, of national identity. The Australians were able to accomplish as a single entity what the squabbling colonies were unable to attain politically was a significant step." The 1897 series against England was a very important landmark in cricket and society. It coincided with a series of pre-federation conferences in which the individual colonies of Australia were trying to reach an agreement at some sort of a federation. In that 1897 tour, Harry Trotter's side of Australians thrashed England 4-1 and that convincing margin of victory was toasted back in Australia.

The Bulletin, a very old Australian magazine which finally shut down in 2008, hailed that victory as "as being more to enhance the cause of Australian nationality than could be achieved by miles of erudite essays and impassioned appeal". When the Australians toured England in 1899, they adopted for the first time ever, a motley of sage green and gold and even flew it in a flag over their headquarters at the inns of Court Hotel. Australianism now had an emotional visual construct as well.

It's also important to keep in mind that Australia didn't have many social and cultural narratives. It's a modern nation. Or as Gideon says, "It's a geographical construct. We didn't have any political identity until 1901. Like what CLR James wrote of cricket in the Caribbean, here cricket provided us access to a readymade culture and helped us assert our superiority in certain controlled and limited respects." In 1901, through the process of Federation, six separate British self-governing colonies of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, and Western Australia formed one nation. Many of the Federation fathers actually learnt how to run the country through their experience of running cricket. The first prime minister of Australia, Edmund Barton, was an umpire and a former vice-president of New South Wales cricket Association. As an umpire he was famous for stopping a riot against a visiting English side in a game against New South Wales in 1879. "Post-Federation cricket has a particular cache, because it represents values held dear, it's national in a newborn nation, it's traditional in a land with few traditions. It's imperial in a country where the links of Empire mattered, and it's also white in a region of the world where immediately beyond Australia's shores was not. And I think Australian cricket success allowed the country to parade both its purity and the necessity of maintaining that freedom from racial contaminants," Haigh says. The Bulletin was a magazine which was fiercely behind the white Australia policy and sought to use cricket to promote its ideas. Its strap line at one point of time was "Australia for the white man and China for the Chow." Things are changing these days of course. Cricket now is at the next step of fusing Australia. With the inclusion of the likes of Usman Khawaja, it's taking the integrated idea of Australia to the next level, trying out-reach programmes with the South Asian population interested in cricket. As always, with Australia, cricket is at the forefront of silent revolutions.

Australia vs India: Josh Hazlewood to miss Adelaide pink-ball Test due side strain

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

Australia pacer Josh Hazlewood has been ruled out of the day-night Test match at Adelaide with a side strain, the Cricket Australia has said in a statement. "Josh Hazlewood has been ruled out of the match with a low grade left side injury," said Cricket Australia. "Hazlewood will remain with the group in Adelaide to prepare for the remainder of the series." The selectors have added two uncapped players Sean Abbott and Brendan Doggett to the squad for the second Test match against India in Adelaide that will be played under lights.

Josh Hazlewood was Australia's best bowler in the first innings of the Perth Test, taking 4 for 29 as India were bowled out for 150. The pacer was economical with 1 for 28 from 21 overs in the second innings. Hazlewood was also one of Australia's best the last time India played in Adelaide, taking 5 for 8 in five overs as India were bowled out for 36.

Who is Brendon Doggett?

It's a second call-up to the Test squad for Doggett who

travelled to the UAE for a Test series against Pakistan in October 2018 – the first under coach Justin Langer – but did not play. A proud descendant of the Worimi people of northern New South Wales, the 30-year-old would become just the fifth Indigenous player to earn a Baggy Green if he plays, following in the footsteps of Indigenous pioneers Jason Gillespie, Faith Thomas, Ash Gardner and Scott Boland. Doggett has bagged collected 11 wickets at 34.27 in three Shield games this season.

Who is Sean Abbott?

Sean Abbott, 32 has been a fringe player for Australia in the white-ball. He has played 26 ODIs and 20 T20Is since his international debut in October 2014 and has been on the fringes of the Test side in recent years.

He was previously included in Australia's Test squad for the 2020-21 series against India, while he spent time with the squad as a reserve for last year's Ashes during a stint playing for Surrey. Abbott took 13 wickets at 19.84 in two Shield matches this season and has 261 wickets from 87 first-class matches in his career.

MI Finders & Keepers: Spotting Allah Ghazanfar, Robin Minz; retaining scouts Sourabh Tiwary, Robin Singh



GNS News Agency, Dec 2

* Allah Ghazanfar is from Paktia, a Pashtun province with a violent history on Afghanistan's border with Pakistan. He is a 19-year-old mystery spinner, a lower-order six-hitter and is being compared to the greatest cricketer his country has produced – Rashid Khan. Robin Minz grew up in Telgaon, the tribal belt in Jharkhand's Gumla district that's mostly in news for insurgency. He is a 22-year-old wicketkeeper, has earned a MS Dhoni recco and is also being called 'Jharkhand ka Chris Gayle.' Bevon Jacobs was born in Pretoria, South Africa, now lives in Auckland, New Zealand. Those who have seen the 22-year-old play see shades of living legends from his country of birth – AB de Villiers and Faf du Plessis – in his batting. At this week's mega Indian Premier League (IPL) auction, Mumbai Indians signed these youngsters who were unknown to those outside cricket's inner circle but are central to their plans going ahead. Ghazanfar and Minz, those in the know say, will start in all games. As for Jacobs, he is a long-term investment, one for the future.

The story of how MI spotted, followed, chased, tested and finally drafted these three promising players points to IPL's pushing back boundaries, stretching its reach and asserting its reputation as a truly global league. Not just India, the nets are now being cast into the deep interiors of the entire cricketing world. It's like the searing gaze of European football clubs on the ghettos of South America or NBA travelling to public basketball courts in Eastern Europe with cheque books. There's more... Mohammad Ghazanfar 6 wickets vs BAN Tanzid Hasan, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Mushfiqur Rahim, Rishad Hossain, Taskin Ahmed and Shoriful Islam all fell victim to Ghazanfar's fiery spell. The valuable inputs about the potential of these untested players were provided by the army of ex-MI players spread across the world. Close to 15 talent-spotters have been MI's loyal and trusted retainers. It also helps that MI have sister teams in franchise leagues in South Africa, USA and UAE. Since the launch of the International League T20, a tournament owned by the Emirates Cricket Board, MI have a unit stationed in Dubai. Incidentally, that is where the Afghanistan national team trains. MI old hand Robin Singh, who coaches MI Emirates, first spotted Ghazanfar when he got into the Afghanistan national camp.

Singh's regular cable to HQ Mumbai would mention the boy from Paktia. Ghazanfar was now on MI watch. Comparisons would be made. The optimists would see in him Sunil Narine – the Trinidadian mystery spinner-cum-opener who helped Kolkata Knight Riders win their third title earlier this year. At the junior level, the Ghazanfar graph would keep showing spikes. From the under-19 national team, he would graduate to the seniors. Months before the auction, the Afghan boy would play India A in the Emerging Trophy tournament in UAE. He would dismiss India's big

World Chess Championship: Of being in the zone, maintaining a poker face and not believing in numerology

GNS News Agency, Dec 2

There was a viral clip a few months back involving Viswanathan Anand and Gukesh. It's barely a 15-second-long clip, but it reveals the amount of respect that Gukesh has for Anand, who has mentored the 18-year-old. The clip shows Gukesh, and then Praggnanandhaa, instinctively jumping to their feet as soon as Anand stands up to speak on stage much to the joy of the audience. Anand then proceeds to compliment Gukesh and his generation of prodigies for being "very well brought up." Anand and Xie Jun, the first Chinese Women's World Champion, were fittingly given the honour of making the ceremonial first moves on the board before Game 4 of the World Championship at Singapore. While Xie Jun was to make a move for Ding, Anand would make a move for Gukesh. As both legends were introduced, Ding Liren broke into applause for both names. The 18-year-old boy sitting opposite Ding, who jumps to his feet each time Anand stands up, had a completely different reaction. Let alone applause, Gukesh never broke eye contact with the board, a measure of how deeply in the zone the 18-year-old can get when it's time to play.

Another Ding second reveals himself. The world knows that Ding is being aided by Hungarian grandmaster Richard Rapport against Gukesh at the world championship. But at the pre-event press conference, Ding had said that he had come to Singapore with a few seconds who would be spotted. On Friday, another of Ding's second – an assistant who helps a player devise strategy for opening stages – made an appearance at the playing hall. Ni Hua, who has been the captain of the Chinese chess team, is one of the seconds the world champion has enlisted to help him out with openings. This again breaks from tradition of world championship contenders keeping the identity of seconds close to their chests. Ding's predecessor Magnus Carlsen was known to keep his seconds stationed at different countries around the world – rather than risk them being in the same country as him – so that he could have access to at least one of them at any hour of the day in a world championship contest.

Fischer or Kasparov?

At the post-match press conference, Gukesh is asked if he believes in numerology like Garry Kasparov, who is said to have said that since he was born on the 13th of April, it was fitting he became the 13th world champion. The 18-year-old Gukesh is, after all, looking to become the 18th world champion. "I guess I should say I believe more in what Bobby Fischer had said (I believe in good moves). So I am just trying to make good moves," smiles Gukesh. Poker face problems. At the press conference, both Ding and Gukesh are also asked if they practise keeping a poker face, especially when an opponent makes a blunder. "Since I am un-

T20 hope – left-hander Abhishek Sharma. Next in was India A captain Tilak Verma, the top-order batsman retained by Mumbai. Tilak would face a few Ghazanfar deliveries, most being dot balls. Another vital input would reach the MI core team that would be at the auction table. Tilak's green signal was all MI needed to go 'all out' for the Afghan teen. They would end up buying him for much less than what they had expected. Maybe, other franchises don't have that many talent scouts posted at every cricketing outpost. Maybe, that's why they didn't know his true worth. Minz has a different backstory. The Jharkhand boy was part of the auction last time also. He was picked by Gujarat Titans for Rs 3.6 crore. Unfortunately for Minz, a freak motorbike accident ruled him out for the season. But MI's hot pursuit continued. They had whiffed a star, and didn't give up on the trail. MI's man in Jharkhand is Sourabh Tiwary. The burly left-handed batsman was with the franchise for four years. He was a utility player, a master of cameos who MI kept retaining. He was reliable and it was this quality that came handy again. Tiwary's 'all ok' was a factor in Minz getting picked by MI.

While Ghazanfar and Minz are ripe to take the field, Jacobs still has time. MI is ready to wait. The batsman has numbers and is also recommended by the trusted voice of Mitchell McClenaghan, another former MI player. Back in 2015, the Kiwi pacer was signed for a bargain price of Rs 30 lakh. He would prove to be priceless that season. He got 18 wickets of which three were in the final against Chennai Super Kings. He played a role in MI winning the title. Even after retirement, he continues to be valuable. So when McClenaghan called to say that Jacobs had potential, MI were ready to listen and lift the paddle at the auction. Robin Singh, Tiwary and McClenaghan are the back room boys to the coaching galacticos, also former MI players, seen in the dugout on match days. Starting with their first marquee player, the GOAT himself, Sachin Tendulkar, most MI stars, after their playing days, remain part of the Mumbai Indians set-up. Shaun Pollock, Ricky Ponting, Lasith Malinga, Shane Bond, Zaheer Khan... the list is long.

IPL Match Today: Jasprit Bumrah back on top MI vs LSG IPL 2024: Mumbai Indians bowler Jasprit Bumrah bowls a delivery during the Indian Premier League (IPL) T20 cricket match between Delhi Capitals and Mumbai Indians, at Arun Jaitley Cricket Stadium in New Delhi. It's the post-retirement employment, along with playing-day perks, that makes MI a franchise where players rarely leave after checking in. Take the example of India's present MVP, Jasprit Bumrah. He was spotted by MI's long-time talent spotter-in-chief John Wright, groomed by Bond and Malinga. When he got injured, the world-class medical facility, owned by the MI owners, came in handy. It was the same when Hardik Pandya got injured. Even lesser players are extended the same perks. Back in 2019, MI's West Indian signing Alzarri Joseph, within days of his 6/13 on debut, got injured while taking a tough catch. Even six months after the IPL season, Joseph was put up in a five-star hotel for his rehab. All this helps to answer that pre-auction puzzling retention question: How were Mumbai able to hold on to Rohit Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah, Suryakumar Yadav – the marquee players who could have got more cash and the captaincy arm-band from any other team of their choice? They wouldn't have got the same perks elsewhere. This also ended up helping others. The huge supply-demand leadership gap would result in the likes of Rishabh Pant and Shreyas Iyer getting the roles that didn't match with their captaincy acumen and record. The unending spotting-retention cycle also makes MI avoid the existential questions that a one-man franchise like CSK faces – Who after MS Dhoni?



able to see my reactions during a game, I don't know if I am able to keep a poker face," smiles Ding. "If my opponent makes some mistake, I think I will show some expressions." "In general I think I'm not a very expressive player. On the board I do show some emotion from time to time. But in general I'm more of a person who always maintains a poker face. I don't really think too much about it," he says while maintaining a poker face.

Doordarshan to broadcast Hockey India League 2024-25 season

New Delhi: The national broadcaster of India, Doordarshan (DD), has partnered with the Hockey India League (HIL) to deliver the electrifying action of the tournament to millions of viewers across the country. HIL is set to commence on December 28. This year's edition is historic as it marks the inaugural season of the Women's Hockey India League, alongside the much-anticipated men's competition. The league will feature eight men's teams and four women's teams, competing across Rourkela and Ranchi, showcasing top-tier talent from India and across the globe. The addition of the women's league underscores Hockey India's commitment to advancing gender inclusivity in sports and promoting women's hockey on a grand stage. Navneet Sehgal, Chairman, Prasar Bharati, said, "Prasar Bharati is privileged to partner with the Hockey India League, a platform that celebrates our national sports and aligns people across different categories. Through our comprehensive coverage, we aim to bring the electrifying spirit of hockey, including the historic debut of Women HIL, to viewers everywhere, bridging urban and rural divide and amplifying the league's impact."