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## Jaya Jayahe Telangana... Janani Jaya Kethanam...



## TELANGANA THALLI

Unveiling

By Hon'ble Chief Minister

Sri **A. Revanth Reddy** Garu

Date : 09<sup>th</sup> December, 2024

Time : 6:05 P.M.

Venue : Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Telangana Secretariat

# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Just not sport

THE indiscriminate use of two prominent stadia in the national capital for non-sports events is a bad advertisement for a country that aspires to host the Olympic Games in 2036. The Sports Authority of India's (SAI) reply to an RTI query has revealed that only 11 of the 131 events held at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium this year were related to sports; the rest included concerts and programmes organised by government organisations, NGOs and political parties. Indra Gandhi International Stadium hosted 48 events, of which just five pertained to sports. The sorry state of affairs was glaringly highlighted when popular singer-actor Diljit Dosanjh's concert, held at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium on October 26-27, left a trail of garbage and broken athletics equipment. The mess prompted Beant Singh, a Delhi-based runner, to vent his anger on social media. Slamming the organisers for making the stadium inaccessible for training for several days, he lamented the lack of respect and support for sports persons in the country. His outburst has resonated with fellow players, but it seems to have left the authorities unmoved. The SAI, set up 40 years ago with the objectives of promoting sports and achieving sporting excellence at the national and international levels, urgently needs to get its priorities right. Last year, in its performance audit report, the Comptroller & Auditor General of India had taken the premier sports body to task for focusing more on revenue generation and renting out stadiums for non-sports functions. The bitter truth is that India's consistent rise on the global geopolitical stage is in stark contrast to its laggard status in international sports. The below-par performance in this year's Olympics has shown that the nation has a very long way to go before it can become a sporting powerhouse. The least that can be done is to ensure that stadia are not misused for commercial purposes.

## Breaking free from wheat-paddy cycle: Nawanshahr farmer exports moringa powder worth Rs 1.5 crore to Germany

GNS News Agency, Dec 8

In Ratnana village of Punjab's Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar (also known as Nawanshahr) district, 40-year-old Dr Pankaj Kumar has redefined sustainable farming by cultivating Moringa Oleifera, popularly known as the drumstick, Sahjan, or miracle tree, on two acres he rented. A postgraduate in yoga and naturopathy, Pankaj has not only broken away from the state's traditional wheat-paddy cycle but also elevated Punjab's presence in the global market. Through his company, Vela Cell India, Pankaj exports premium moringa leaf powder worth Rs 1 crore to Rs 1.5 crore annually to Germany. This is made possible by his partnership with German businessman Harald Seibel, who operates the Germany-based Vela Cell UG company.

Pankaj began independent moringa cultivation in 2022 after leasing 8.5 acres for Rs 6 lakh annually. Drawing inspiration from his association with Harald and his previous partners, Pankaj, who has been working as a yoga instructor and naturopathy with Nawanshahr-based Kirpal Sagar Charitable Institute, where Harald had been a regular visitor, Pankaj decided to take over the cultivation. His familiarity with Harald's work in sourcing moringa from the area motivated him to revive the operations. With dedication and innovation, Pankaj now processes moringa leaves into high-quality green moringa powder, showcasing the potential of sustainable and organic farming in Punjab on a global platform. Pankaj emphasises the meticulous process involved in producing and exporting organic moringa powder. The crop is grown under strict organic conditions, and certified under the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) and the European Union (EU) standards. Each export batch undergoes rigorous testing in government-approved laboratories to ensure quality and compliance. To preserve its nutritional value, the powder is vacuum-packed in 2 kg silver pouches. Pankaj cultivates a high-density variety of Moringa, which is specifically designed to grow to a manageable height of 3-4 feet, allowing only the leaves to be harvested. "We planted fresh moringa saplings last August, and the leaves are harvested 3-4 times in a year," he explained. Once planted, Moringa trees, which grow rapidly, require very little water for irrigation and need to be replaced after 5-6 years. He further said that they prepare their own seeds and saplings for cultivation, ensuring the quality of their produce. "Unlike taller moringa trees where drumsticks are harvested, we focus solely on leaf production," he added. Describing the processing method, Pankaj highlighted the precision required to retain the nutritional integrity of leaves. The freshly picked leaves are washed in saline water twice within 30 minutes of harvesting, as delays can lead to a loss of nutrients. They are then dried at controlled temperatures of 25-45°C to retain their nutritional value before being processed into powder at a facility near the fields. "Every step, from cultivation to packaging, is handled with utmost care to meet international standards," he emphasised. Sharing insights about the moringa yield, Pankaj said an acre of moringa cultivation produces 500-700 kg of powder annually, priced between Rs 10,000 and Rs 12,000 per kg. This translates to revenue of Rs 50-Rs 70 lakh per acre. "If a farmer follows all required parameters to produce high-quality moringa powder, they can easily earn Rs 25- Rs30 lakh per acre per annum after expenses." Moringa powder is a natural immune booster. It is rich in calcium, Omega 3, 6, 9, magnesium and over 103 micronutrients. It treats malnutrition and prevents several deadliest diseases, which is why it has high global demands," Pankaj said. Speaking with The Indian Express, Harald, who is currently in Nawanshahr, praised the quality of moringa cultivated in Punjab. "I have been sourcing moringa powder from Punjab since 2018, initially through other partners. Now, I am collaborating with Pankaj," he said. Harald further said he brings teams of experts and scientists from Germany to inspect the moringa cultivation and processing units. "Recently, a team of scientists and pharmacists from Germany visited the farm. After thorough testing and meeting all parameters, we import the powder to Germany, where the demand is substantial," he added. Pankaj uses organic methods to control pests, including garlic and chilli paste and relies on cow dung as fertiliser. To prevent smoke and ash from affecting his crops, he manages stubble in nearby paddy fields so that it should not be set on fire after the fields' owners harvest the paddy. He also uses it as mulch on his farm to retain soil moisture and control weeds.

## 'Don't mislead people': As Sharad Pawar raises doubt about poll results, Maharashtra CM Fadnavis hits back



GNS News Agency, Dec 8

After Nationalist Congress Party (SP) chief Sharad Pawar raised doubts about the outcome of the recently held Maharashtra assembly elections, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Saturday hit back at him, asking him "not to mislead people of the country". "Sharad Pawar, you are a veteran leader. At least, you should not mislead the people of this country... If you accept defeat, you will quickly come out of it. I hope you will advise your colleagues to self-introspect," Fadnavis said in a post on social media.

Speaking in Kolhapur on Saturday, Pawar expressed surprise at the Maharashtra Assembly election results, citing figures for voting for different parties and the seats they won. "The Congress received 80 lakh votes but 15 of its candidates were elected as MLAs. Shiv Sena (Shinde) got 79 lakh votes, they have 57 MLAs. NCP (SP) secured 72 lakh votes and has 10 MLAs. NCP (Ajit Pawar) received 58 lakh votes, and 41 candidates became MLAs. These

voting figures are surprising. We have yet to study them deeply. Till we get the official figures, we will not express doubts about EVMs," said Pawar. In Maharashtra Assembly elections 2024, the ruling Mahayuti registered a landslide victory, winning 235 seats. None of the parties in the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) had sufficient seats to become the Leader of Opposition, for the first time in six decades.

"Though people have elected Mahayuti, they are not confident about the authenticity of the voting figures. There is unease among the people and that is why after the elections, Maharashtra did not witness enthusiasm," said Pawar, who will later visit the Markadwadi village in Malshiras taluka of the Solapur district where the police stopped an attempted "repoll" using ballot papers by the villagers. "I cannot understand the reason for the administration to stop the polling by ballot papers... I don't know under which law this was done. I will visit Markadwadi and try to understand the issue," he said. Late Saturday evening, Fadnavis reacted to Pawar's comment by citing figures from previous elections. "You said despite getting more votes, your party got fewer seats... Let me highlight what happened in the 2024 (Lok Sabha) elections. BJP secured 1,49,13,914 votes and won nine seats. However, the Congress received only 96,41,856 votes and won 13 seats. Shiv Sena got 73,77,674 votes and won seven seats, NCP (SP) got 58,51,166 votes and won eight seats." Fadnavis added, "The 2019 Lok Sabha election figures are worth highlighting. Congress got 87,92,237 votes and won one seat, and then the undivided NCP secured 83,87,363 votes and won four seats."

## 'Delivering muscle gainer in place of whey protein': Chandigarh consumer commission orders Amazon, its seller to refund Rs 11,875



GNS News Agency, Dec 8

The District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission of Chandigarh has directed Amazon Services and one of its sellers Khandelwal Enterprises to refund Rs 11,875, along with Rs 5,000, to a Kalka resident for wrongly delivering muscle gainer instead of whey protein. Gurmit, a resident of Kalka in Haryana, alleged in his complaint that on March 4, 2023, he had placed an online order for a 'Muscle tech Nitrotech 100 per cent Whey Gold Protein Powder Whey Isolate Primary Protein Source Support and recovery Vegetarian Double Rich Chocolate- 4kg' (product) amounting to Rs 11,875 from Amazon Services Seller Private Limited. However, on March 10, 2023, a wrong and expired product was delivered to him and he made the payment of Rs 11,875 to the delivery partner, the complainant said.

Gurmit said being a student, he took a personal loan of Rs 10,000 from Hero FinCorp Limited. The complainant said on receiving the product, he felt something amiss as he had ordered the product weighing 4 kg but the product received weighed less than 4 kg. Gurmit then decided to record video footage while unboxing the product. Gurmit said, "I was shocked and baffled to find the product delivered to me by Amazon Seller and Khandelwal Enterprises (seller) was an expired 2 kg 'Muscleblaze Supergainer XXL (High Calorie Gainer)' having an MRP of Rs 2,200." "I immediately raised my grievances before Amazon through various emails, along with unboxing video and photographs, but the Amazon Customer service centre flatly refused to entertain my grievances and refused to provide any refund/replacement," the complainant alleged.

Amazon Services Seller Private Limited in reply submitted that the complainant placed an order for a 'Muscletech Nitrotech 100 percent Whey Gold Protein Powder on March 4, 2023 from an independent third-party seller which is Khandelwal Enterprises for Rs 11,874.05, which was issued by Seller (Khandelwal Enterprises) and not by them, and thus, they cannot be held responsible for deficiency in service as it only operates and manages the e-commerce marketplace wherein lakhs of third-party sellers and buyers interact and conduct their transactions. Also, it was stated that all payments are made directly by such buyers to independent third-party sellers and the answering Amazon Services has no role to play in the same. Khandelwal Enterprises, New Delhi, despite served notice, did not appear before the Commission, it was thus proceeded ex-parte on May 24, 2024. The Commission on hearing the contentions and documents and evidence placed on record said that "one thing is proved on record that the Amazon Services Seller and Khandelwal Enterprises have delivered wrong and expired product having MRP of Rs 2,200 instead of the product, which was different from the wrongly delivered product, having cost of Rs 11,875, which was admittedly accepted by the Amazon Services through its agent and till date the opposite parties have admittedly neither replaced the wrongly delivered product nor have refunded the cost of the subject product." Thus allowing the plea, the Commission directed the Amazon Services Seller, Bengaluru, and Khandelwal Enterprises, New Delhi, to refund Rs 11,875 to the complainant, along with an interest at 9 per cent per annum (simple) from March 10, 2023, till onwards payment and to pay a lump sum amount of Rs 5,000 to the complainant as compensation for causing mental agony and harassment and towards the cost of litigation.

## Only 10% senior citizens above 70 in Chandigarh registered for new govt insurance scheme

GNS News Agency, Dec 8

According to the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 75 per cent of elderly persons have one or more chronic diseases, 40 per cent have one or another disability and one in every four suffers from multiple morbidities. According to the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 75 per cent of elderly persons have one or more chronic diseases, 40 per cent have one or another disability and one in every four suffers from multiple morbidities. The Chandigarh Health Department has registered 8,000 citizens above 70 years of age for the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri - Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) scheme, providing a health cover of Rs 5 lakh per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation, since the central government approved the expansion of the scheme in September.

"In Chandigarh, we have about 40,000 senior citizens and we have so far registered around 8,000 citizens who are above 70," said Dr Suman Singh, Director, Health Services. "The needs of this age group are different, with special care needed due to health conditions related to age, vulnerability to chronic illnesses and high medical costs." Stating that the UT Health Department has started the process of creating cards for senior citizens in Chandigarh, Dr Singh said, "The card can be self-generated by downloading the Ayushman app, searching your name in the list, filling the Aadhaar KYC and downloading the card." "To avail of the scheme, the beneficiary must not be receiving free healthcare services under any other scheme funded by the government. We also have the provision to make the cards in all our hospitals and government dispensaries. As many as 27 camps across the city have been planned to facilitate this process," Dr Singh said. According to the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 75 per cent of elderly persons have one or more chronic diseases, 40 per cent have one or another disability and one in every four suffers from multiple morbidities, with the rate of hospitalisation among 70 years and above population about 11.1 per cent.

At Government Multi Specialty Hospital in Sector 16, doctors at the Department of Orthopaedics have performed several knee replacement surgeries under the AB PM-JAY scheme. According to Dr Singh, citizens can use this card in government hospitals and empanelled private hospitals



across the country. "We have been successful in covering a major population below the poverty line under the scheme, with 70 per cent of ration card holders also covered and as many as 8,000 packages available under the scheme. We now have Ayushman mitras who will guide patients. The process is simple: a patient comes to the hospital, mitras will write on the file the category, and then tests, medicines, admissions, etc., can be done, with the verification, etc., of the estimate of the treatment done by us," Dr Singh said.

Under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme, the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh, has treated over 1.25 lakh patients, offering complex treatments such as cancer therapy, neurosurgery, cardiothoracic surgery and kidney transplants — all free of charge under the scheme. Over 100 kidney transplants have been performed at no cost to the patients, alleviating the financial burdens on families. In 2023-24 alone, the PGI treated more than 32,000 Ayushman Bharat beneficiaries, amounting to over Rs 130 crore in medical services. Prof. Vivek Lal, Director, PGI, noted, "PGI leads all Union Territories in healthcare services under Ayushman Bharat." According to Dr Navin Pandey, Department of Hospital Administration, PGI, "Citizens above 70 have started coming to the institute for treatment under the new scheme, though the numbers are still a few. "People can generate the cards at home using the app. We too help here, if needed. The maximum number of people using the facility are from Punjab — almost 50 per cent — and the rest are from Haryana, Himachal, Chandigarh, Bihar, etc. As there is no separate system or process required for the people above 70, we have all systems in place for the beneficiaries," Dr Pandey added.

## Mamata is a capable leader, says Sharad Pawar on her willingness to head INDIA bloc



GNS News Agency, Dec 8

Sharad Pawar Asked about Mamata Banerjee's remark, Sharad Pawar said, "She is a capable leader in the country and has the right to say it. The MPs she has sent to the Parliament are hardworking and aware." Nationalist Congress Party (SP) chief Sharad Pawar has supported West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's statement expressing her willingness to take charge of the INDIA bloc.

Talking to reporters in Kolhapur on Saturday, Pawar said the Trinamool Congress chief is a capable leader and has the right to show her intent to head the opposition alliance. Earlier this week, Banerjee said she could manage the dual responsibility of running the opposition front while continuing her role as the chief minister of West Bengal. Her statement comes at a time when broader tensions have emerged within the INDIA bloc due to dissatisfaction from various regional parties and the recent electoral setbacks for the Congress in Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir and Maharashtra. Asked about Banerjee's remark, Pawar said, "She is a capable leader in the country and has the right to say it. The MPs she has sent to the Parliament are hardworking and aware."

## Delhi records minimum temperature of 8 degrees Celsius



GNS News Agency, Dec 8

The weather department has forecast generally cloudy skies with chances of light rain or drizzle during the day. The maximum temperature is expected to settle around 24 degrees Celsius. The national capital recorded a minimum temperature of 8 degrees Celsius on Sunday morning, two degrees below the season's average, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) remained in the 'poor' category with a reading of 276 at 9 am, according to the Central Pollution Control Board. 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'. Humidity levels were recorded at 94 per cent at 8.30 am, the IMD said. The weather department has forecast generally cloudy skies with chances of light rain or drizzle during the day. The maximum temperature is expected to settle around 24 degrees Celsius.

## Delhi Police arrest third accused in murder of pregnant woman whose body recovered from pit in Rohtak

GNS News Agency, Dec 8

The incident unfolded on October 21, when the young woman was reported missing by her brother. Her body was soon recovered from a pit in an abandoned area at Madina in Rohtak. (Representational The Delhi Police's Crime Branch on Friday arrested a man involved in the murder of a 19-year-old pregnant woman. Sohiti, 19, also known as Ritik, had been on the run for over a month. The incident unfolded on October 21, when the young woman was reported missing by her brother. Her body was soon recovered from a pit in an abandoned area at Madina in Rohtak. The police suspected her partner, Sanju, of being behind the murder. "The victim was putting pressure on Sanju to marry her. But he was hesitant. He asked her to keep a fast on Karva Chauth, and in the name of breaking her fast, took her to Haryana... On the way to Rohtak, an argument ensued between Sanju and the woman. He then strangled her to death in the car and buried her in a three-foot-deep pit in a forest in Rohtak," an officer told The Indian Express in October. Three days after the complaint was made, Sanju and his friend Pankaj were arrested for the woman's murder. Sohiti, however, had absconded. Manish, the victim's brother, told The Indian Express in October, "She had been talking to the boy for the last one-and-a-half years. He lived behind our house..." He added that after the woman went missing and when he called her on her cellphone, Sanju once answered the call. "He told me my sister did not want me to talk to me and wanted to leave her family behind. He also made a video call to my mother once in an inebriated condition from a forest area to say that he would make her visit my sister when he reaches home." Initially booked under sections 140(3) and 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the case later incorporated additional charges under Section 103(1) as the police uncovered more details about the crime. The officers analysed intelligence inputs, monitored potential hideouts, and coordinated efforts across jurisdictions to locate the fugitive. On Friday, the police's persistence bore fruit when credible intelligence placed Sohiti in the Rohtak. Acting swiftly, the team set up a carefully planned trap on Tilyar Road and arrested him. During his interrogation, Sohiti allegedly admitted his involvement in the gruesome crime. He recounted how he, Saleem, and Pankaj conspired to murder the young woman. Sohiti had worked at a grocery store, where he met Saleem and Pankaj. Over time, their association devolved into criminal collusion.

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## Women development committee stages protest against Congress leader

Warangal: Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) 14th Division Women Development Committee members on Sunday staged a protest against Congress party 14th division president Syed Inteyaz for threatening and using abusive language against them. Women Development Committee President Pitta Saroja, member secretary Akula Vanaja, and about ten committee members approached the Ennumamula police and complained against Inteyaz. They alleged that Inteyaz was threatening to dissolve the committee and form a new one with his supporters. Inteyaz claimed that Wardhannapet MLA K R Nagaraju had asked him to dissolve the present committee and appoint a new one.

## ABVP forms new committee for JNTU-Hyd

Hyderabad: The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) on Saturday announced its new committee for Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Hyderabad (JNTUH), appointing university students Sriram as president and Shivamani as secretary. The announcement was made by ABVP Telangana president Jana Reddy. Sriram and Shivamani expressed their gratitude to ABVP for the opportunity and pledged to work diligently to address the issues faced by students. The newly appointed vice president, Sanjayani, emphasized her commitment to the holistic development of students and addressing campus-related challenges. She said she would strive for the upliftment of women leadership on the campus.

## PM Modi extends best wishes to George Koovakad, first Indian to be elevated to Cardinal



GNS News Agency, Dec 8

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday extended his best wishes to priest George Jacob Koovakad on his elevation to the rank of Cardinal in the Roman Catholic Church by Pope Francis. The 51-year-old priest from Kerala was promoted to the rank of Cardinal by the Pope in a grand ceremony at St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City on Saturday. The event was attended by clergy and dignitaries from across the globe and marked the induction of 21 new Cardinals. Taking to X, PM Modi posted, "A matter of great joy and pride for India! Delighted at His Eminence George Jacob Koovakad being created a Cardinal of the Holy Roman Catholic Church by His Holiness Pope Francis." "His Eminence George Cardinal Koovakad has devoted his life in service of humanity as an ardent follower of Lord Jesus Christ. My best wishes for his future endeavours," the Prime Minister added. Koovakad has become the first priest from India to be directly promoted to the rank of

Cardinal. Previously, all other cardinals from India had held the positions of bishops or archbishops before receiving this honour. Koovakad is attached to the Syro-Malabar Catholic Archdiocese of Changanacherry and after being elevated as a cardinal, he became the sixth person from India to occupy the post. The other five Cardinals were bishops before being elevated to this exalted post in the Catholic Church.

On Saturday, while speaking to the media just before he took his immediate family to have the customary meeting with the Pope, the smiling Koovakad said, "My parents and my close relatives have come for the function and we are going for the function when the Pope will receive all the guests. This is God's will, which I never expected. This elevation is a selection done by God. I owe this to all who made it possible. When I was sent here (in 2006), I was told by my respected seniors that if it's to learn the Bible, that can be done in Kerala itself, but since you are being sent to the Vatican, it's being done to learn things deeply." In the global Catholic Church, there are 232 active Cardinals at present, and the numbers will go up to 253 after Koovakad and 20 others will be elevated. It's this group of Cardinals who will be sitting together to elect the next Pope whenever that time comes. Koovakad, currently based in the Vatican, has the responsibility of organising the international travel schedule of Pope Francis. He joined the Vatican Diplomatic Service in 2006 after completing his formation at the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy. Born on August 11, 1973, in Thiruvananthapuram, Koovakad became a priest on July 24, 2004, and later pursued training for diplomatic service at the prestigious Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy. In 2006, he began his diplomatic career at the

## Telangana CM Revanth Reddy claims record in farm loan waiver, job creation in first year



GNS News Agency, Dec 8

Hyderabad: Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy said on Sunday that during the first year in power, the Congress government in the state set a record in farm loan waiver, crop bonus, jobs creation and attracting investments. He said the government waived farm loans of 25 lakh farmers by crediting over Rs 21,000 crore directly into their accounts. The government also paid a Rs 500 bonus per quintal for a fine variety of rice above the Minimum Support Price (MSP). It also ensured free 24/7 electricity for farmers. Revanth Reddy shared his thoughts on 'X' on the "successful" completion of the first year of Praja Palana or people's rule. "Our women welfare schemes, caste census, and environmental-centred urban development policies are being discussed for emulation by other governments," he wrote. The Chief Minister listed some key achievements of his government. For women's welfare, the government implemented the free bus travel scheme, free

electricity to up to 200 units per month, and a cooking gas cylinder for Rs 500.

Revanth Reddy claimed that over 55,000 government jobs were provided for youth in a single year. Lakhs of jobs were created in the private sector. He further claimed that the unemployment rate has fallen to a record low in 12 years. In the housing sector, the allocation of 4 lakh houses under the Indiramma Housing Scheme is currently underway. The government also established Young India Integrated Residential Schools and launched Young India Skill University and Young India Sports University.

The Chief Minister said the Congress government launched a war against narcotics and drugs. He claimed that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the state has doubled during the last nine months. The overall investments in the last 11 months also grew by over 200 per cent. The government is also making Hyderabad the first city in India to undertake an urban reimagining program to meet the climate crisis challenge. "Building a Regional Ring Road, Regional Ring Rail, Radial Roads, next phase of Metro Rail, and several other ambitious projects, including India's first Artificial Intelligence City, within the Future City of Hyderabad to ensure massive growth and ease of living," he said. The state government also launched one of India's first comprehensive caste surveys. Almost the entire population participated in the survey. The Chief Minister said Hyderabad will soon become India's first city where traffic will be managed by transgender marshalls. Claiming that the Congress government restored democracy and liberal values, Revanth Reddy announced that it will unveil the Telangana Thalli statue at the Secretariat on December 9.

## Uttarakhand CM inaugurates 'Winter Char Dham Yatra,' opens doors for year-round pilgrimage



GNS News Agency, Dec 8

New Delhi: In a historic move aimed at enhancing religious tourism and economic growth, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Sunday inaugurated the Winter Char Dham Yatra at Omkareshwar Temple in Ukhimath, the winter seat of Lord Kedarnath. The ceremonial launch began with traditional prayers and rituals, symbolising the official start of a pilgrimage that will now continue throughout the year, marking a significant milestone in the state's cultural and economic journey. During his two-day visit to Rudrapur district, CM Dhami announced on the second day, addressing a long-standing demand to make the Char Dham Yatra a year-round reli-

gious circuit.

Traditionally, the yatra would cease during the winter months when the Himalayan shrines are inaccessible due to snow. With this initiative, the winter abodes of the deities, Omkareshwar Temple in Kedarnath, and other designated locations in Badrinath, Yamunotri, and Gangotri will now host pilgrims during the colder months. Speaking at the event, CM Dhami said, "The winter Char Dham Yatra is a major step towards establishing Uttarakhand as a year-round pilgrimage destination. We are closely monitoring all arrangements to ensure the success of this initiative. I am confident that this will not only strengthen the religious significance of our state but also provide a continuous source of livelihood for local communities."

The Winter Char Dham Yatra is expected to attract pilgrims from across the country and abroad, bolstering Uttarakhand's economy by promoting tourism even during the off-season. The event saw a large gathering, including prominent leaders such as Rudrapur MLA Bharat Singh Chaudhary, Kedarnath MLA Asha Nautiyal, BKTC (Badri-Kedar Temple Committee) President Ajendra Ajay, BJP District President Mahavir Panwar, temple priests, and numerous residents. By facilitating 12 months of pilgrimage, the initiative aims to strike a balance between tradition, spirituality, and economic sustainability, reinforcing the state's identity as Devbhoomi, the Land of Gods.

## Syrian government falls as 50-year rule of Assad family ends, rebels take over Damascus



GNS News Agency, Dec 8

Beirut: In a stunning end to the 50-year rule of the Assad family, the Syrian government appeared to have fallen early on Sunday after a shock rebel offensive. The head of a Syrian opposition war monitor said President Bashar Assad had left the country for an undisclosed location, fleeing ahead of insurgents who said they had entered Damascus after a remarkably swift advance across the country.

Syrian Prime Minister Mohammed Ghazi Jalali said the government was ready to "extend its hand" to the opposition and hand over its functions to a transitional government. "I am in my house and I have not left, and this is because of my belonging to this country," Jalali said in a video statement. He said he would go to his office to continue work in the morning and called on Syrian citizens not to deface public property. He did not address reports that Assad had left the country. Rami Abdurrahman of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Assad took a flight

on Sunday from Damascus. State television in Iran, Assad's main backer in the years of war in Syria, reported that Assad had left the capital. It cited Qatar's Al Jazeera news network for the information and did not elaborate. There was no immediate statement from the Syrian government.

An Associated Press journalist in Damascus reported seeing groups of armed residents along the road on the outskirts of the capital and hearing sounds of gunshots. The city's main police headquarters appeared to be abandoned, its door left ajar with no officers outside. Another AP journalist shot footage of an abandoned army checkpoint where uniforms were discarded on the ground under a poster of Assad's face. Residents of the capital reported hearing gunfire and explosions. Footage broadcast on opposition-linked media showed a tank in one of the capital's central squares while a small group of people gathered in celebration. Calls of 'God is great' rang out from mosques. It was the first time opposition forces had reached Damascus since 2018, when Syrian troops recaptured areas on the outskirts of the capital following a yearslong siege. The pro-government Sham FM radio reported that the Damascus airport had been evacuated and all flights halted. The insurgents also announced they had entered the notorious Saydnaya military prison north of the capital and "liberated" their prisoners there. The night before, opposition forces took the central city of Homs, Syria's third largest, as government forces abandoned it. The city stands at an important intersection between Damascus, the capital, and Syria's coastal provinces of Latakia and Tartus — the Syrian leader's base of support and home to a Russian strategic naval base.

## BRS releases charge sheet on Congress; Harish Rao criticises one-year rule

GNS News Agency, Dec 8

Hyderabad: Former Minister and senior BRS MLA T Harish Rao on Sunday slammed the Congress government for its failed one-year governance and unfulfilled electoral promises. He charged the Congress with creating administrative chaos and neglecting the people's welfare. "The one-year rule of the Congress can be summed up in just four words — 'Thittlu, Kottlu, Vottlu, Notlu' (abuses for opposition leaders, lathicharge on people, pledges to deities, money dealings to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and Congress leaders)," he said. Releasing an 18-page charge sheet on the one-year Congress rule at Telangana Bhavan on Sunday, Harish Rao said the charge sheet exposed the Congress' inability to govern effectively, and urged Telangana citizens to hold the Congress party accountable.

Harish Rao said Revanth Reddy had prioritised criticism of the opposition over addressing pressing public concerns. He felt that Revanth Reddy should be awarded the title of "Most Abusive Chief Minister" in the country. He said the Congress government started its term with a negative attitude and controversial decisions like attempts to alter the State emblem, cancelling key projects such as Pharma City, and imposing restrictive measures on businesses in Hyderabad. Following public backlash, the government reversed these decisions but not before damaging the State's development and Hyderabad's reputation, he said.

Harish Rao pointed out the Congress' inability to fulfill its much-publicised six guarantees. He pointed out that promises like Rs 2 lakh crop loan waiver and Rs 2,500 monthly assistance under the Mahalakshmi scheme remain unfulfilled. He noted that the free bus service for women, the only partially implemented guarantee, lacks adequate buses, creating more inconvenience. The former Minister also criticised the government for halting Rythu Bandhu assistance for two seasons, leaving farmers in distress. He contrasted this with the BRS' record of spending over Rs 72,000 crore on direct financial support to farmers. "Instead of delivering on promises, the Congress has resorted



to blaming the opposition for its failures," Harish Rao said. The BRS leader said the Congress administration lacked stability and coordination, citing frequent changes in key positions, including three Police commissioners, four TransCo chairpersons and managing directors, three GHMC commissioners, and three Ranga Reddy District Collectors within a year. He accused Revanth Reddy of mismanaging critical departments, leading to incidents like food poisoning in residential welfare schools and government schools, which is posing threat to students' lives. Harish Rao stated that the Congress government not only failed to initiate new projects but also hampered ongoing development. He reminded that Revanth Reddy's administration is attempting to take credit for projects like the Yadadri Thermal Power Plant, irrigation initiatives, and increased paddy production, all of which were achievements of the BRS government. He challenged Congress leaders to name a single major project initiated and completed during their tenure. The cancellation of the Hyderabad Metro extension to Shamshabad Airport and restrictions on trade and commerce in the city were highlighted as examples of the Congress' flip-flops. "These decisions hurt Hyderabad's brand image, and the subsequent reversals could not undo the damage," he remarked.

## Protesting farmers suspend 'Dilli chalo' foot march for the day



GNS News Agency, Dec 8

Protesting farmers on Sunday (December 8, 2024) afternoon suspended their foot march to Delhi for the day after some of them suffered injuries in tear gas shelling by Haryana security personnel here along the state's border with Punjab. Farmer leader from Punjab Sarwan Singh Pandher said at least eight farmers were injured and one of them was rushed to the Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) in Chandigarh. Farmers 'Delhi Chalo' protest live updates - December 08, 2024 "We have called back the 'jatha' (group of 101 farmers)," he told reporters in Shambhu. Pandher said the farmers would de-

side their next course of action after a meeting of their forums — the Samyuka Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha. The 'jatha' resumed its foot march from the farmers' Shambhu protest site earlier in the afternoon but was soon halted by multilayered barricading erected by Haryana security personnel. Tear gas shells were lobbed at the protesting farmers and water jets were used as well to disperse them after they reached the barricades. The Ambala police had earlier said the farmers' outfits may march to Delhi only after getting permission from the national capital administration.

## BRS to press center for Kazipet Railway Manufacturing unit's progress

GNS News Agency, Dec 8

Hyderabad: The Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) is all set to intensify efforts to push for the long-pending Railway Manufacturing Unit at Kazipet, announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi 15 months ago but which has made no tangible progress.

## Karnataka mulls cancellation of MUDA's controversial 50:50 land allotment scheme

GNS News Agency, Dec 8

The Karnataka government is mulling cancellation of a controversial 50:50 land allotment scheme of the Mysore Urban Development Authority (MUDA), which was halted in October 2023 after allegations of irregularities, the government and members of the ruling Congress party have indicated in recent weeks. The MUDA land compensation scheme is at the centre of a controversy after Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah's family has been accused of benefitting to the tune of Rs 56 crore. Under the scheme, 50 per cent of land in developed areas of Mysore was granted to land losers in exchange for 50 per cent of land wrongly acquired by MUDA in under-developed areas of the city. The Chief Minister's wife was granted 14 high value MUDA housing sites in the developed Vijayanagar area of Mysore in 2021 (during the BJP regime) in exchange for 3.16 acres of low value land that was gifted to her by her brother in the Kesare village outside Mysore.

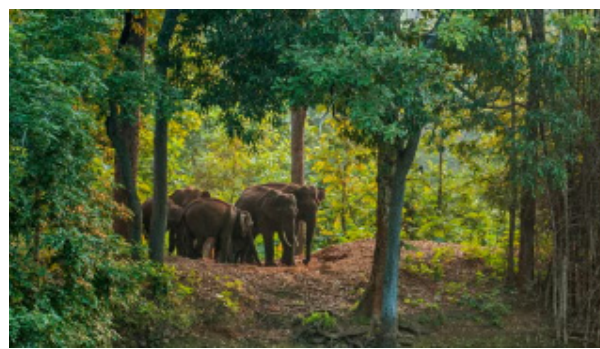
Siddaramaiah's wife B Parvathi returned the 14 housing sites to MUDA in September this year after the Karnataka HC allowed the filing of a corruption case against the CM, despite denials by Siddaramaiah of playing any role in the allotments. The Karnataka Lokayukta police are investigating a case of corruption registered against the CM on September 27 over the 50:50 land allotments to his wife. The Enforcement Directorate is also investigating a case of money laundering in the matter. "With the scheme creating a political controversy, the Congress government and MUDA are considering cancelling the 50:50 scheme in its entirety," said an official source. The government is likely to reconsider all allotments after the conclusion of an inquiry into the scheme by a one-man commission headed by retired Karnataka High Court judge Justice P N Desai. Diverse views on cancelling scheme On November 1, Social Welfare Minister H C Mahadevappa, the Congress minister in charge of Mysuru region, indicated at a press conference that the state will "not hesitate in cancelling any 50:50 scheme land allotment found to be illegal".

The first meeting of MUDA was held on Thursday after a gap of 10 months and it was presided over by Mysore Deputy Commissioner G Lakshminath Reddy, the newly appointed interim chairman of the agency. During the meeting some Congress MLAs also suggested the cancellation of the 50:50 scheme. K Harish Gowda, the Congress MLA from the Mysuru region, said MUDA must undergo a corruption clean-up and has called for the cancellation of the 50:50 scheme, which was misused by officials. Earlier the BJP MLA from Mysore T S Srivatsa wrote to CM Siddaramaiah for the cancellation of the entire MUDA land allotments. The CM has forwarded the letter to the state Urban Development Department. Another BJP MLA G T Deve Gowda who is among the beneficiaries of the 50:50 scheme has however advised the government that only allotments found to be blatantly illegal under the 50:50 scheme must be cancelled as it would otherwise erode public trust in MUDA schemes. Karnataka government has dallied on the scheme

Despite multiple letters from the Mysuru deputy commissioner through the tenure of the BJP and Congress in 2023, calling out the 50:50 alternative land compensation scheme for misuse and illegality, the Congress government finally stopped the scheme only in October 2023. The Con-

gress government also did not move to retrospectively cancel 1,328 allotments, with beneficiaries cutting across political parties and prominent religious/educational institutions. After deciding to halt the scheme in October 2023, the government only cancelled the scheme prospectively. There are allegations that people who did not lose land in Mysuru were also given high value alternate sites under the scheme and it began being abused by realtors and politicians. After a resolution in October 2020 the alternate site scheme was drafted on November 20, 2020 by MUDA members, including the chairman and commissioner for distributing sites to land losers on a 50:50 ratio basis – 50 per cent of a developed area in exchange for 50 per cent of the land acquired by MUDA. The MUDA was warned against implementing the scheme on May 4, 2021 and March 14, 2023 by the state urban development department but did not stop the scheme. According to the department, 1,328 alternate sites have been given as compensation. There are 125 allotments in the scheme in the same Vijayanagar area where Parvathi received an allotment. MUDA is a body created under the Urban Development Authority Act of 1987 and the 50:50 alternative land allotment scheme was introduced in 2020 under the Karnataka Urban Development Authorities (Disposal of Plots in Lieu of Compensation for Land Acquisition) Rules, 1991 instead of a previously existing land for land scheme. The resolution passed by MUDA on October 13, 2020 for grant of land at the rate of 50:50 is an illegal resolution under Section 67 of the Karnataka Urban Development Authorities Act-1987, urban development officials have stated, leading to its final cancellation on October 27, 2023. The MUDA resolutions of 2020, which facilitated the 50:50 land compensation scheme, were approved at meetings attended by local Mysuru legislators cutting across party lines like G T Deve Gowda of the Janata Dal (S), S A Ramdas of the BJP who were the members of MUDA. Beneficiaries across parties According to official records, JD(S) MLA G T Deve Gowda has received sites in exchange for 2.25 acres of land in Iranagar and 1 acre in Madagalli villages respectively under the controversial scheme. JD(S) MLA Sa Ra Mahesh has received MUDA sites in exchange for 0.09 acres in Dattagalli village and 2.11 acres in Bogadi village. Another JDS legislator from Mysuru C N Manjegowda has received alternate sites in exchange for one acre of land in Hinkal, 2.25 acres in Devanur, and 4.15 acres in Kesare villages. BJP legislator and former Congress leader H Vishwanath has received MUDA sites in exchange for 0.05 acres in the Belavath village, while BJP leader U S Shekhar has received sites in compensation for 1.26 acres acquired in the Nachenahalli village. Among others who have benefitted from the scheme are the prestigious Lingayat educational institution JSS, which has received sites in exchange for 4.34 acres in Kuppalur, and the Vokkaliga Trust known as BGS, which has received sites for 0.11 acre in Malavadi. As per existing laws, alternative plots cannot be provided to land losers in developed locations but only in the place where they have lost land. A judicial commission headed by retired Karnataka HC judge P N Desai constituted on July 14 and a panel headed by a serving IAS officer Venkatachalapathy have been tasked by the Congress government with finding all illegalities that have occurred under the 50:50 land allotment scheme that was started during the tenure of the BJP government in Karnataka.

## Officials unable to warn family deep inside forest, elephant herd tramples 2 children to death in hut



GNS News Agency, Dec 8

Elephant In January this year, in the same district, a village resident was trampled to death when he tried to stop an elephant herd from feeding on sugarcane in his field. Two children aged five and 11 were trampled to death in the early hours of Sunday when a herd of 11 elephants destroyed a makeshift hut that they were living in on a hillock in the forests near Maheshpur village in Chhattisgarh's Surajpur district. Three-four families from the Pando tribe, one of the seven Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) in Chhattisgarh, lived on the hilltop in the area that comes under Ramanujnagar forest range. At around 1 am, the elephants reached the area and destroyed one of the huts, killing the two children. Others who were in the hut managed to escape safely.

On Saturday night, Forest officials had informed residents of Maheshpur village about the movement of the elephant herd. Unfortunately, the Pando tribe, who lived deep in the forest, could not be alerted, officials said. Later, other huts in the area were evacuated as a precautionary measure, said Surajpur Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Pankaj Kamal. An official said the area has been a traditional route for elephant herds, and their movement was being tracked for days. The herd was moving only inside the forest and continued to move away from villages, the official added. Regarding measures to prevent such deaths in the future, a Forest official said, "We are coordinating with other government departments to ensure the PM Awaz Yojna housing scheme is implemented to build concrete houses which elephants can't harm. Another measure is to identify such villagers and tribals living deep in the forest and evacuate them to avert such incidents." The family of the deceased has received instant relief of Rs 25,000, and the remaining compensation of Rs 5.75 lakh will be disbursed after formalities, the official said. In January this year, in the same district, a village resident was trampled to death when he tried to stop an elephant herd from feeding on sugarcane in his field. As per figures put before Rajya Sabha this year, more than 303 people were killed in human-elephant conflicts in the past five years in Chhattisgarh. The districts where the incidents have occurred are Surguja, Raigarh, Korba, Surajpur, Mahasamund, Dhamtari, Gariaband, Balod and Balrampur – most of which are in north and central Chhattisgarh.

## BJP video on social media spreading false charges against Opposition, says Congress to EC

GNS News Agency, Dec 8

Congress Congress MP and the party's communication in-charge Jairam Ramesh wrote to the poll panel stating that "false allegations and statements are being ascribed to leaders of the JMM, Congress and the RJD" through the advertisement published by the Jharkhand BJP page. The Congress submitted a complaint to the Election Commission on Sunday alleging that a BJP official handle for its Jharkhand unit had published a video on social media "in blatant violation of the Model Code of Conduct" and other election laws. Jharkhand Assembly election will be held in two phases on November 13 and 20. Congress MP and the party's communication in-charge Jairam Ramesh wrote to the poll panel stating that "false allegations and statements are being ascribed to leaders of the JMM, Congress and the RJD" through the advertisement published by the Jharkhand BJP page on November 9. "Additionally, the leaders are being portrayed in a negative and false light, with the sole intent of propagating false and baseless narratives against them," the letter read and requested the poll panel to issue directions for the "immediate takedown of all videos" and sought action against the BJP. The "BJP had first tried to use actors who resemble the leaders of JMM, INC and RJD", the letter alleged, adding that "consequently, the advertisement has tried to raise several blatantly false allegations against the leaders of the JMM, INC and RJD."

One of the allegations, the letter said, is that "these leaders are 'anti-Adivasi' who are banding together under



the garb of being pro-Adivasi to ultimately serve their own personal agendas". "It is submitted that under the Model Code of Conduct, no political party, leader or candidate can engage in electoral campaigning that is based on false information about opposing political parties/candidates. Further, no political party, leader, or candidate, can engage in activities that would constitute corrupt practices under the Representation of the People Act, 1951," it said. It said the "advertisement published by the BJP is rife with baseless allegations and falsehoods whose sole purpose is to unduly influence voters to dissuade them from voting for any opposition party and for the BJP to make unfair electoral gains in the state of Jharkhand". Saying that elections were underway in Jharkhand, the Congress said that "the BJP was required to have its advertisement approved" by the EC.

## Shots fired at poll procession, Congress and BJP trade charges as Assam's Samaguri sees night of violence

GNS News Agency, Dec 8

Days before the Assembly bypolls in Assam, poll-related violence in Samaguri constituency intensified on Saturday night, with an Independent candidate being found injured and both Congress and BJP alleging that their supporters were shot at. Since the announcement of the bypoll schedule on October 15, there have been multiple instances of clashes between BJP and Congress workers in central Assam's Samaguri constituency. On Saturday night, the BJP MLA from Barhampur constituency, Jitu Goswami, alleged that his vehicle was shot at during a procession at Mari Puthikhaiti village in Samaguri constituency. "We were doing a procession from a nearby BJP office to another BJP office. On the way, stones were thrown at us from the house of a Congress worker named Ismail Hussain. After that, our car was attacked with bullets. Several cars were damaged and several of our workers were injured," he told reporters. Congress, however, alleged that the bullets were fired by BJP workers who were in the procession. Imam Uddin, the son of Ismail Hussain – the Congress worker named by the BJP – was injured allegedly in the firing.

Congress MP Rakibul Hussain, the father of Congress's Samaguri candidate Tanzil Hussain, visited Imam Uddin's house late at night. He said, "BJP leaders and workers have shot at a Congress office and they are, in turn, complaining about the person at whom they have shot... If the firing was done by Congress workers, how is it possible that someone from the Congress side was shot at? ... What were they doing here at 9.30 pm at night in the first place? Where did they get permission for this?" Nagaon SP Swapnaneel Deka said that as of Sunday afternoon, while two complaints have been filed, the police have not registered an FIR and are examining the claims. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma hit out against the alleged attack on Jitu Goswami. "The real question is, why has the Congress stooped to such depths in this by-election? It's not just fear of defeat, but the desperation to hold on to their core vote bank that drives them to such extremes. Justice will be served, and we will not allow anyone to sabotage or undermine our democratic process," he wrote on X. Meanwhile, an Independent candidate, Musabbir Ali Ahmed, also alleged that he was assaulted in a separate incident on Saturday night. SP Deka said, "The candidate has said that he was in his home in Nagaon and that some people called him outside. He said that these people beat him and threatened him to withdraw from the election. The matter is being investigated." Samaguri is one of five Assembly constituencies in Assam in which by-elections will be conducted on November 13. The seat, which has a sizeable minority population, became vacant after Rakibul Hussain, who represented the seat for five terms, was elected from the Dhubri parliamentary seat. Hussain's 26-year-old son, Tanzil, is the Congress candidate this time, and he will take on the BJP's state general secretary Diplu Ranjan Sarma. State Congress spokesperson Mehdi Alam Bora accused the BJP of "trying to see whether muscle power can work for them in the 2026 Assembly election". "They are trying to see how much they will be able to make the administration work for them. Samaguri is a constituency where they are going to lose, but they are trying to see if they will be able to win here with muscle power," he said. Assam BJP spokesperson Manoj Baruah called the violence "unfortunate". "In Assam's political tradition, we don't have instances of this kind of violence. It has reached the



extent of an elected MLA being shot at. That can't be accepted. We hope that there will not be such a situation in the future, and we should all come to a consensus," he said.

## Modi to attend DG-IGP meet in Bhubaneswar; cyber crime, AI, to be discussed



GNS News Agency, Dec 8

PM Narendra Modi is scheduled to attend the three-day All-India Conference of Director Generals/Inspector Generals of Police in Bhubaneswar from November 28-30 where cyber frauds, challenges posed by AI tools such as ChatGPT, latest threats of drone and counterterrorism are among the issues to be discussed. According to a source, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and NSA Ajit Doval will attend all the sessions.

"They will discuss a wide-range of policing and internal security issues including cyber crime, technology in policing, counterterrorism challenges, LWE, and prison reforms, among others," the source said. "As per tentative agenda, discussions will be held on counterterrorism, emerging trends in militancy and hybrid intelligence in J&K, Khalistan communication and logistics network, role of virtual assets, dark web in terror financing, drug trafficking, and the role of cryptocurrency in counterterrorism," the source said. "... Chinese influence in the neighbourhood and its implications for India, growing radicalisation, instability in neighbourhood and its implications for India will be discussed," the source said.

## Russia's First Dy PM Denis Manturov to visit India, focus on economic cooperation

EMS News Agency, Nov 10

Russia's First Dy PM to visit India, focus on economic cooperation Russia's Deputy PM Denis Manturov with External affairs minister S Jaishankar. (ANI/File) Days after the election of Donald Trump as the US President, Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov is set to visit India on November 11-12 to hold key discussions on bilateral and global issues with the Indian leadership. The Russian Embassy in New Delhi announced Manturov's visit Sunday. On November 11, Manturov will participate in the plenary session of the Russian-Indian Business Forum in Mumbai "where the focus will be on expanding economic and business cooperation between the two nations". The forum, organised by Business Council for Cooperation with India and FICCI, will address areas such as industrial collaboration, transport and logistics, finance, digital technologies and enhancing interregional cooperation. On November 12, Manturov will hold a bilateral meeting with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in New Delhi. He will also participate in the 25th Session of the Intergovernmental Russian-Indian Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical and Cultural Cooperation. The session will address the progress of ongoing bilateral initiatives and explore new areas for collaboration.

Manturov is also expected to hold a series of bilateral meetings with key Indian leaders to further discuss strate-



gic cooperation, the embassy added. Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday congratulated Donald Trump on his victory in his first public comment on the US elections. The Kremlin earlier welcomed Trump's claim that he could negotiate an end to the conflict in Ukraine "in 24 hours" but emphasised that it will wait for concrete policy steps. In the wake of the Russian-Ukraine war and West Asian conflict, PM Narendra Modi, while congratulating Trump on his election, said that the two leaders would work together for peace and stability. "Together, let's work for the betterment of our people and to promote global peace, stability and prosperity," Modi said. Trump has repeatedly claimed that the Ukraine-Russia war would not have started if he had been president.

## Government data shows spike in selection for Group B, C jobs last year

GNS News Agency, Dec 8

1.41 lakh selected for Group B, C posts last year, 10-year high: Govt The latest available data from the Department of Expenditure shows that 33.42% of the sanctioned posts of Group B and 23.77% of the Group C posts were vacant as of March 1, 2023. Selection of candidates for Group B and Group C posts, which form the bulk of Central government posts, nearly doubled in 2023-2024 compared to the previous year and was the highest in at least 10 years, according to data released recently by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.

These posts include lower division clerks, stenographers, junior engineers and sub-inspectors in CAPF. Based on open exam and departmental exams for promotion carried out by SSC, a total of 1,41,487 candidates were recommended for recruitment in 2023-24, says the ministry's annual report. These candidates were selected out of 2.57 crore aspirants who registered for the exams. The highest number of selections (46,554) was for posts of constable in the CAPF, rifleman in Assam Rifles and sepoy in the NCB. An analysis of the SSC's annual reports from 2014-15 to 2022-23 and Ministry's report for 2023-24, shows that last year's selections were the highest in 10 years. In 2014-15, 58,066 candidates were selected. In 2022-2023, the SSC selected 73,721 candidates out of 2.82 crore registrations. "The SSC is one of the largest recruiting agen-



cies in India in terms of the number of candidates who apply for various posts in the Central government," the Ministry's report says. It is mandated to recruit for all Group B (non-gazetted) and Group C (non-technical) posts in the Union government ministries and their attached and subordinate offices. The latest available data from the Department of Expenditure shows that 33.42% of the sanctioned posts of Group B and 23.77% of the Group C posts were vacant as of March 1, 2023. Overall for Group A to C, the vacancies stood at 24.21% in 2022-2023, the DoE annual report shows. Meanwhile, the UPSC carried out 15 exams in which 33.51 lakh candidates appeared in 2022-23 and 4,195 were recommended for appointments.

## Unchecked sand mining, damaged bridge forcing 30-km detour: No relief in sight for 200 Punjab villages as authorities grapple with fund crunch



GNS News Agency, Dec 8

Sand mining, a lucrative industry worth crores of rupees, has become a significant problem for residents of at least 200 villages in Ropar and Garhshankar in Punjab. The Kalwa-Nangal bridge over the Swan river, located in Algran village and connecting Ropar to Garhshankar, has been damaged since July 2023 due to the overexploitation of the river bed for sand. Despite the outcry over the bridge's condition, sand mining continues unchecked even as residents are forced to take a 30-km detour because the Punjab Mandi Board lacks the funds necessary to carry out the repairs. The bridge has been closed to traffic since December 21, 2023. As residents have reported, the bridge was opened for traffic in 2002 and has witnessed illegal sand mining activities since 2006. Crushers operating in the area ran all night and this overexploitation of the riverbed for sand mining damaged the bridge's pillars which were further compromised by the floods in 2023.

"The mining operation not only disrupted our peace—requiring police intervention each time illegal activities were reported—but it also caused significant damage to our bridge. One of the bridge's piers has become tilted, leading to its closure for all traffic except two-wheelers. This damage occurred due to excessive digging near the bridge. We have raised red flags multiple times about this issue, but unfortunately, nothing has been done to address it," said Surinder Kumar Saini, a shopkeeper in Bhallan village near the bridge. A visit to the area near the damaged bridge revealed trails left by heavy vehicles, possible quarrying sand, on the bed of the river. "We hear noises of heavy machinery every night. If mining is not taking place then how come these machines are working. We have complained many times. I have retired from the police. I know how the entire system works," said Bachhittar Singh, a resident of Tarakh Majari village. The Public Works Department (PWD) flagged concerns about mining activities near the bridge and provided an estimate of Rs 17 crore for its repair to the Punjab Mandi Board, which is responsible for the construction and repair of rural roads and bridges. However, the Mandi Board is currently facing a cash crunch. "We have submitted the estimate to the Mandi Board. As soon as the funds are released, we will proceed with the repairs," said a PWD official. The area is part of the Anandpur Sahib constituency, represented by AAP MP and spokesperson Malvinder Kang. He said, "The bridge is significant and its repair a major demand from local residents. We are working to get it repaired. This falls within the Assembly segment of Education Minister Harjot Singh Bains (Anandpur Sahib), who is also advocating for its repair. We have raised this issue with the government. There is currently a funding shortage with the Mandi Board, as the Centre has not released the state's Rural Development Fund, amounting to Rs 6,767 crore." He stated that the bridge was damaged in last year's floods due to sand mining during the previous Congress government's regime. Harjot Bains was unavailable for comments.

CBCP study and recommendations In April this year, The Indian Express reported the plight of villages. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) took suo motu notice of the report and directed the district administration of Ropar and the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to conduct a study and submit a report. A CPCB team that visited the damaged bridge has not ruled out the damage caused to the bridge due to illegal mining. The report submitted to the NGT in August stated that although no mining activity was observed within 1,000 metres of the bridge, and no deep craters were found on the riverbed or its banks during the site visit, a report from the Department of Drainage, Mining, and Geology in Anandpur Sahib revealed that eight FIRs were filed for illegal mining between 2015 and 2020. It said these incidents occurred within 1,000 metres upstream and downstream of the bridge. "Additionally, 11 tippers and six excavators were confiscated in connection with these FIRs. No data was provided to the CPCB team with regards to illegal mining for the period of 2021-2024. Therefore, the possibility of illegal mining activities in the past occurring near the bridge may not be ruled out," the report stated. During the site inspection, the joint team noted that significant erosion had occurred around four of the 14 pillars supporting the bridge. They also observed that water flows through only four of the pillars, while the others remain intact. This situation increases the risk of damage to the bridge, according to the report.

During the visit, the team observed that the joints on the road slabs above pillars P7, P6, and P8 had widened,

and cracks were present on the top slabs of the bridge. The team suggested that the Geology and Mining Department may rigorously enforce the Enforcement and Monitoring Guidelines for Sand Mining (EMGSM), 2020. This includes ensuring that sand and gravel extraction is prohibited within 1000 metres of major bridges and highways on both sides. All mining sites beyond 1,000 metres of the bridge under reference, if any, may also be inspected to verify compliance with these guidelines. Additionally, the report said that strict monitoring may be conducted by the police, forest, and transportation departments. Adequate check posts should be established across the district, the operation hours of quarries and depots should be limited to 7 am to 6 pm, and the parking of sand-transporting vehicles within quarry or depot sites during night or odd hours may be restricted, it said. The report recommended that the local administration conduct a study on the impact of mining activities on the surrounding area's hydro-geological conditions. The data collected from this study can be compared with baseline data to evaluate the effects on groundwater levels. Water table going down, say residents. Residents of nearby villages reported that the underground water levels in their area have significantly decreased. "Our area used to have the best water supply; we could access it at 20 feet. Now, it has dropped to 120 feet. All our pump sets have failed, and we have had to deepen them," said Saini. He recalled how the first crusher was set up at the Swan river in the Algran village in 2008. "Ever since, these 16 years have been a nightmare. Our daughters do not feel safe. Every night, we see vehicles of informants parked on our roadsides to tip off the workers at the mining sites if any police party comes to raid the spot. We have been seeing that these crushers keep changing hands. The operations get patronage from the politicians in power."

Mining contractors rue lack of proper policy. A mining contractor, speaking anonymously, stated that a crusher was set up for Rs 20 crore but the business is no longer profitable. "Only 5 to 7 per cent of crushers are operational. The region now only has fine sand available in Punjab, while coarse sand is being sourced from neighbouring states like Himachal Pradesh. Those still operating are doing so with the support of local leaders. There are also issues regarding environmental clearance. To date, the government has only auctioned 40 quarries." He stated that coarse sand, obtained from crushed stones, is currently available to end users at a price ranging from Rs 32 to Rs 40 per cubic foot. This starkly contrasts the promise made by the AAP government, which pledged to provide sand at a rate of Rs 5.50 per cubic foot. However, local residents expressed their frustration, noting that the sand is actually being sold at Rs 32 to Rs 40 per cubic foot. Gurpreet Singh, a resident of Kasumbri village in Fatehgarh Sahib, said, "I have never purchased sand for less than Rs 32 per cubic foot. It has never touched Rs 30 even," he said. A government official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, stated that there is no issue with sand supply in the state. "There is no shortage; it is readily available. The price of Rs 5.50 refers to the material itself and does not include transportation or labour costs. People can buy it for Rs 5.50 per cubic foot at the pit head."

Sand mining, a political hot potato in Punjab. The sand mining business, estimated to be worth Rs 5,000 crore, gained momentum in Punjab around 2005-06. However, it has not significantly contributed to the financially strained state, as no government has been able to generate more than Rs 400 crore annually from it. This issue has become a political concern for every administration, as sand is available to end users at high prices, yet the government struggles to capitalise on it. The mining activities have transformed the lives of people living near the rivers. Punjab has an estimated demand of 2 crore tonnes of sand and mining has been a significant political issue in the state, influencing the narrative during the SAD-BJP coalition government from 2007 to 2017, as well as under Congress CM Amarinder Singh's government from 2017 to 2021, and subsequently during Charanjit Singh Channi's tenure from September 2021 to March 2022. The SAD-BJP government earned less than Rs 50 crore annually by implementing a reverse bidding system for mining operations. The Congress government later changed the mining system, but it was unable to generate more than Rs 350 crore annually from this sector. AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal promised before the last Assembly elections that the government would earn Rs 20,000 crore a year from sand mining. However, to date, the government has only managed to earn around Rs 300 crore. In the post-terror era, Punjab experienced rapid development, increased cash flow, and a surge in construction activities over the last two decades. However, a "politician-sand miners nexus" emerged during this period. Successive governments made pre-poll promises to dismantle this nexus and liberate the sand business from its grip. The sand business is now closely linked to several politicians, as the sand mafia reportedly operates with political support. An official from the mining department stated that illegal mining is occurring in the state, and while cases have been registered, the extent of the issue is less significant than it was in the past. "That's why the Opposition is not raising concerns. Otherwise, would they remain silent?"

## A lot of countries are nervous about US, we are not one of them

GNS News Agency, Dec 8

A lot of countries are nervous about US, we are not one of them, says Jaishankar. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar at an event in Mumbai "I know today a lot of countries are nervous about the US, let's be honest about that. We are not one of them," External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said Sunday.



He also said Prime Minister Narendra Modi was "among the first three calls" that Donald Trump took after winning the US presidential election. Jaishankar was speaking at the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the Aditya Birla Scholarships Programme in Mumbai. Also present were Harvard University professor and political philosopher Michael J. Sandel and Aditya Birla Group chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla. Asked if the outcome of the US presidential election is impacting Indo-US ties, the External Affairs Minister said, "Prime Minister Modi has actually built rapport across multiple presidents of the US... There is something natural in terms of how he forges those relationships." Stating that the world is increasingly appreciating the India story, he said the focus on economic policy has in fact become the key change in India's foreign policy in contemporary times which is purported to advancing national development apart from ensuring national security. "We no longer measure each

other just by military capabilities or political influence, but take into account technology strengths, economic resilience, human creativity and societal well-being. No nation can truly develop in a unidimensional manner. And large ones, in particular like us, must have some basic self-sufficiency," he said, emphasising on Atmanirbhar Bharat. Pointing to the changing world demography where demands for services are growing and many societies are falling short, Jaishankar said this is an opportunity for India. "A better educated, skilled and confident generation of Indians will have openings that could not be contemplated earlier. In fact, the interest in Indian talents is probably the most frequent theme in my conversations with foreign governments and corporates."

## Australia site not banned, EAM Jaishankar's comments freely viewed: Canada



GNS News Agency, Dec 8

News outlet The Australia Today, which alleged it was blocked in Canada, an allegation affirmed by the Ministry of External Affairs, was "never banned" and the comments of India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar can be "easily and freely viewed in Canada", a spokesperson for Canada's Foreign Ministry told The Indian Express Sunday. As for the allegation of it being pulled down from social media, the spokesperson cited "a decision by Meta to block news on its social media platforms in Canada since 2023". Last week, the MEA and The Australia Today said the latter's content, including Jaishankar's interview and press conference with Australian counterpart Penny Wong, published on November 5 were blocked on social media by Canada. Responding to a questionnaire from The Indian Express, in the first official reaction, Louis-Carl Brissette Lesage, Spokesperson, Media Relations, Global Affairs Canada, said Sunday: "Australia Today has never been banned in Canada. The news site and video of media comments by both India's Foreign Minister (S) Jaishankar and Australia's Foreign Minister (Penny) Wong, can be easily and freely viewed in Canada." Lesage added: "In Canada, Meta, which owns and operates Facebook and Instagram, blocked the sharing of news content on their sites, irrespective of the outlet. This is due to a decision by Meta to block news on its social media platforms in Canada since 2023. This is in line with a broader business strategy on Meta's part to de-emphasize news on its platforms globally." On November 7, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal had said he was "surprised" over the "strange" Canadian move of blocking content on social media and that the action "yet again highlights the hypocrisy of Canada towards freedom of speech".

"We understand that the social media handles and pages of this particular outlet, which is an important diaspora outlet, have been blocked and are not available for viewers in Canada. This happened just an hour or a few hours after this particular handle carried the press conference of S Jaishankar along with Penny Wong, and the outlet also had several articles on the (Australia) visit of the External Affairs Minister, as also an interview of him. We were surprised. It looks strange to us," he had said. Responding to a question on the safety of diaspora in his interview to The Australia Today, Jaishankar had said, "Sometimes, you will have a few extremist people who will go and do something; it's important that they are checked." "No country has a stronger commitment to freedom than India. But we always tell people freedoms are meant to be utilised, not misused." In

a veiled reference to Canada, he said, "Governments have the responsibility in this regard."

Managing editor of The Australia Today Jitarth Jai Bharadwaj said the next day that the "ban" was "under orders from the Canadian government". The Australia Today also shared an image that said "people in Canada can't see this content". But the following sentence, which can be read on Facebook, states: "In response to Canadian government legislation, news content can't be viewed in Canada." The legislation in question is Canada's Online News Act of 2023 which requires online companies like Facebook and Google to compensate news publishers for use of their content. Since the law came into force last year, Facebook has blocked access to all news content on its platform in Canada, as it does not wish to compensate news outlets, as outlined in the law. When asked about this, Bharadwaj told The Indian Express Sunday that reports came in from their audience in Canada within hours of the Jaishankar interview being posted (on Tuesday). "Prior to this, we had no issues with our content being accessible in Canada. Our concern stems from the timing of the restriction. Not a day earlier, not a day later, but within hours of the interview being posted which leads us to question whether this action was selectively enforced in response to the interview's content," Bharadwaj said. The publication had shared an image that said "people in Canada can't see this content". The following line, available on the Facebook site, reads: "In response to Canadian government legislation, news content can't be viewed in Canada." In Canberra, Jaishankar, in remarks on Canadian allegations against India over the killing of Khalistan separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, had reiterated that Canada made the allegations without providing specifics. He also said India believes in freedom and it should not be misused, and that India had brought this up with the Australian side. Jaiswal said, "So you can draw your conclusions from that, why The Australia Today channel was blocked by Canada." Meta and the Ministry of External Affairs did not respond to a help page on Facebook in Canada, which is mentioned on all news publishers' pages whose content is unavailable states, "In response to Canada's Online News Act, news content from Pages connected to a news outlet can no longer be viewed or shared in Canada." If you are in Canada, this means: You can no longer share or view news links or content on Facebook, including news articles and audio-visual content posted by news outlets, and you can no longer see links or content from any news outlet Pages, even if you search for them or follow them," the Facebook help page states.

## Tipra Motha to submit memorandum in govt offices across Tripura on Nov 14, press for pending demands

GNS News Agency, Dec 8

Tipra Motha Pradyot Kishore also informed he would visit New Delhi towards the end of November to attend a tripartite meeting on the Tiprasa accord. The Tipra Motha Sunday announced that it will submit copies of a memorandum at government offices across Tripura on November 14 highlighting various demands of the tribal population. As per the announcement, the BJP ally will press for the implementation of the tripartite Tiprasa Accord, early holding of panchayat polls in the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC), and the adoption of the 125th constitutional amendment bill that envisages more administrative, executive, and financial powers for autonomous councils under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, among others. Speaking to reporters in Agartala, TIPRA Motha founder Pradyot Kishore Debbarma said the decision to submit the memorandum to the Governor, block development officers, sub-divisional magistrates, and district magistrates was taken following an organisational meeting of the party.

Pradyot Kishore also informed he would visit New Delhi towards the end of November to attend a tripartite meeting on the Tiprasa accord. "We shall go for a meeting in Delhi at the end of the month... Our demand is not against anyone but to



uplift our community. If anyone feels that with the upliftment of the tribal population, someone will face loss in the state, then he is spreading poison here. This is going to be the second round of the meeting. I expect the Centre to respond positively to our demands," he said.

Talking about the 125th amendment bill, he said,

"The BJP, Congress, and all other parties are saying that the 125th amendment bill should be passed. So, if all are ready, why have we been told to wait? For how long we shall wait?" Speaking about his recent meeting with Chief Minister Manik Saha, he said the latter has assured him that village council polls in TTAADC would be conducted soon in accordance

with the directives of the High Court of Tripura. When asked, he said there has been no formal discussion yet on a pre-poll alliance with the BJP for the village polls. In September, Pradyot Kishore attended the first round of talks in New Delhi over the tripartite Tiprasa Accord, which was signed by the Centre, the state government, and the TIPRA Motha in March.

## Would you grab a cancelled order? Zomato's 'Food Rescue' lets you save and savor

Hyderabad: Zomato has come up with an irresistible offer for its customers on the cancelled orders, but would you be interested in picking up the order which is cancelled by another customer? While it remains to be seen how the customers respond to the new of-

fer, the cancelled order facility has received excellent online attention. Here is what Zomato has announced on its blog on Sunday about what it is branding as "Food Rescue", an initiative to minimize food wastage. Zomato says around four lakh food pack-

ets on their way for delivery are cancelled every month, despite its no-refund policy on cancelled orders. With the customers cancelling orders in the last minute, there is every possibility of the food going waste. So Zomato has now come up with this innovative solution to reduce food wastage.

## India has all growth drivers China had 20 years ago, raising education levels key: Jean-Pierre Landau



compared to expectations 20 years ago when it joined the WTO, the professor said. "We first thought that we could absorb the China shock. For the US, it was much more concentrated regionally and sectorally than expected, and so the regional implications of the China shock have been enormous. Perhaps that's a source of populism. That was certainly the first surprise. The second surprise is that everybody expected that by bringing China into the WTO and the world economic order, they [China] would have supported it. Instead, they fought against it very strongly, and that was a very bad surprise," Landau added.

Notably, rising imports from China have been a major concern for India, with imports exceeding \$100 billion in FY24, affecting businesses from small artisans to large steel manufacturers. During the ongoing financial year, India's imports from China have already surpassed \$60 billion in the first seven months of 2024—a 10 per cent increase compared to \$55 billion during the same period last year. Landau said that China can grow on its own through size, work, and expertise, but it still needs two things—commodities and technology. "In my view, they have not caught up with the technology frontier where the US is, let alone pushed the frontier beyond the US. And clearly, the US intends to prevent them from doing that. Additionally, the [Chinese] regime, as I see it, is no longer in a position to trigger innovation as much as before," he said.

When asked if the Chinese stimulus would be enough to revive the Chinese economy, Landau said that while a stimulus makes sense, it may not be sufficient. "Whether it will be enough to dissipate the latent crisis of confidence that exists in China since Covid, I'm not sure," he said. The world's second-largest economy is experiencing deflationary pressures due to a sharp decline in the property market and weak consumer confidence. On Saturday, Chinese Finance Minister Lan Fao said the country would issue \$325.5 billion in special bonds over the next three months to boost the economy. Interest rates and inflation. The professor noted that Western countries have managed to reduce inflation in record time, following the substantial stimulus provided during the Covid-19 pandemic. Notably, inflation in the West has impacted Indian exports, particularly in labour-intensive sectors such as textiles and gems and jewellery. Meanwhile, high inflation has also slowed the flow of investments into developing countries like India. "What has been done in the last two years is historically exceptional. Western countries have managed to bring inflation down very close to their target. We are not quite there yet, but we are very close—in the Euro area, we are almost touching the target, but we are also triggering a recession. To the best of my knowledge, this hasn't happened in the last half-century," he said. "If you look at real interest rates, before the cuts and even after, they are very high right now. Real rates are in the order of 2-2.5 per cent, which for advanced economies is certainly above what we call the famous R-star, the natural equilibrium rate. From that perspective, I wouldn't judge the [interest rate] cuts as premature, but everyone is aware that the last mile is more difficult. You don't want to remove accommodation too fast, especially since we are still above target," he said. Landau said that capital is much scarcer today than it has been over the last two to three decades, with global savings rates falling. "We have reached unprecedented levels of indebtedness in advanced economies. We have no idea how this will develop. It may continue as usual, or we may face shocks we cannot yet imagine. Climate finance will be difficult. Part of climate policy is about setting objectives, with the assumption that finance and strategy will adapt. I think we need more than that now," Landau said.

As overcapacity in China is seen as a major challenge to global manufacturing growth, India stands to benefit the most if it promotes industries that raise the qualifications of its population, increase productivity, and improve education levels, said Jean-Pierre Landau, Associate Professor of Economics at Sciences Po, France, and former IMF and World Bank executive, in an interview with . Landau stated that India possesses all the growth drivers that China had 20 years ago, and that a focus on education would be crucial, as South Korea's experience shows that "education is everything". He also noted that India's service sector is generating a significant number of positive externalities in the economy.

"I think what India has done with the payment system is going to be a model for the rest of the world, or at least the emerging world. Since 1991, India has found the right balance between the private sector and the public sector. However, there are challenges such as poverty and education," he said. Professor Landau added that rising global protectionism poses a major challenge to economic growth for developing countries such as India. Even regions like Europe, which were strong advocates of free trade up until a few years ago, are now prioritising the climate agenda, sometimes in a highly "restrictive" manner. Notably, Indian policymakers have criticised European Union's regulations where climate interferes with trade. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman have called taxes under Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and EU deforestation law as an unfair unilateral measure that could disrupt trade.

"I started my career as a trade official 20 years ago. I've never been a fanatic for pure free trade. But now, I think it's moving in the wrong direction. We may be in the process of 'throwing the baby out with the bathwater', and that is very dangerous. Much depends on the US election, but depressingly, the one thing on which both parties seem to agree is the trade agenda," he said. While former president and Republican nominee Donald Trump has targeted India over high tariffs during his election rallies, President Biden has also announced tariffs on electric vehicles and clean energy products. However, these measures have been largely directed towards China. Under Biden, India and the US resolved all seven pending disputes at the World Trade Organization (WTO). "I don't think a Democratic US president five years ago would have gone as far as invoking national security. All of this is done under the national security exception of the WTO. I don't think a Democratic president would have gone that far. Conceptually, there's something worth exploring—what exactly economic security means," he said. On China's shock and stimulus

There were two negative surprises regarding China,

## Health cover for senior citizens, term life insurance may get GST waiver

GNS News Agency, Oct 22

The Goods and Services Tax on premiums paid by senior citizens for health insurance and premiums paid by all for term life insurance may be exempted as most members of a ministerial panel set up specifically to study this agreed in favour of extending such relief. Separately, the Group of Ministers (GoM) on rate rationalisation also discussed Saturday a GST rejig for several items and proposed cutting rates for some items such as packaged water above 20 litres (5 per cent from 18 per cent), bicycles priced less than Rs 10,000 (5 per cent from 12 per cent) and exercise notebooks (5 per cent from 12 per cent). Shoes above Rs 15,000 and wrist watches above Rs 25,000 are likely to be shifted to the topmost slab of 28 per cent GST from 18 per cent now, a state finance minister said. This rate rejig exercise will help the states and Centre to realise revenue gain of Rs 22,000 crore, which will help cover the revenue loss from reduction in GST rates for insurance premiums and other items, the minister said. For the insurance sector, GST on term life insurance premiums are likely to be exempted for all persons, including plans that consist of family members. Health insurance premium paid by senior citizens irrespective of coverage would also be exempted. For other citizens, health insurance cover till Rs 5 lakh is likely to be exempted and the existing rate of 18 per cent will be charged for health insurance cover over Rs 5 lakh. "Every GoM member wants to give relief to people. Special focus is on senior



citizens. We will submit a report to the Council. Work is being done to reduce the GST rate from 18 per cent, exemption will be given for certain categories (of insurance premium). The final decision will be taken by the GST Council," Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary, who is the convener of both the GoMs on insurance and rate rationalisation, said after the two meetings. In its 54th meeting held on September 9, the GST Council had broadly converged on the need to reduce the tax rate for health and life insurance premiums from 18 per cent but the specific proposal was referred to the GoM on life and health insurance premium for further discussion. The existing six-member GoM on rate rationalisation was expanded to form a 13-member GoM on life and health insurance premium with the mandate to submit their report by October-end. The GST Council will meet in November to take a final decision on the rate recommendations by both the GoMs. "There were discussions held in the meeting. Most states are on board for

exempting term life insurance premium from GST. Term life insurance plans which include family members are also going to be exempt. For health insurance, total relief would be given for insurance premiums paid by senior citizens and exemption would be given for health insurance cover up to Rs 5 lakh for others. The existing 18 per cent GST rate will be retained for health insurance cover above Rs 5 lakh," a state finance minister, who is a member of the GoM, said after the meeting on Saturday. The revenue implication of the exemption proposal for senior citizens for health insurance is expected to be around Rs 2,200 crore and Rs 200 crore for exemption to term cover premiums. The revenue loss is going to be offset by gains of around Rs 22,000 crore from the proposed hike in rates on several high-end items, sources said. Rate rationalisation was discussed in the second meeting of the GoM that included rate changes for several common-use items such as packaged water, bicycles and exercise notebooks. The broad consensus was

to provide relief on consumer goods and charge a higher rate for items with premium value. The GoM has proposed a reduction in the GST rate for packaged drinking water bottles above 20 litre to 5 per cent instead of 18 per cent at present. Bicycles costing less than Rs 10,000 are likely to be charged 5 per cent GST as against 12 per cent at present, whereas GST on exercise books may get reduced to 5 per cent from 12 per cent. The GoM on rate rationalisation will continue to discuss proposals for rate rejig including merger of slabs, another state finance minister said. "Rate rationalisation is an ongoing process. Several items of common use have been discussed. More discussions are pending, especially for demerit goods in the 28 per cent slab and for items which were reduced earlier from the 28 per cent slab to 18 per cent or 12 per cent," the minister said. In December 2018, the GST Council had reduced rates for several items in the 28 per cent slab including movie tickets priced above Rs 100, television screens and monitors up to 32 inches.

## Can the shape and size of your banana stem reveal more about its taste?



If you love eating bananas, you might wanna listen up! According to digital creator Suman Ranganath, the stem of a banana can share insights into the taste and flavour of the fruit inside the skin! In the caption of her reel, she mentioned that "the shorter stem bananas are naturally more sweet and has more flavour!" Is it really true? Indianexpress.com spoke to experts to verify the statement.

Clinical dietitian Ridhima Gupta shared that there is no evidence that represents any relation between the length of banana stem and its taste. According to her, the factors on which the taste of bananas depends are its color, ripeness, whether it is plump, bruised or split, and the presence or absence of dull gray undertones. "If you want to consume them immediately, choose bright yellow bananas with little to no green around the ends. Some light brown speckling, a sign of ripeness and sweetness, is okay," she said. However, if you want to take your sweet time and eat them in a couple of days, she suggested opting for bright-yellow bananas with more green at the ends. When stored at room temperature, they'll ripen over a couple of days, she added.

"Banana stems helps in the banana ripening process as it produces a plant based hormone called ethylene, which helps in converting the plant's starch into sugar and gives it a sweet and a soft texture. This also helps the fruit get its characteristic yellow colour," said Arooshi Aggarwal, nutritionist and wellness consultant, Founder and owner of Arooshi's Nutrylife. According to her, keeping the bunch of the bananas intact and together will ripen the bananas quickly. Therefore, separating the bananas and keeping them individually will stall the process. Gupta said that the only thing to watch out for is to examine the stem or cap of the banana. "It should be intact and firmly attached. Avoid bananas with a loose or missing stem, as they may ripen too quickly. Also, check the tips of the bananas to ensure they are intact and free from damage," she said.

What are the health benefits associated with bananas?

"Banana fruit is a rich source of important phytonutrients, including vitamins and phenolic compounds. It is also notably enriched with minerals, such as phosphorus, sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, iron, copper, zinc and manganese," shared Gupta. According to her, the utilization of banana as an ingredient in different food products as well as incorporation in recipe helps improve the total dietary fibre, resistant starch, total starch and provides some essential minerals (phosphorus, magnesium, potassium and calcium). Agarwal shared that bananas are rich in vitamin A, C and B6 (pyridoxine), which help with anti ageing, improve skin and a better our sleep cycle. "Bananas contains good amounts of Tryptophan a mood relieving neurotransmitter which produces the happy hormone serotonin," she added.

## Can these drinks help overcome your vitamin B12 deficiency?

"Vitamin B12 is mostly found in animal-derived foods", says Kanikka Malhotra, Consultant Dietician & Diabetes Educator. As a result, people who eat a plant-based diet, such as vegans and severe vegetarians, are more likely to be deficient in vitamin B12. While not a primary source of B12, several plant-based milk replacements are fortified with this vital nutrient. The amount of B12 added to plant-based milk also varies significantly. Relying entirely on plant-based milk for B12 may not be sufficient. A varied plant-based diet including "fortified cereals, nutritional yeast, and other B12 supplements" is frequently suggested. The recommended B12 consumption varies according to age, gender, and overall health. Individuals with a B12 deficiency may require higher quantities than individuals with appropriate levels.

Do these drinks help?

Unfortunately, no, says Kanikka. Solely relying on plant-based drinks cannot help combat your vitamin B12 deficiency. Fruit juices like "orange or pomegranate do not contain significant amounts of vitamin B12". This essential vitamin is primarily found in animal-based foods. While lassi is a refreshing and nutritious drink, it is also not a significant source of vitamin B12. If you're concerned about deficiency, consulting a qualified dietitian is crucial for personalized guidance. Incorporate folate-rich foods like leafy greens (spinach, kale, collard greens), legumes (lentils, chickpeas, black beans), and fruits such as oranges, bananas, and avocados into your diet.

2. Vitamin B6 Sources

Non-citrus fruits like bananas, along with nuts and seeds such as sunflower seeds and pistachios, are also great sources

3. Vitamin C-Rich Foods

To enhance nutrient absorption, especially of non-heme iron, include vitamin C-rich foods like citrus fruits (oranges, grapefruits, lemons), berries (strawberries, blueber-



ries), and vegetables such as bell peppers and broccoli. Vitamin C's role in boosting iron absorption is particularly important for those who rely on fortified foods for their B12 intake.

4. Calcium-Containing Foods

For overall bone health and to support B12 in nerve transmission, include calcium-rich foods in your diet. Dairy products like milk, cheese, and yogurt are excellent sources, as are fortified plant-based milks, tofu, and orange juice. Leafy greens such as kale and collard greens also provide a healthy dose of calcium.

5. Probiotic Foods

Maintaining a healthy gut microbiome is essential for nutrient absorption, including B12. Incorporate probiotic-rich foods like yogurt with live cultures, kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi, miso, and tempeh into your diet to support gut health.

6. Magnesium-Rich Foods

Magnesium plays a key role in many biochemical reactions, including those involving B12. To ensure adequate magnesium intake, include nuts and seeds like almonds, cashews, and pumpkin seeds, as well as legumes like black beans and lentils. If you're concerned about deficiency, consulting a qualified dietitian is crucial for personalised guidance.

## Swap your sunny side ups with water eggs for a healthy breakfast option

Love eggs for breakfast but want to switch to a healthier option? Swap your fried eggs for ones made with water! Dr Michelle Davenport's Instagram post highlights that how we cook our eggs is gradually making us sicker. She suggested opting for water-based cooking methods to lower our risks of chronic diseases and premature ageing. How can you make water eggs? Measure the volume of the eggs you are using. Beat the eggs until smooth.

Add double the volume of warm water (2:1 water to eggs ratio). Add a sprinkle of salt. Mix. Pour mixture through a sieve into a heat-safe, shallow bowl that will fit into your steamer. Cover the bowl with a heat-safe plate. This recipe will make 2 bowls and you can cook them individually or together depending on the size of your steamer.

Steam for 10-12 minutes on low heat.

Remove and cut into squares, then add toppings. Ved Gautam, Executive Chef, For Earth's Sake Cafe, said that water eggs refer to those cooked using steam or water instead of being fried in oil or butter. The process of making water eggs is often compared to poaching or steaming, resulting in eggs that are tender and lower in fat compared to traditionally fried eggs. "These are made in a pan or a steamer where a small amount of water is added to the pan and brought to a boil or simmer, in case of the steamer water is heated enough to get the steam rolling. Then eggs are either cracked directly or through a bowl.



The pan or steamer is covered and cooked until the egg is set to one's liking," he explained. Not to be confused with poached eggs, which involves cracking an egg into simmering water and cooking it until the whites are firm but the yolk remains runny, celebrity chef Ananya Banerjee points out that steamed are considered a healthier alternative to regular fried eggs because they are cooked using water or steam, avoiding the added fats that come with frying. Gautam agrees, mentioning that this way of cooking doesn't use any additional fat of any kind such as oil, butter, lard, chicken fat, or bacon fat. This also lowers the overall calorie count of the meal and is better for heart health for the same reasons. "This way of cooking eggs also preserves the nutritional composition better than cooking over direct heat. Chances of overcooking or burning the eggs also reduce considerably," he added.

## Solo debuts by Shreema Upadhyay, Harinie Jeevitha in Hyderabad on Dec

Hyderabad: Featuring two of India's most promising young dancers, Shreema Upadhyaya from Bangalore and Harinie Jeevitha from Chennai, the DVI Dance Festival 2024 will take center stage on December 7 at CCRT Amphitheatre. This exclusive one-day festival will mark their debut solo performances in Hyderabad. Curated by Sravya Subramanyam, a renowned Kuchipudi artist and visual designer from Hyderabad, with assistance from a fellow Kuchipudi artist Shrestha Pabbati, the festival will have eminent dance gurus, Pavan Sreelatha Prasad, Sandhya Raju and Kala Krishna as chief guests. Harinie Jeevitha, known for her emotive and intricate choreography, will present her first solo thematic production titled "Varadarajam Upasmahe", based on the revered Brahmotsavam of the

Kancheepuram Varadarajaswamy Temple. The piece explores the divinity of Lord Varadarajaswamy and the grandeur of the temple's annual festival, highlighting the spiritual fervor and devotion experienced by the devotees during this sacred occasion.

Shreema Upadhyay will perform 'Devi', a powerful solo that celebrates the many facets of the Goddess. Conceptualized and choreographed by Guru P Praveen Kumar, 'Devi' draws inspiration from the devotional works of two legendary composers, Sri Adi Sankaracharya and Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar. Sravya has curated the festival to showcase the diversity and depth of Indian classical dance and her vision for DVI is to witness the artistry of the young established artists.

## AP Dhillon sings 'With You' for his 'childhood crush' Malaika Arora at Mumbai concert.



GNS News Agency, Dec 8

Indo-Canadian rapper AP Dhillon regaled fans at a concert in Mumbai on Saturday night. The evening's standout moment occurred when the singer called actress Malaika Arora on stage and dedicated a song to her. AP

Dhillon confessed that Malaika was his "childhood crush" while performing his song "With You". The concert was held in Mumbai's BKC, and many other celebs, including Bhumi Pednekar and Mrunal Thakur, were in attendance.

In a viral video, Malaika Arora is seen sporting a black dress as she grooves to AP Dhillon's tunes on stage. The two also shared a warm hug towards the end. Reacting to the video, a fan commented, "Every girl deserves this hug." Many others dropped fire and heart emojis. Another user also referred to the time when Pakistani actress Hania Aamir was invited on stage by Diljit Dosanjh during his London concert and wrote, "Hania Aamir ke bad sy trend set ho gaya hai (This trend has started from Hania Aamir)." Many fans began to speculate if something was brewing between Malaika Arora and AP Dhillon because, after the viral moment on stage, a photo of her chilling with the singer emerged on social media. At the concert, Dhillon performed some of his hits like "Excuses," "Brown Munde," "With You" and "Dil Nu". He was later joined by partner Shinda Kahlon, who treated the audience to tracks from his latest album The Brownprint, including songs like "Bora Bora" and "Old Money". Before AP Dhillon and Malaika Arora's viral moment, Diljit Dosanjh invited Deepika Padukone on stage during his Bangalore concert.

## Allu Arjun juggernaut becomes fastest film to breach Rs 500 crore club

Pushpa 2 Box Office Collection Day 3: In 2024, we have seen many big-ticket and much-hyped films not living up to the hype when it comes to box-office collections. However, no such thing happened to Pushpa 2 that seemed to have ticked all the right boxes from Day 1. Pushpa 2: The Rule capitalised on the success of the original, and the team undertook a whirlwind tour of promotions to reach out to the audience who were huge patrons of the original. And voila! On December 5, when Sukumar's much-awaited sequel finally hit theatres after various delays, controversies, and speculations, people lapped it up like all of it didn't matter at all.

On Day 1, Pushpa 2 made a whopping Rs 282.91 crore at the global box office, and beat the likes of RRR and Baahubali. On Day 2, while there was a dip in the numbers in the domestic market, the overall collections ensured the film crossed the Rs 400 crore mark, and broke a few more records on the way. On Day 3, Pushpa 2 picked up steam, and amassed Rs 115 crore at the domestic box-office, and it is safe to assume that the movie would have breached the Rs 600 crore mark worldwide in just three days since the release.

Such has been the success of Pushpa 2: The Rule that the lifetime collections of its predecessor was surpassed on Day 3 itself. The numbers also establish the fact that a pan-Indian film coming from the South has to appeal to the Hindi market if they want to see such numbers. The true strength of Pushpa 2 has been the patronage from the Hindi audience for the action drama. Out of the Rs 115 crore earned at the domestic box-office, the Hindi version has contributed a whopping 73.5 crore, with the Telugu version bringing in Rs 31.5 crore, and the rest made up by Tamil (Rs 7.5 crore), Malayalam (Rs 1.5 crore), and Kannada (Rs 0.8 crore). While it was expected that Pushpa 2 will pull above its weight in the Hindi belt, these numbers are unprecedented. In fact, even in the Rs 383 crore earned in the



domestic box-office over three days, the Hindi version has contributed 52% with Rs 200.7 crore and the Telugu version has collected Rs 151.05 crore. The real surprise has been the drop in the Malayalam numbers, which was considered to be a sure shot source of revenue. Over three days, it has only garnered Rs 8.5 crore. With multiple records being broken by this golden run of Pushpa 2, including biggest opening for any Indian film (beating RRR), and largest opening of a Hindi film (beating Jawan), Sunday numbers are expected to push the envelope further. The Rs 1000 crore lifetime run might happen much sooner than expected too. Directed by Sukumar, the film features Allu Arjun in the titular role, and Rashmika Mandanna and Fahadh Faasil reprising their roles from the original. With music and background score by Devi Sri Prasad, and additional background music by Sam CS, Pushpa 2 was made on a budget of Rs 400 crore.

## Making of Mallu Arjun: The mastermind behind Allu Arjun's success in Kerala

Allu Arjun's latest outing Pushpa 2 opened across 500 screens in Kerala. It is reported to have earned Rs. 5 crore on the day of release. On a promotional tour to Kochi, ahead of the film's release, Allu Arjun had said he was always grateful for the love and affection showered by fans in Kerala. The actor said, "Thank you Kerala. Thank you. Lots of love from your adopted son, Mallu Arjun. When I was getting off the flight, I told my crew, 'Welcome to my land.' For the last 20 years, you have been showing me so much love. Thank you, Thank you." Allu Arjun also said a song was specially composed in Pushpa 2 to reciprocate his love for his fans in Kerala. "I told Devi Sri Prasad (film composer, singer) we must create a song to show my love for my Kerala audience. The song 'Feelings' starts with Malayalam lines, and I've ensured these lines are retained across all six languages the film is releasing in. This is my tribute to Kerala's love." Also Read | Pushpa 2 The Rule movie review: Allu Arjun, Fahadh Faasil film chokes under the weight of performance pressure What endears Allu Arjun to his fans in Kerala? Why is he referred to as Allu Etti (elder brother) or Mallu Arjun? We take a close look. Long before Allu Arjun became the pan-Indian superstar he is today, Malayalam film distributor Khader Hasan had found a unique appeal in him to captivate audiences across languages. Hasan's gut feeling about the twenty-something hero of Arya (2004) made him pick up the Kerala distribution of the film. Hasan also had taken note of a void in Malayalam Cinema then - of 'youth,' in terms of star presence and content. He decided to pitch the Telugu star there. Not only did Arya win hearts, but also opened a new market for Allu Arjun. But it was not just the case of gut feeling going right. A strategy, a carefully crafted one, and a robust PR campaign did the job. Khader Hasan remembers his journey with Allu Arjun, who is lovingly referred to as 'Mallu Arjun' in Kerala.

Khader Hasan on Allu Arjun Khader Hasan remembers his journey with Allu Arjun. Telugu cinema had shifted its base from Chennai and was entering an interesting phase in the early 2000s. A slew of star kids were making inroads into cinema. Allu Arjun was one among them. While people raved about his dance, what truly impressed me was his smartness. Arya had all the key elements of a success formula. I felt an instant spark the moment I saw it. The phrase 'power of youth' came to mind. And I knew if this film is marketed well in Malayalam, it will have an appeal among the young audience. There were only a few actors in Malayalam who could be considered part of the 'youth' wave. Prithviraj had already made his debut and earned a reputation as a skilled actor, but he hadn't yet sparked a major fan following. Apart from him, there were no other young stars making waves in Malayalam cinema at that time. But that wasn't enough to launch Allu Arjun in Malayalam.

I knew the marketing had to be well-planned, with a focus on the Malayalam audience. I approached filmmaker Priyadarshan who supported me. After watching Arya, I used his endorsement in the promotion. We created a special, emotionally charged song starting with 'Arya... Arya...' to make an impact. Ahead of the release, we targeted the



Arya had all the key elements of a success formula. I felt an instant spark the moment I saw it. The phrase 'power of youth' came to mind. And I knew if this film is marketed well in Malayalam, it will have an appeal among the young audience.

youth through advertisements in magazines and newspapers. We also secured deals with TV channels to air the film's songs and trailers regularly. This was during a time when Malayalam cinema was facing a rough patch, so we made sure to understand the market potential and thoroughly plan our approach. We organized sustained PR campaigns and focused on promoting Arya in colleges to engage the youth. Additionally, we leveraged popular social media platforms like Orkut for promotion. Ads were released in weekend editions of newspapers and transit ads were placed on college buses. Even before Arya, I had already brought several hit Telugu films to Malayalam, including successful titles like Pranayama. At that time, dubbing was in a rudimentary stage - sound reels were attached, and the shots were synced at the editing table. There was no professional studio setup for dubbing films, and I wondered, 'Why can't the voices of these films be dubbed in a more professional way?' I worked as an assistant in various films. So I had an understanding of the basics of filmmaking. With this knowledge, I believed I could improve the dubbing process. I decided to take the plunge, aiming to add quality and perfection to the process. I heard Jis Jis's voice in a serial and wanted to try him out for Allu Arjun in Malayalam. Though there were some initial hiccups, he soon became very natural and now his voice is identified with Allu Arjun. Similarly, we pay a lot of attention to the songs, the lyrics, and sound mixing.

Following Arya's success, we distributed Bunny, Krishna, Hero, Badrinath, Gajapokiri, Gangotri, and Ala Vaikunthapuramulu. Ram Charan's first film, Magadheera, produced by Allu Arjun's father, came my way, followed by Prabhas' film. Both were offered for release in Malayalam, and there were a couple of meetings regarding it. However, I decided not to take them up. I politely declined, not out of ego, but simply because I didn't feel it was the right time or fit. But when it came to Allu Arjun, it was different. I believe everything happens for a reason, and I knew my true mission was to introduce Bunny to the Malayali audience. That's what I focused on.

## The small-town boy who dreamed of being like Dilip Kumar, bought a Fiat as his backup plan



Dharmendra, born as Dharmendra Kewal Krishna Deol in Nasrali, Ludhiana, was just a village boy when he first watched the 1948 film Shaheed, starring Dilip Kumar, Kamini Kaushal, and Leela Chitnis. The young kid, who struggled with his studies, felt a unique connection with cinema. At 13, Dharmendra knew he wanted to be among the stars and started manifesting before the mirror, "Mai Dilip Kumar banna chahta hu (I want to become Dilip Kumar)." "When I saw Dilip Kumar, and other actors, I was like where are these beauties from? I should be among them. I belong there." Dharmendra recalled in an interaction with India TV.

At a young age, the actor expressed his desire to go to Bombay to his mother Satwant Kaur, who quickly silenced him. "I want to go to Bombay, Maa. As soon I said this, my mother covered my mouth and said, 'Son, please don't say this ever again. Your father will throw both you and me out of the house.' This upset me. But, she couldn't see me upset. To make me feel better, she said, 'Why don't you send applications to Bombay? You look good, if they like you, they will call you,'" shared Dharmendra on Asian Paints' show Har Ghar Kuch Kehta Hai. As luck would have it, Filmfare had launched its first-ever talent hunt. Dharmendra applied for the same. He recalled chanting the Gayathri mantra before sending his photos and details about his appearance to the Filmfare office. Two months later, he received a reply with an all-paid trip to Bombay. This was a dream come true moment for Dharmendra, born to a simple school headmaster, Kewal Kishan. Winning the Filmfare Talent Hunt in 1958 marked the beginning of his journey as an actor.

Two years later, Dharmendra marked his debut with the film Dil Bhi Tera, Hum Bhi Tere. However, it largely went unnoticed and didn't fare well at the box office. In 1961, he appeared in the film Shola Aur Shabnam. The Ramesh Saigal movie proved to be the actor's first commercial success, followed by Mohan Kumar's Anpadh (1962), and Bimal Roy's Bandini (1963), which won the National Award for Best Feature Film in Hindi. Dharmendra shared in an interview with India TV, "When I started to do a little better in the industry, and was paid well, I bought my first car, a Fiat. However, my brother Ajit didn't approve of my choice. He said, 'Paaji you could have bought a better looking car, with an open roof, after all you are a hero.' I said, 'We can't trust this industry. Tomorrow I might not get work. If things go south, I will at least have this Fiat, which I can turn into a taxi and earn a living.'"

But, there was never a dull phase for the actor in terms of bagging roles. With each passing day, his stardom only got bigger and better, eventually earning him titles like 'Action King' and 'He-man'. In fact, Jaya Bachchan said Dharmendra looked like a Greek God in her appearance on Karan Johar's chat show Koffee With Karan in 2007. Dharmendra is also said to be the actor who started the trend of going shirtless on screen with his characters in Phool Aur Patthar (1966) and Dharam Veer (1977), among others.

Dharmendra was regarded as one of the most good-looking actors of his time, but his mother didn't think so. He shared on Har Ghar Kuch Kehta Hai, "We were six brothers and sisters. I had an elder brother, Santosh, who passed away at the age of 2. So when I was born, my mother told to her father, 'Babuji, Santosh was so adorable, Dharmendra doesn't look as appealing as his brother.' Dharmendra starred in several box-office hits, including Phool Aur Patthar (1966), Mamta (1966), Anupama (1966), and Aaye Din Baahar Ke (1966). In 1967, he did critically acclaimed but commercially unsuccessful films Dulhan Ek Raat Ki Opposite Nutan, Majhli Didi and Chandan Ka Palna opposite Meena Kumari with whom he shared a close bond. In 1968, Dharmendra delivered more successful films like Shikhar, Akhen, Izzat, Mere Hamdam Mere Dost. By now,

## Rohman Shawl on his relationship with Sushmita Sen and her daughters: 'We are like family'

Rohman Shawl and Sushmita Sen's relationship has been the talk of the town for several years. Despite announcing their breakup three years ago, the two are often spotted together. Rohman, who made his Tamil debut with the recently released hit film Amaran, starring Sivakarthekeyan and Sai Pallavi, says that he "doesn't care" what people think about his complicated relationship with the Miss Universe 1994.

In an exclusive conversation with SCREEN, the model turned actor addresses the conversation around his connection with Sushmita, after the latter recently revealed in a podcast that she has been single for about three years now. Talking about the public scrutiny he has to face regarding the rumours, he says, "I am very blessed because what people say or think about me, doesn't affect me. I know my truth and I am very honest to myself. What people have to say is their call. They want to say good, bad or whatever, it doesn't affect me." Rohman further adds, "What affects me is what I think of me and what I am doing at the moment. I stand by the things I have done in my life and I totally respect that. If somebody can't see that, it is their problem, the onus can't be on me."

Ask him about the bond he shares with the Main Hoon Na actor and her daughters Renee and Alisah as they are snapped together a lot of times and he answers, "I've always said that we have been like family. We may not live together or not talk for months, but whenever they need me, I will always be there. So, there are no two questions about it." Meanwhile, Rohman marked his Tamil debut with the successful movie Amaran and he says that good work is coming to him after the release, "I wanted people to see my work in Amaran and what I'm capable of and then accordingly pitch work to me, which has already started happening. I am really happy about that."

The 32-year-old found the idea of playing a negative character "appealing". "I was totally blown away by the idea

Dharmendra had become a popular face with many hits under his belt. So popular that even Rajesh Khanna's emergence as a superstar in 1969 couldn't slow down Dharmendra. He and Manoj Kumar were the only two actors who remained unaffected in the Rajesh Khanna superstardom era. In fact, the 1970s saw Dharmendra attaining superstardom with films like Jeevan Mrityu, Tum Haseen Mai Jawan, Sharafat, Kab? Kyu? Aur Kahan? Two of these films were with Hema Malini, who he eventually tied the knot, causing a lot of controversy and drama in their professional and personal lives. Tum Haseen Mai Jawan was Hema Malini's debut film, and her pairing with Dharmendra proved to be a hit. They went on to make Seeta Aur Geeta, Sholay, and The Burning Train, among others. While their on-screen pairing was a fan favourite, their off-screen relationship created quite a stir. After all, Dharmendra was a married man with four children (including Sunny Deol and Bobby Deol). He tied the knot with Prakash Kaur at the age of 19, four years before he moved to Bombay. Hema Malini's father was strictly against their marriage. Despite it all, the couple went ahead and tied the knot in 1980. His marriage to Hema Malini while still being legally married to Prakash Kaur raised concerns, with many speculating if the actor had converted to Islam. However, in an interview with Outlook in 2004, Dharmendra firmly said, "This allegation is totally incorrect. I am not the kind of man who will change his religion to suit his interests." Apart from Hema Malini, Dharmendra was also linked several other heroines in the industry. Once while speaking to India TV, Dharmendra said, "Mard hu, mard agar thoda chanchal na ho, thoda khiladanda na ho, toh use mard kehlaane ka haq nahi (You are not a man if you are not naughty)."

Speaking of his naughtiness, Dharmendra was quite the riot on film sets. He would often mix alcoholic beverages in his buttermilk in between shoots. "I was shooting for Aagya. I felt like having some beer at noon. I mixed beer in my lassi. Moushami Chatterjee was my co-star in the film, who understood what I was up to. She teased me in her Bengali accent, 'Dharmendra, what are you drinking?' I said, 'Lassi.' On purpose, she asked, 'Give some to me.' She knew it had alcohol in it. I ended up laughing and confessed it to her, 'I am having beer'," said Dharmendra on Aap Ki Adalat. Over the years, Dharmendra also tried his luck in politics. But the stint was not as successful as his films. Dharmendra was elected as an MP for the Bikaner constituency on a BJP ticket. He served the constituency from 2004 to 2009. The veteran actor calls these five years as the most difficult time of his life. He said, "Getting into politics was never my choice. A couple of them asked me to join by saying things like, 'There are very few good people in politics; they need people like you.' This changed my attitude and I built my own bubble where I believed I am everything politics needs. But, it is not meant for an emotional being like me; you need to be thick-skinned."

"Those five years of my life were the most difficult times. Only I know all the things I have done for Bikaner. But, it so happened that every time I did something nice for the constituency, someone else would take credit for it. I never got credit for anything I did", the actor added. Dharmendra was also known for doing his own stunts, which included the actor fighting with a cheetah, working 19,000 feet above ground level with less oxygen and everything in between. He told India TV, "My duplicate would often get tired so I used to do my own stunts. On the first day of my shoot, they left four huge tigers before me and I was in my jeep. Everyone was scared. Even I was concerned, what if it attacks my face. Yet, I was the actor and I had to do my job." The actor recalled an incident from another set. "We shot at the world's highest road, Khardung La. There was very less oxygen, and many of our crew members fell sick. Our skin was peeling off. We trekked all the way. I was with the actor who played Samba. Even he fell sick, there was no water. I squeezed an apple in his mouth." Despite his success, Dharmendra has certain regrets. One of them was giving away the script of Zanjeer, which made Amitabh Bachchan the 'Angry Young Man'. "I bought the script of Zanjeer from Salim (Khan) for Rs 17,500. At this time, I was making a film with Prakash Mehra. He was so excited that he requested me that I gave him the film. I did. We were planning to shoot the film soon. But, something went wrong between my cousin sister and Prakash Mehra, who refused to work with her. As revenge, my sister made me promise not to work with him ever again. Due to this, I had to give up Zanjeer. Today, Amitabh Bachchan is known because of this film", said the actor on Aap Ki Adalat. Even after six decades in the industry, Dharmendra continues to act in films. He was recently seen in Karan Johar's Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani and Shahid Kapoor's Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya.



of playing an antagonist because I am completely the opposite in real life. It kind of intrigued me because I took it as a challenge. Playing something so different from myself and that too in such a big film," he shares. Rohman also opens up about shifting towards acting, while he entered the industry for his modelling career. He tells us, "I shifted to Bombay in 2016-17. When I came here, I got to know that many of my modelling friends were into acting so I spoke to them and got to know that they have been doing some acting classes, so I also joined. I realised that I am not particularly interested in acting." "During that time, I got an audition call for a big film that was being made at that time and I got selected. But after a month or so, they told me that it's not happening because of some changes. It totally broke my heart. So, I thought that I don't want to act anymore. I stayed off acting for four years. Fate had something else for me, so I did my first film Azaadi in 2021, which is about to be released in a couple of months," the actor ends.

Sushmita and Rohman ended their three-year-long relationship in 2021, announcing the breakup with a post on their Instagram accounts. On the work front, Sushmita Sen was last seen in the third season of the crime-thriller series Aarya. On the other hand, Rohman Shawl recently starred in Amaran, in which he played the role of a terrorist. He has a few projects in the pipeline which will be announced later.

## The Making of Harshit Rana: Inside a 150-kph dream



GNS News Agency, Dec 8

IN THE living room of Harshit Rana's house in North-west Delhi's Ghevra village are two trophies the fast bowler won for bowling quick in the IPL. "This one is my favourite," his father Pradeep points at a gold plaque Harshit won for cranking 146 kph in the IPL final against Sunrisers Hyderabad in Chennai. He has set his son a stiffer challenge. "I have challenged him to bowl 150 kph. I have told him I will consider you a player the day you touch 150 kph," says Pradeep.

Last month, he made a head-turning Test debut against Australia in Perth, enacting the perfect second fiddle to Jasprit Bumrah in one of India's most heroic victories abroad. He has become an overnight sensation, with former players and pundits touting him as the next big thing in India's fast bowling stable. But the bigger quest continues — breaching the 150-kph barrier. From the time he picked a cricket ball for the first time in his life, in his adolescence, 150 was the magic number that obsessed the father and son. Pradeep, a former hammer thrower and weightlifter for CRPF, laid a simple brief to his son: "If you bowl 150 kph, no one will stop you from playing for India but if you will bowl 125 kph, even a local club will not select you." Pradeep Rana points towards the fastest bowler award Harshit has won in the IPL. Pradeep Rana points towards the fastest bowler award Harshit has won in the IPL. Everything was channelled towards achieving the golden number — the back-breaking practice, the streak of ruthlessness and badtameezi that are his biggest weapons, according to coach Shriyan Kumar, the snarls and stares at batsmen, the flying kisses at them, and an unbreakable spirit that made him wade through the dark days of injuries and flimsy prophecies. "Badtameez hai (he is ill-mannered). He is aggressive but in Harshit's case he is ultra," laughs the 72-year-old coach, who had coached former India quick Ishant Sharma. "That is his strength. He has played all his cricket with that attitude and it has helped him reach this level," he adds. After his exploits in the IPL, Harshit told this newspaper he won't curb his aggression. "I have always played my cricket like this. I am a fun-loving guy off the field but on the cricket pitch, I am not there to make friends, I want to win," he said.

In essence, he carries a slice of Ghevra's nonchalance to the cricket field. The village, like its neighbourhood that wiggles across the Haryana-Delhi border, is more Haryana than Delhi in sensibilities. Just 12 km down the road is Najafgarh, which produced Virender Sehwag, one of the country's greatest batsmen. An hour takes you to the SAI Centre in Sonapat, where the finest athletes train for the Olympics. The obscure diversions along the sprawling highway take you to the homes of the country's finest wrestlers and boxers. Yet, for a part of the country that accounts for a three-fourth of Olympic medals, it has designed few true fast bowlers. Most of the cricketers from Delhi have been either batsmen or medium pacers. The one genuine quick, Ishant Sharma, was from South Patel Nagar. Haryana churned arguably the greatest cricketer of the country, Kapil Dev, but he was not exactly a tearaway. There, thus, has been no one like Harshit to have worn the Test stripes, one who is all bark and bite, all pace and rage. Harshit Rana's father Pradeep Rana during his playing days. (Special Arrangement) Harshit Rana's father Pradeep Rana during his playing days. (Special Arrangement) You would imagine speedsters like him popping from every corner of this pocket, all badtameezi and jigar (pluck), with the shoulders of Hercules and the will of Atlas. But surprisingly, they have not. In that sense, Harshit's emergence has a wider potential, in turning the Olympics conveyor belt into a fast-bowling hub. Young men fired to nudge 150 kph. Like youngsters from Ranchi donning the gloves, growing long hair and blasting the ball over the cow cordon after their talisman MS Dhoni.

Pradeep proudly points to the entrance gate of his village, dedicated to Ghevra's bravehearts, flying officer Sajjan Singh Rana and pilot Jagmahendra Singh Rana. Right at the corner of the entrance, there is a 40 ft-tall tricolour and Pradeep proudly says, "My son plays for this flag."

In the one-and-a-half km journey from the entrance to the Rana household, Pradeep had to stop his Scooty at least a dozen times to greet well-wishers of his son. The elders, Pradeep's friends or the kids playing in the dusty lanes have discovered a new hero in Harshit. A 13-year-old Atul, who was putting his kitbag in his father's car, shouted at Pradeep: "Harshit bhaiyya ko bolna Perth me swaad aa gaya." The way Pradeep is addressed has changed, too. He is now "Harshit's father".

At his house, his wife Gita opens the door and screams in joy: "Ukhaad di gilli (He has got his first wicket). Harshit had bagged his first wicket against the Prime Minister's XI. By the time Pradeep settled down on the big sofa in his living room, Gita stepped out dancing "Ek aur wicket (one more wicket)." A few moments later, she shouted again, "Teesri bhi (third wicket as well)." Harshit ended with one more. "Aaj toh kamal hi kar diya chor ne (He has bowled exceptionally well today)," says Gita. She

is upset that his son was taken out from the attack for he would have picked five. Pradeep consoles her: "Arey abhi chaar match baaki hai (There are still four matches to go)." Pradeep, though, mutters, referring to his first four overs that leaked 34 runs: "Engine garam hone mey time lag gaya (It took him time to get going)."

A doting mother, Gita shows a photograph of Harshit, when he was two years old. "Ye mera bachcha, isne humara sapna pura kiya India khel kar (My child has fulfilled our dream)," she says, wiping her tears. Then shifting her gaze to Pradeep, she describes him as a "haanikarak baapu", a reference to the Aamir Khan-starrer Dangal, the story of a taskmaster father moulding his daughters to champions. "He was living his dream through my son. He was a taskmaster. Harshit used to cry every night. I tried to stop him so many times that it was not the right way to treat a kid. He used to say, 'It is not easy to become a sportsman. He is the one who told me that he wants to play cricket. It is sweat and blood and if he wants to quit, he can'. But Harshit never gave up," she says. Pradeep started training Harshit when he was 10. For the next eight years, they would leave home at 5 am and return by 9 pm. "There is a drain nearby and on the bank of it, Harshit used to run," Pradeep recalls. He breaks down the training. "After an hour of running, I would take him to a ground, which was closer to the house. He would bowl 120 balls on the trot. I would drop him to his school, Ganga International. In the afternoon, I used to drive him to Rohtak Road Cricket Academy in Ramjas Sports Complex in West Patel Nagar, where he was training under Shriyan Kumar. At 6.30 pm, when he was done with the training, he used to run five to seven laps on the ground. By 7.30 pm, we used to leave the ground," he says. Gita brings out a few medical reports of Harshit. She then recollects an incident when they took a 15-year-old to a hakim near the Feroz Shah Kotla Stadium. "We were taking him everywhere. He told my husband, 'Your son can never become an athlete'. Harshit's father fumed in anger," she adds.

Pradeep narrates Harshit's ordeal, "It began with a pain in his joints in the lower back to the knee in 2016. We took him to the Sports Injury Centre in Safdarjung. They told me to not train him. One day after returning home from the academy, he collapsed on the stairs. For two days, he couldn't move his legs or go to the loo on his own. He would say 'Papa, yeh zindagi bhi koi zindagi hai. Isse acha hota ki main mar jaata (What kind of life is this? It is better to die than live like this)." He adds, "There is an ayurveda hospital in Khera Dabar, Najafgarh. I took him there. He was admitted for 20 days. A couple of weeks later, the pain recurred and he spent another week at the hospital." In a year, he not only regained his fitness but also played for Delhi U-19 the next year and was picked for Ranji Trophy camp in 2019. "From the time I saw him bowling at Kotla nets, I told Awana (Parvinder) that he can easily play 70-80 Tests for India," says Narinder Negi, who was Delhi U-19's coach back then.

But in 2020, Harshit suffered a stress fracture in his lower back. "It was just before Covid. During the lockdown, he was doing gym sessions at home and it kind of escalated his injury. In September 2020, we went to Dr Saif in Gurugram. After the MRI, he told us Harshit has broken his back. In the MRI, one can clearly see it. He was bedridden for six months," says Pradeep.

Harshit Rana India's Harshit Rana appeals unsuccessfully for the wicket of Australia's Nathan McSweeney during the day one of the second cricket test match between Australia and India at the Adelaide Oval in Adelaide, Australia. (AP) The tryst with injuries recurred. A hamstring injury saw him miss the entire 2023-24 Ranji Trophy season. It was a wake-up call to get as fit as possible. From November 2023 to the start of the IPL 2024 in March, he shed 17 kg. The rest is well-chronicled. After the IPL final, Pradeep met KKR owner Shah Rukh Khan, who told him "Ladka jawan ho gaya hai Ranaji, ab meri tarah flying kisses de raha hai (your boy has become a man now, he is giving flying kisses like me)." He was referring to Harshit's signature wicket-taking celebration. A few days before that Shah Rukh had promised Harshit that they would celebrate together after winning the IPL trophy. "After I got banned for one match, I was very sad and then Shah Rukh sir came to me and said 'don't take any unnecessary tension, we will celebrate the IPL with a flying kiss'. He promised me and made sure that we did that with the trophy and our team," Harshit had said. Coach Gautam Gambhir, though, immediately put this win in perspective. "Gambhir told him, 'Look Harshit, you have done well, congratulations. Enjoy this, but I want to tell you one thing, the joy you will get while representing your country will be bigger than this. The joy of representing 140 crore people is out of this world. So double up your training,'" says Pradeep. He did, and in Perth he blew a few more flying kisses. The wicket that is still playing in Pradeep's mind is the pearler that dismissed the counterpunching Travis Head in the first innings. The ball pitched on the middle and off-stump before moving a shade to hit the top of Head's off-stump. "Probably the best ball he has bowled his whole life," says Pradeep, with a beaming smile. The spell reminded the coach of Ishant's bowling at WACA in 2008. "It took me to 2008, when Ishant bowled that exceptional spell at WACA (the old stadium in Perth). Ishant went on to play 105 Tests. I want Harshit to achieve that feat as well," says Kumar. Meanwhile, the Ranis are busy preparing for their first overseas trip. "We will go to Melbourne on December 20. We wanted to go for the Adelaide Test but since there was no direct flight, Harshit told us to come for the Melbourne Test," he says. There, on the grandest stage, the Boxing Day Test at the MCG, in front of his parents, will Harshit keep his date with the 150-kph scorcher? India's prolonged hunt for out-and-out quick bowlers has been somewhat fulfilled over the last decade. Several pacers have burst through the ranks and breached the 150-kph mark.

## 'I think my statue (at Adelaide Oval) should be a little fatter': Darren 'Boof' Lehmann bothered about being made to look thinner than he was



GNS News Agency, Dec 8

South Australian cricketers continue to spread chortles with their deadpan humour. After home town player Travis Head said he had jokingly told Mr Siraj "well bowled" only to precipitate one right overthrow, a former legend from these parts threw in a wicked line, quibbling about how his statue at the Adelaide Oval wasn't accurately "fat" enough. The two time World Cup winner was renowned for being part of the most memorable World Cup finals of 1999 (he got winning boundary) and 2003 (he took winning catch), and was known for unfussedly slamming or Boofing his way as part of the middle order and his utility on the field and left arm spin bowling. On Sunday, Lehmann wearing a peach shirt and beige shorts joined in a conversation of some fans, at the Adelaide Oval sunning right next to his statue. 'Boof' as he is called, casually said "How are you lads?" strolling into their conversation — something unthinkable in India. The fans sipping their beer asked him what he thought of his own statue, standing right next to where they were chilling.

Pradeep narrates Harshit's ordeal, "It began with a pain in his joints in the lower back to the knee in 2016. We took him to the Sports Injury Centre in Safdarjung. They told me to not train him. One day after returning home from the academy, he collapsed on the stairs. For two days, he couldn't move his legs or go to the loo on his own. He would say 'Papa, yeh zindagi bhi koi zindagi hai. Isse acha hota ki main mar jaata (What kind of life is this? It is better to die than live like this)." He adds, "There is an ayurveda hospital in Khera Dabar, Najafgarh. I took him there. He was admitted for 20 days. A couple of weeks later, the pain recurred and he spent another week at the hospital." In a year, he not only regained his fitness but also played for Delhi U-19 the next year and was picked for Ranji Trophy camp in 2019. "From the time I saw him bowling at Kotla nets, I told Awana (Parvinder) that he can easily play 70-80 Tests for India," says Narinder Negi, who was Delhi U-19's coach back then.

## 'It was all about Nathan Lyon': Brad Haddin reveals the real reason behind Adelaide 'blackout'

GNS News Agency, Dec 8

Nathan Lyon Australia's Nathan Lyon chews gum as he walks to his fielding position during the day one of the second cricket test match between Australia and India at the Adelaide Oval in Adelaide, Australia. (AP) Former Australian wicketkeeper Brad Haddin has revealed Nathan Lyon was the main reason behind the "Adelaide blackout" on the first day of the second Test in the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Haddin says the stadium's light towers were switched off as the ground officials were trying to turn the net lights on for nightwatchmen Nathan Lyon, who requested to have a few hits. "I was speaking to the ground staff and it was all about Nathan Lyon," Haddin said on The Willow Talk podcast. "Nathan Lyon went out the back for a hit and they went to turn the lights on and whatever happened, they turned the wrong set off and the lights went off and Nathan Lyon said, 'I've got to fix this so I can go out and bat in the nets.'" They politely said to Nathan, the lights are off on the ground, we're not so worried about your hit at the moment. So that's come hot off the press from the curators. "With the floodlights going off twice during the 18th over bowled by Indian



pacers Harshit Rana, former Australian cricketer Mark Waugh took a dig at the issue. "Oh hello. They've run out of electricity in Adelaide. Pretty hot today. Plenty of air conditioners on," Waugh said while commenting on Fox Cricket. However, South Australian MP Tom Koutsantonis had assured people that it was not a power grid failure. "I can confirm there was no lack of power supply or availability in South Australia. Whatever caused the light towers at Adelaide Oval to turn off was not related to a lack of power supply from the Grid," he wrote on X.

## 371/8: Listless India concede their highest ever total in women's ODIs as Voll, Perry smash centuries

GNS News Agency, Dec 8

After losing the toss at the Allan Border Field on Sunday, Indian bowlers were made to chase leather. In sharp contrast to India's 100 all out a couple of days back while batting first at the same venue, Australia piled on the runs to post a mammoth 371/8 in the second One Day International. This is now the highest ever score conceded by India in women's ODIs. That the previous record of 338/7 was also scored by Australia just earlier this year at the Wankhede Stadium doesn't augur well for India less than a year out of the ODI World Cup. Rookie Georgia Voll and veteran Elyse Perry were in magnificent form as Harmanpreet Kaur's side struggled for any sort of control in Brisbane. Voll (101) and Perry (105), at differing ends of their career spectrum, smashed equally magnificent centuries.

After electing to bat, Australia put on a commanding display with openers Phoebe Litchfield (60) and Voll forging a 130-run partnership to set the tone. Voll then combined with Perry for a 92-run stand before the latter teamed up with Beth Mooney (56) in a 98-run stand. And through it all, India looked bereft of answers. It was only when Litchfield struggled for early momentum that it felt India had any sort of grip on the proceedings. And after she was dropped early by Priya Punia, Litchfield also shifted through the gears. Voll, meanwhile, was near flawless in just her 2nd ODI innings.



Early in the piece, she drove the Indian bowlers with disdain, through the covers and down the ground past the bowlers repeatedly. Once the opening stand was broken, Perry was steady in the first half of her innings, before unleashing a flurry of strokes, smashing six sixes during her knock. When the 300 came up in 41.2 overs, it actually looked like Australia could even make a push for 400. But a few late wickets at least prevented that from happening. Australia's first 100 came up in 98 balls, the 2nd 100 off 82 balls and the 3rd 100 off just 68 balls. Among the Indian bowlers, Saima Thakor (3/62) snapped three wickets, while debutant Minnu Mani (2/71) took two wickets. Renuka Singh (1/78), Deepti Sharma (1/59), and Priya Mishra (1/88) picked one each.

## Mohammed Siraj on Travis Head send-off incident: It's a lie that he said 'well bowled' to me

GNS News Agency, Dec 8

The Border-Gavaskar Trophy needed some spice. And the Travis Head vs Mohammed Siraj incident on the second day of the pink-ball test has given that to this series to spice things up for the remaining three Tests.

Australia batter Travis Head said he was disappointed with how his dismissal transpired — both with the fiery sendoff that India pacer Mohammed Siraj gave him. A heated exchange followed as Siraj appeared to exchange a few words and gestured Head towards the dressing room. "I said 'well bowled' but he thought otherwise... when he pointed me to the sheds he got a little bit back from me," Head told Fox Cricket after the day's play. "I'm slightly disappointed with how that transpired, with a couple of the past innings. It is what it is. If they want to react like that and that's how they want to represent themselves, then so be it." However, Mohammed Siraj disagrees with Head's comments, saying the Australian opener lied about the send-off incident. "It was a good battle. I loved bowling to him. He has batted really well for

his 140," Siraj told the Start Sports. "When you get hit for a six on your good ball, it kind of gets annoying. It ignites your passion. When I got him out, I celebrated but he abused me," said Siraj. "It's a lie that he said 'well bowled' to me." You can see what he actually said on TV. Initially, I only celebrated but he was the one who started the conversation. In the press conference, he lied that he said 'well bowled.' You can go and check the highlights again. Mohammed Siraj criticized Travis Head dismissal Siraj, after being hit for a four and six earlier in that over, bowled a yorker to end a magnificent innings by Head, who made 140 off 141 balls on Day 2 of the second Test in the Border Gavaskar Trophy. Stares and words were exchanged between Siraj and Head after that. (Screengrabs: cricket.com.au) "We don't disrespect anyone. I respect every cricketer. Cricket is a gentleman's game but the way acted after getting out was uncalled for," he said. Harbhajan backs Siraj Former India off-spinner Harbhajan Singh, who has had a history with the Australian cricketer, backed Siraj and lauded him for his bowling performance.



Mitchell Starc (2/60). India had claimed a commanding 295-run victory in the series opener in Perth but failed to replicate their performance in Adelaide.

## India register humiliating defeat in pink-ball Test, Australia level series

GNS News Agency, Dec 8

Adelaide: Australia dismissed India for 175 in their second innings before comfortably chasing a 19-run target to win the Pink-ball Test by 10 wickets, levelling the five-match series 1-1 here on Sunday. Resuming at 128 for 5, India lost their remaining five wickets for just 47 runs in 12.5 overs on Day 3, with Nitish Kumar Reddy top-scoring with a 47-ball 42. Usman Khawaja (9 not out) and Nathan McSweeney (10 not out) chased down the modest target in just 3.2 overs to seal the victory. Rishabh Pant (28) was the first to fall, caught by Steve Smith off Mitchell Starc. The tail offered little resistance, with Ravichandran Ashwin (7), Harshit Rana (0), and Mohammed Siraj (7) departing cheaply. Skipper Pat Cummins was the pick of the bowlers with figures of 5/57, supported by Scott Boland (3/51) and