

INDIAN CHRONICLE

14 December, 2024 | Saturday | Volume No:12 | Issue No:262

Pages: 8+8

www.indianchronicle.com

Published from : Ranga Reddy (Telangana State)

₹ 3

Egg prices hit the roof in Karimnagar, now selling for up to Rs 8 each

Karimnagar: The price of eggs is skyrocketing. There is a Rs 1 to Rs 1.5 jump in the price of each egg in the recent past. Export to other states as well as blocking of eggs for the purpose of Christmas and new year celebrations were main reasons for the price spurt.

Taking it as an advantage, traders are hiking prices. While some of the traders are selling each egg for Rs 6.16 to Rs 7 each, a few of them sell at Rs 8 each. Though the traders are fixing the price on their own, no government department is bothered about the price.

Hoi Introduces Advanced Airport Experience Platform with Real-Time Intelligence and Premium Services

Hyderabad: Hoi, an innovative travel-tech platform revolutionising airport experiences for modern travellers, announced enhancements to its airport services suite.

The platform's integration with airport infrastructure systems enables accuracy in real-time flight information delivery, transforming traditional airport processes into seamless digital experiences. Hoi has transformed the airport experience across major Indian airports including Hyderabad, Delhi, and New Goa (GOX). Hoi's 'Time to Gate' feature leverages advanced data analytics to guide travellers through optimal routes and shortest queues.

Allu Arjun Sent to Remand in Chanchalguda Jail

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

Hyderabad: Actor Allu Arjun has been sent to a 14-day judicial remand by the Nampalli Court following his arrest in connection with the tragic stampede at Sandhya Theatre. The incident, triggered by the actor's unannounced appearance, resulted in the death of a woman and injuries to several others. Allu Arjun was arrested under Sections 105, 118(1), and 3/5 of the BNS Act, with charges related to negligence and endangering public safety. His legal team had earlier filed a plea seeking relief, but the court has now ordered the actor's remand while the investigation continues. The case has drawn attention due to its similarities to past incidents involving celebrities and crowd management, prompting discussions on accountability and safety measures at public events. The investigation is on-



going, and further developments are expected in the coming weeks.

Celebration of India's cultural heritage, collective spirit: PM Modi on Maha Kumbh

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

Prayagraj: Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Prayagraj on Friday and lauded the tireless efforts of employees and sanitation workers involved in the preparations for the grand Maha Kumbh 2025. Addressing a public gathering, PM Modi emphasized the historical significance of the event, describing it as a "great yagya of unity" that will captivate global attention. He remarked, "The Maha Kumbh will be a monumental event which will unite people from all walks of life. A new chapter of history is being written on the sacred land of Prayagraj, where a continuous Mahayagya is going on to host lakhs of devotees daily for 45 days."

In preparation for this cultural and spiritual extravaganza, the Prime Minister inaugurated 167 development projects worth Rs 5,500 crore. These projects include the construction of 10 new road overbridges, flyovers, permanent ghats, and riverfront roads to enhance infrastructure and connectivity in Prayagraj. PM Modi further highlighted India's rich cultural and spiritual heritage, stating, "India is a land of countless holy places and sacred rivers like the Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati, Kaveri, and Narmada. Prayagraj, the confluence of three holy rivers, is a spiritual epicentre where sanctity resides at every step." He quoted ancient scriptures, saying, "When the Sun enters Capricorn in the month of Magh, all divine powers, sages, and pilgrims gather in Prayag. Without Prayagraj, the stories of our Puranas remain incomplete." The Prime Minister described the Maha Kumbh as a "living symbol of India's cultural and spiritual journey that has been thriving for thousands of years." He explained that the event transcends mere rituals, symbolizing the awakening of collective consciousness and inner spirituality. "This consciousness draws people from villages, towns, and cities to the banks of the Sangam, creating an unparalleled spectacle of unity and devotion," he added. He also emphasized the transfor-



mative nature of the Maha Kumbh, stating, "Here, caste differences dissolve, sectarian conflicts end, and crores of people unite with one goal and one idea. Saints, sages, scholars, and ordinary people come together to take a holy dip in the Triveni Sangam, embodying the true essence of unity." As the preparations for Maha Kumbh 2025 continue, PM Modi expressed his best wishes for the event's grand and divine success, reiterating that it will be an extraordinary celebration of India's cultural heritage and collective spirit. Earlier after reaching Prayagraj, PM Modi was welcomed by Governor Anandiben Patel and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. He proceeded to Arai Ghat, where he met saints and performed a ceremonial puja at the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati rivers. PM Modi received a warm welcome from sadhus and saints and boarded the Nishadraj Cruise to reach Sangam from Arai. Thousands of people gathered to witness the event, with crowds lining the roads from GT Jawahar Chowk to the pandal on the Sangam bank.

CM Revanth Reddy Responds to Allu Arjun's Arrest in Delhi



GNS News Agency, Dec 13

Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, currently in Delhi, responded to the recent arrest of actor Allu Arjun, clarifying his stance on the matter. He stated that the law would take its course regarding Allu Arjun's case, emphasizing that there would be no interference from anyone, including himself. He made it clear that everyone is equal before the law, and there would be no personal involvement in the legal proceedings.

CM Revanth Reddy further explained that the same legal processes that apply to anyone else would be followed

in Allu Arjun's case. He stressed that no one's intervention would alter the course of justice. Regarding the tragic stampede at the Pushpa 2 movie's premiere at the Sandhya Theatre, he confirmed that the police were already taking necessary actions in the matter.

The incident, which took place on December 4 during the Pushpa 2 premiere, saw a tragic stampede outside the Sandhya Theatre, resulting in the death of a woman named Revathi, while her son was critically injured. Following the incident, police took Allu Arjun into custody on December 13. The actor was apprehended at his residence in Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad. The stampede occurred amidst a massive fan frenzy, as Allu Arjun had visited the theatre, leading to chaos among his enthusiastic followers. In the aftermath of the stampede, the police arrested several individuals linked to the incident, including Sandhya Theatre's owner Sandhesh, senior manager Nagaraju, and the in-charge of the upper balcony, Ghandakam Vijay Chander. They were remanded in custody after their arrest. On December 5, a complaint was filed by Bhaskar, and further investigations led to the arrest of three more individuals, including the theatre manager, on December 9. The investigation is ongoing, and the police are focusing on the events leading up to the tragic stampede, with efforts to ensure justice for the victims.

KTR condemns Congress govt's high-handed behaviour in Allu Arjun's arrest, calls it 'Pinnacle of Insecurity'

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao lashed out at the Congress government over the arrest of National Award-winning actor Allu Arjun, terming it the "pinnacle of insecurity" by those in power. He criticised the high-handed behaviour of the government, where the actor was treated as a common criminal despite not being directly responsible for the stampede at Sandhya theatre in Hyderabad recently. "I totally sympathise with the victims of the stampede, but who is truly at fault here?" he questioned, suggesting that the government should take accountability rather than resort to punitive actions against the actor. He stressed that treating Allu Arjun with disrespect was uncalled for, especially for something he is not directly responsible for. He stated that there is always space for respect and dignified conduct in such situations. Drawing a parallel, Rama Rao took a jibe at Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, arguing that by the same "perverse logic," the Chief Minis-



ter himself should be held accountable for causing the death of two innocent people who died in Hyderabad due to the fear psychosis caused by HYDRABAD which marked the victims' houses for demolition.

Film actor Mohan Babu knocks High Court doors. Requests for anticipatory bail

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

Hyderabad: Veteran film Actor Mohan Babu filed an anticipatory bail petition in journalist attack case in the Telangana High Court on Friday. He was seeking exemption from the arrest in the attempt to murder case booked against him at a police station in Hyderabad. Mohan Babu appealed to the court to give instructions to the police not to conduct further investigation. It is known that Mohan Babu assaulted the reporters who were waiting at his residence to cover the news of intensified family disputes two days ago. One journalist of a TV news channel received injuries on his head and admitted to hospital. Mohan Babu tendered unconditional apology to the journalists through an audio message on Thursday and also questioned the journalists community for entering his house without his permission.



Rajya Sabha adjourned till Dec 16 as stand-off continues



GNS News Agency, Dec 13

New Delhi: The Rajya Sabha was on Friday adjourned till December 16 amid the continuing standoff between the treasury benches and the Opposition over the no-trust notice against Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar. As the Opposition stuck to its demand related to the no-trust notice, BJP MPs raised the issue of the alleged relationship between former Congress president Sonia Gandhi and US billionaire George Soros, sparking noisy exchanges. With little hope of normalcy returning to the House, the Chair adjourned the proceedings till Monday. On Thursday, Leader of the House in Rajya Sabha and Union Minister J. P. Nadda strongly condemned Congress and Leader of Opposition (LoP) Mallikarjun Kharge for "demeaning" and "derogating" Constitutional positions and "questioning the Chair." Nadda emphasised that the "Chair cannot be questioned, with regard to admissibility, and the Chairman's ruling cannot be questioned or criticised. To do so is contempt of the House and the Chairman." During his speech, Opposition MPs continued sloganeering.

Expressing his disappointment, Nadda said, "With sadness, I must say that yesterday, one of the most senior and experienced leaders, Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge, conducted a press conference and criticised the Chair. This is condemnable and objectionable. It paves the way for a wrong tradition. Any amount of condemnation would not be enough for this." A day earlier, Kharge, along with INDIA bloc leaders, launched a scathing attack on Chairman Dhankhar, blaming him for the repeated stalling of the House due to his "headmaster-type attitude" and treat-

ing "Parliament like a school." In a joint press conference with Congress and its allies, Kharge made serious accusations against Vice President Dhankhar, stating, "The biggest disruptor of the House is the Chairman himself." Kharge accused the Rajya Sabha Chairman of partisan conduct, alleging that he often acted as a "spokesperson of the ruling party."

Two Maoists killed in gunfight with security forces in Chhattisgarh



In yet another counter insurgency operation, two Maoists were killed and police recovered a pistol, tiffin bomb, cooker bomb, explosives recovered

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

Bijapur: Two Maoist cadres were killed in a gunfight with security forces in the forest areas near Bijapur under the Gangalur police station limits in Chhattisgarh on Friday morning. Police recovered a pistol, tiffin bomb, cooker bomb, explosives and some other materials used by naxalites, police said. The two slain Maoists were identified as Gangalur Area Committee platoon deputy commander Pandu Madhwi and his fellow naxalite Munga Nayapara, police said.

Delhi court junks plea for FIR against Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge



GNS News Agency, Dec 13

Mallikarjun Kharge The alleged that Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge made a scathing remark against Prime Minister Narendra Modi during an election rally in Karnataka on April 27, 2023.

In a relief to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, a Delhi court has refused to direct the police to register an FIR against him. Judicial magistrate Chatinder Singh, however, took cognisance of the complaint. The plea alleged that Kharge made a scathing remark against Prime Minister Narendra Modi during an election rally in Karnataka on April 27, 2023. In an order on December 9, the court recorded the allegation that the Congress president made remarks in the election rally against the BJP and RSS, prompting

the complainant to be aggrieved as he is a RSS member.

The complainant claimed of having "complete details" of the accused persons and wishes to be examined, and therefore, said neither any recovery, nor any material evidence was required to be collected by the police. "The true test to use the discretionary power to order an investigation by police under Section 156(3) of the CrPC (magistrate's direction to police to investigate cognisable case) is not whether any cognisable offence is committed or not, but whether an investigation by police agency is required or not," the court said. The court observed all the material was available with the complainant and no technical or complex investigation was required by the police. "There is no need to invoke Section 156(3) of the CrPC for issuing direction to register FIR against the alleged accused persons," it said. The identity of the alleged accused persons was ascertained and no facts needed to be unearthed as they were well within the knowledge of the complainant, it added. The court order further said the custodial interrogation of the alleged accused was not necessary. "The evidence is well within the reach of the complainant and no assistance of police is required to gather the same. The facts of the case are not such that would warrant a detailed and complex investigation to be carried out by the state agency," the court said, dismissing the complaint. The court, however, took its cognisance, saying, the complainant was at liberty to lead pre-summing evidence."

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

A Nobel plea

THE 2024 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Nihon Hidankyo, a grassroots organisation of Japanese atomic bomb survivors, underscores an urgent and timeless call: abolish nuclear weapons before they abolish us. Representing the hibakushas — survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki — 92-year-old Terumi Tanaka's speech in Oslo reverberated with haunting memories of 1945 and dire warnings for the present. The horrors etched in Tanaka's narrative — a "bright, white light", the charred remains of loved ones and a city reduced to ashes — are more than history. They are a moral imperative. The bombings killed over two lakh people by the year's end, with countless others succumbing to the radiation's insidious grip. Yet, nearly eight decades later, humanity teeters on the brink of repeating its gravest mistake.

Despite a longstanding global taboo against nuclear weapon use, cracks are showing. Russia's veiled threats to Ukraine, Israel's nuclear rhetoric amid the Gaza conflict and relentless modernisation of arsenals by nuclear-armed states paint a chilling picture. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, once a beacon of hope, is now a neglected promise. The hibakushas' campaign underscores the catastrophic human toll of nuclear warfare and the futility of seeking peace through annihilation. Yet, their struggle also highlights systemic failures — decades of societal discrimination, insufficient state support and political inertia. Their plea for a nuclear-free world is not just an anti-war cry; it is a fight for dignity and survival.

Tanaka's words, "Nuclear weapons cannot — and must not — coexist with humanity", should resonate beyond Oslo. Our collective survival depends on our ability to learn from the past and act decisively in the present. Let us heed the hibakushas' call before their voices, like their memories, fade into silence.

As nerve damage spikes due to two-wheeler accidents, doctors stress on use of helmets and protective gear



According to hand surgeons, at least 70 per cent of brachial plexus injuries in Pune stem from road accidents, with the majority involving two-wheelers

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

"I was unable to move my right shoulder and elbow. While surgery has repaired the nerve damage, regaining full hand movement remains a daunting challenge, requiring months of physiotherapy." These were the words of a 31-year-old Pune man who suffered severe nerve damage known as brachial plexus injury following a motorbike accident during the monsoon in July last year. His case is far from unique. Traumatic brachial plexus injuries are serious, life-changing injuries that are becoming more common worldwide. Experts in trauma injuries have raised alarms over the increasing incidence caused by road traffic accidents. In Pune, at least 70 per cent of brachial plexus injuries stem from road accidents, with the majority, around 90 per cent, involving two-wheelers, hand surgeons said. The brachial plexus is composed of five main nerve roots that originate from the spinal cord in the neck. Each nerve supplies the shoulder, elbow, wrist, and hand with motor and sensory functions. According to Dr Abhijeet Wahegaonkar, a senior hand surgeon at Sancheti Hospital, injuries to this network of nerves often occur when the arm is forcefully pulled or stretched, which frequently happens in road accidents, particularly those involving two-wheelers. "Early detection and nerve repair are crucial for a full recovery. If you have experienced an injury to the neck or shoulder area and are unable to feel or move your hand or arm, it is important to contact your healthcare provider to determine the cause of your symptoms. A comprehensive physical examination, along with radiological and electrodiagnostic tests, will be included in the initial evaluation," he said.

Hand surgeons are specially trained to repair nerve damage, a critical area of their work. Nerve injuries are most commonly seen in motor vehicle accidents. "Patients often arrive with paralysis affecting their hand and arm, extending from the shoulder down. Although brachial plexus injuries are frequent in such accidents, awareness about them is surprisingly low. As a result, patients often seek help from hand surgeons too late," he said. "About 90 per cent of road traffic accidents involve two-wheelers. Among them, about 54 per cent of patients have brachial plexus injury associated with other injuries. And 46 per cent of patients with motor vehicle accidents have isolated injury involving the brachial plexus," Dr Wahegaonkar said. Dr Wahegaonkar emphasised the importance of wearing helmets and protective gear to reduce injuries. He stated, "Wearing protective riding gear alongside a helmet—such as gloves, elbow pads, sleeves, or a jacket—is essential to protect against abrasions in the event of a road accident."

According to data from Sancheti Hospital, a major referral centre for trauma injuries in Pune, most patients who suffer from brachial plexus injuries due to motorbike accidents are between the ages of 20 and 50. "Every year, we receive approximately 100 to 120 cases of brachial plexus injuries resulting from road accidents at Sancheti Hospital. These cases primarily come from Pune and the surrounding districts. It is often observed that the right side is more affected than the left. About 50 per cent of these patients experience injuries to all five nerves. Additionally, more than 80 per cent of patients with these injuries are male," said Dr Parag Sancheti, chairman and chief orthopaedic surgeon at Sancheti Hospital.

After man's death by suicide in Bengaluru, brother says sister-in-law sought Rs 3 crore to drop cases, Rs 30 lakh to meet son



GNS News Agency, Dec 13

The brother of a deputy general manager at an automobile firm in Bengaluru who allegedly died by suicide on Monday has lodged a police complaint against his sister-in-law and her family, saying they had demanded Rs 3 crore to withdraw the cases against him and Rs 30 lakh for visitation rights to see his son. Atul Subhash, a resident of Munnekollal, was found dead inside his apartment on Monday. Following his death, his brother Bikas Kumar filed a complaint on Monday against Subhash's estranged wife Nikita Singhania, her mother Nisha, brother Anurag, and uncle Sushil, leading the Marathahalli police to book them for abetment to suicide. In his complaint, Kumar alleged that relentless harassment and demands from his in-laws had pushed Subhash over the edge.

Subhash hailed from Uttar Pradesh and got married to Nikita, a software professional, in 2019. They later sepa-

rated. Subhash was facing nine cases under several charges, including murder, dowry harassment, unnatural sex etc. His parents were also named as accused in some of the cases. Subhash had left behind a 24-page note where he had narrated his ordeal and had also posted an 81-minute video with a board on his neck that had 'Justice is Due' written on it, the police said. He had also alleged that a family court judge in Uttar Pradesh favouring his in-laws had been charged with corruption. "My brother has been mentally and physically drained since the court battles began. He was constantly mocked and told to die if he could not meet their demands," Kumar said in his complaint. Speaking to the media, Kumar said that his brother was troubled after the cases piled up against him without any evidence. "He has travelled between Bengaluru and Jaunpur at least 40 times just for the sake of attending court hearings. Eight months after the marriage, she filed a divorce case and later charged him and our family. Every law in India is for women and not for men. I will fight for justice so that it sends a strong message to society," Kumar said.

In his note, Subhash allegedly requested authorities to prevent his wife and in-laws from seeing his body and said that his last rites should be withheld until justice was served. "If the accused walk free, dump my ashes in a gutter near the court. Let it be a testament to how life is valued in this country," he wrote, the police said. He also apologised to his parents for not being able to care for them in their old age, the police added. A senior police officer said that a police team from Bengaluru would question Nikita and her family members soon.

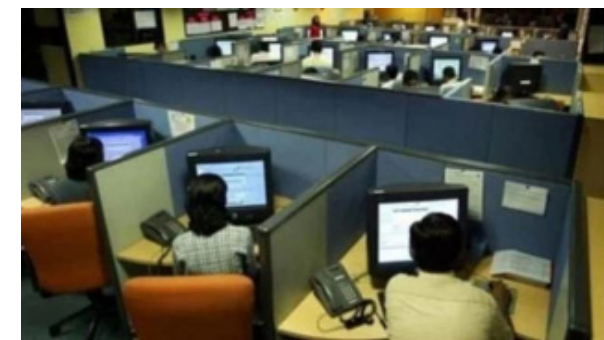
IT hub in Bengaluru's Sarjapura: KIADB invites consultants to prepare DPR

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

The Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB) on Tuesday issued tenders inviting reputed consultants and firms to prepare a Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the proposed Sarjapura Industrial Area in the Bengaluru Urban district. The project, covering 647.69 acres, entails the creation of a new industrial zone. The consultancy work includes economic analysis, surveying, layout planning, design, cost estimation, and preparation of a comprehensive cost structure.

The state government is working to develop Sarjapura into a significant IT hub, inspired by Electronics City and the International Tech Park in Whitefield. The Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB) has been assigned the task of acquiring 1,050 acres of land for this project, despite concerns that this development may contradict efforts to reduce congestion in Bengaluru. The proposed tech park will span villages in Sarjapur Hobli of Anekal taluk, including Bikkanaahalli, S Medahalli, Adigara Kallahalli, Sollepura, Murthanallur Amanikere, and Handenahalli. While the KIADB has completed acquiring nearly 647 acres across six villages, it plans to secure an additional 401 acres in Hosahalli, for which preliminary notifications were recently issued.

Officials aim to finalise land acquisition within six months, with compensation distributed under the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition,



Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013. "We will take possession of the land only after compensating the landowners. Most of the area comprises agricultural or vacant land," a KIADB official reportedly said. The project is designed to bolster Bengaluru's start-up ecosystem, focusing on sectors like artificial intelligence, finance, and technology. Commerce and Industries Minister M B Patil, spearheading the initiative, is expected to unveil the plan ahead of the Global Investors Meet (GIM) in February 2025.

To address the concerns of displaced landowners, KIADB officials said they would be offered developed sites in industrial parks such as Devanahalli and Doddaballapura. The officials also noted that other industrial parks in Bommasandra, Jigani, Attibele, Veerasandra, and Electronics City are now fully occupied.

Clubs, resto-bars to seek hard copies of age proof to stop violation of legal drinking age rule

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

drinking ageThe excise department of the Delhi government, during routine inspections by its teams in recent days, found customers younger than 25 years having alcohol at bars, clubs and restaurants. (Representational image: Pexel)The Delhi government has directed operators of the city's hotels, clubs and restaurants serving liquor to verify the age of their clients through hard copies of government-issued identity proofs after violations of the legal drinking age norm were detected. In Delhi, liquor is served only to persons aged 25 years and above.

The excise department of the Delhi government, during routine inspections by its teams in recent days, found customers younger than 25 years having alcohol at bars, clubs and restaurants. The inspections also revealed that some customers were consuming liquor pretending to have completed 25 years. Complaints were also received by the department that some excise licensees were serving liquor to underage persons, officials said. Under the Delhi Excise Act, 2009, no person or licensed vendor or his employee or agent will sell or deliver liquor to any person apparently under the age of 25 years for personal or others' consumption. The violations of the age restriction norms were reviewed by the department.

"All the licence holders of hotels, clubs, restaurants (HCR) are hereby directed to be more careful and to not serve liquor to any person under the age of 25 years without verifying the age through government-issued IDs," stated a circular issued by the department. Further, the department has advised the HCR licensees to verify customers' age only with physical IDs instead of virtual ones saved by



people on their mobile phones (excluding those in Digilocker portal) to minimise the use of fake or edited digital IDs. The violation of the legal drinking age norm invites action under the Delhi Excise Act, 2009.

The legal drinking age was a lingering issue in Delhi as it was lower in the NCR cities of Noida, Gurugram, Ghaziabad and Faridabad. Under the excise policy 2021-22, now scrapped, there was a plan to lower the legal drinking age to 21 years but it failed to materialise as the policy itself came under attack over allegations of corruption and violations of rules. Further, in pursuance of a campaign launched recently by Delhi to make the city drug-free in the next three years, the excise department has directed the licensees to take e-pledge on its official website and conspicuously display the certificate at the hotels, clubs and restaurants. The department has advised the licensees to create awareness among their staff and customers to cooperate in stopping drug abuse and stay away from its use to have a healthy life.

540 touts near Indira Gandhi airport held in 2024 for duping flyers: Delhi Police

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

Over 500 touts operating around Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport in Delhi have been arrested in 2024 for duping flyers on the pretext of unauthorised services, said the Delhi Police. The arrests that were made under Delhi Prevention of Touting and Malpractices against Tourists Act saw a jump of 48 per cent from last year, according to the data shared by the Delhi Police. The data said that 540 touts were arrested and 254 vehicles used as illegal taxis were seized as against the 264 arrests and 96 vehicle seizures in 2023. "Touts often prey on unsuspecting passengers, particularly at night, posing as pre-paid taxi drivers and offering false promises of cheaper services. These deceptive practices leave passengers vulnerable to harassment, financial exploitation, and safety risks," said Usha Rangani, Deputy Commissioner of Police (IGI). Of the arrested, 373 are from Delhi, 107 from Uttar Pradesh, 32 from Haryana

and 11 from Bihar. The others arrested hail from Rajasthan, Punjab, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand and Sikkim. The police made 41 preventive arrests of repeat offenders in 2024, in comparison to zero in 2023, the data said. Cases of foreigners getting duped by the touts eye flyers who arrive late at night, including foreign nationals, and purvey cheaper services in comparison to standard market rates, the police said. In one of the major cases of the year, a foreign national was duped of Rs 98,700 by a tout promising him to take to Varanasi. "The tout falsely informed the passenger that Delhi was witnessing heavy protests, causing all hotels and public transport to shut down. The touts and his three associates promised to make alternative arrangements for them," DCP Rangani said. However, the touts charged the credit card of the foreign national a whopping Rs 98,700 to take him to Varanasi and then abandoned him midway. "Within 24 hours, the police apprehended four accused people, in-

Pune to see slight dip in temperature as cold waves get active up north



GNS News Agency, Dec 13

winter pune A man crosses railway tracks amid dense fog during a cold winter morning on the outskirts of Agartala, on Monday. (PTI Photo)A man crosses railway tracks amid dense fog during a cold winter morning on the outskirts of Agartala, on Monday. Pune and its surrounding regions are expected to see a slight dip in temperature in the next few days, as cold wave conditions are expected to set in the northern part of the country.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) stated on Tuesday that the night temperature would be in the range of 12-13° Celsius with chances of slight haze possible in the morning hours. A well-marked low-pressure area over the Bay of Bengal is expected to cause rain in some parts of southern India this week. At the same time, a western disturbance (moisture-carrying cold winds that bring snow and rain) is active in the northern parts of the country, which is likely to result in a cold wave in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and other parts of north India. Some parts of the North Central Maharashtra are also expected to see a significant dip in minimum temperature in the days to come, the IMD said.

For Pune, the present dip in temperature would come after days of almost absence of winter. This was mainly because of Cyclone Fengal, which had formed over the Bay of Bengal. After the cyclone, the advent of moisture in the air had seen temperatures rising well above 16 degrees. Pune had recorded the season's coldest day when mercury dipped to 9.1 in November. That was mostly due to the lack of moisture in the air coupled with clear skies. After the cyclone, the temperatures had started rising with moisture incursion in the air. Cloudy skies and haze have made a comeback leading to a gradual rise in minimum temperature. However, the advent of the cold air from the north will see a dip in the minimum temperature. Pune's winter has been changing with a dip in minimum temperature recorded occasionally. The present dip may last for the next four to five days, the IMD said.

Pedestrians struggle to cross the road at Swargate Metro station

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

Over two months after the inauguration of the Swargate Metro by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, commuters still have no safe way of crossing the road at the gate of the station. Across the road lie two important bus connectivity points: the Swargate State Transport (ST) bus stand and PMPML Swargate bus stop. Outstation buses ply from the Swargate ST stand and PMPML buses to stops like Katraj, Market Yard, Upper Indiranagar, etc ply from the PMPML bus stop.

Commuters have to face incoming buses and vehicles to cross the road, and then climb over a divider or duck under a temporary metal fencing structure, to reach either of these two points. An underpass connecting the metro station and the ST bus stop is still under construction. "It is true that commuters are facing an issue reaching the bus stops from the metro station. Maha Metro should have planned this properly and the underpass should have been completed along with the station," a PMPML official told The Indian Express.

Metro commuter Sriram Rao said, "The underpass should have been opened along with the metro station. Even the placement of the bus stop (for buses going in the other direction) is right in front of the exit of the metro station. This leads to a lot of crowding." Nilesh Oak, another pedestrian, expressed similar sentiments and said, "Facilities for pedestrians should also be kept in mind while completing the metro station. The underbridge should have been completed when the station was inaugurated. Right now the pedestrians have to struggle." Sanjay Chavan, Pune City President of the disability cell of Pathari Panchayat Maharashtra, said, "Even people who don't have disabilities struggle to reach the metro gate from the ST stand. I have a 55% disability and use a stick to walk, how am I supposed to cross this? I challenge any Pune Metro official to cross this road safely in front of us."

This is the demand of the disabled community. The inauguration has been done in a hurried manner and this is playing with the lives of not just disabled people but even the elderly. "Executive Director (Administration and Public Relations) at Maha Metro Hemant Sonawane told The Indian Express that the underpass should be ready in the next two months, providing much needed relief to passengers. He also said that the PMPML bus stop location would be changed after the underpass is completed so that commuters can comfortably reach it."



cluding the mastermind Amit Malhotra. Further, they froze the suspects' bank accounts, ensuring the recovery of the victim's hard-earned money," said DCP Rangani. Another foreign national was duped on his first trip to Delhi by touts at IGI airport.

Minor girl who crossed border from Bangladesh on foot was fleeing after 'threats from fundamentalists', say relatives



GNS News Agency, Dec 13

A 17-year-old girl from Bangladesh, who was intercepted by the BSF after she crossed the border into Uttar Dinajpur district of West Bengal on Tuesday night, had fled the neighbouring country after her family got "threats from fundamentalists", said her relatives. The BSF has handed her over to West Bengal police, who will produce her before the Juvenile Justice Board. Police have contacted her relatives who live in Jalpaiguri. The relatives said the girl's family in Bangladesh are followers of ISKCON, and had received threats.

"She took the desperate step to save her life. They (her family) are residents of Panchagarh district of Bangladesh. The family are followers of ISKCON. Recently,

the family received threats from fundamentalists. Miscreants also threatened to kidnap her and kill the family. Her parents then decided to send her to India. They called and informed me that she is coming to India, but did not tell me when and how," her relative told reporters. Joby Thomas K, superintendent of Islampur police district, said: "We got a complaint from BSF regarding a girl who is 17 years old having entered India illegally from Bangladesh through the border. We have lodged an FIR and due process is being followed. Details of what made her take the step and enter India will be revealed during investigation." According to police and BSF sources, the girl bypassed Bangladesh Border Guards and crossed the border on foot to the Indian side. The BSF spotted her at Fatehpur Border outpost in Chopra block of Uttar Dinajpur district, and handed her over to Chopra police station. Later, police called in the relative of the girl, who resides in Jalpaiguri district. The relative said: "With the help of some locals, she came to the border and somehow bypassed Bangladesh Border Guards. Her father, who works as a medical representative, is ill. I got a call from Chopra police station last night and came here. I told police whatever I know and the reason for her taking this step." There have been widespread protests in Bengal and other parts of India against alleged atrocities faced by minorities in Bangladesh, and the arrest of ISKCON monk Chinmoy Krishna Das in Dhaka on November 25. Das, who has organised multiple rallies in Bangladesh to condemn the alleged atrocities, was charged with treason.

'Supari' of Rs 5 lakh paid to murder BJP MLC Yogesh Tilekar's uncle, key suspect among 4 held: Pune police

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

The Pune police said Wednesday the murder of the maternal uncle of BJP legislator Yogesh Tilekar was a contract killing for which a 'supari' of Rs 5 lakh was paid to assailants. A former neighbour of the victim is among the four suspects detained by the Pune police so far and is believed to have given the order for the killing, said officers.

Satish Sadba Wagh, 55, a resident of Manjari Budruk, was kidnapped sometime around 6.20 am on Monday when he was on a routine morning walk near his house. Around Monday evening, around 12 hours after he was kidnapped, his body was found in Shindavane village near Yavat, around 50 km from Pune city. Wagh, who was a farmer and also owned a small eatery, is survived by wife Mohini and sons Omkar and Abhishek.

"We have till now detained four suspects in the case. The probe suggests that this was a contract killing. A former neighbour of the deceased paid a supari of Rs 5 lakh to the assailants. The prime suspect, the former neighbour, is among those detained. He had a personal grudge against the deceased. The others are the suspected assailants. They are being questioned. We are probing the exact rea-



son behind the personal grudge," a senior officer from Pune police said. The investigation has revealed that around 6.15 am on Monday, Wagh left his house. A few minutes later, he met Nilesh Sodnar, a resident of the same area, who was also on a walk. Within moments, Sodnar heard Wagh's screams as he was forced into an SUV by some people. They fled the spot with Wagh. Sodnar ran to inform the family about what happened and subsequently the police were alerted. The family did not receive any ransom demand.

Former Maharashtra DGP Sanjay Pandey appears before Thane police in extortion case



GNS News Agency, Dec 13

Former Maharashtra DGP Sanjay Pandey appeared before the Thane police crime branch on Wednesday in connection with an extortion case registered against him and other police personnel in August. He enjoys protection from arrest granted by the Bombay High Court till January 3. The case was registered at the Thane Nagar police station on a complaint lodged by one Sanjay Punamiya, against whom two FIRs had been registered during the Maha Vikas Aghadi government, when Pandey was first the DGP and then the Mumbai police commissioner. After the Mahayuti government came to power, the cases registered against Punamiya were transferred to the CBI, which filed a closure report in the FIR in which former Mumbai police com-

missioner Param Bir Singh was also named as an accused.

An officer from the Thane police said that Pandey would be allowed to go after his statement is recorded. Punamiya alleged that Pandey had misused his position, initiated an illegal probe against him and extorted money from him and other businessmen by threatening to book them in false cases. Others booked in the case are Shyamsundar Agrawal, a builder and rival of Punamiya, two other members of his family, and two police officers—Sardar Patil, who retired as an assistant commissioner of police, and inspector Manohar Patil. In his statement to the police, Punamiya claimed that when he was admitted to Saifee Hospital in 2021, Sardar Patil and two police officers visited him to record his statement. The police officers told him that Pandey, then director-general of police, had sent a message for him, saying his name would be cleared from the criminal case if he gave a statement implicating Eknath Shinde, Devendra Fadnis and Param Bir Singh in an urban land ceiling scam. He had flatly refused the offer, he had claimed before the police. Pandey, who retired as Mumbai police chief on June 30, 2022, was earlier arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in a money laundering case and later granted bail. The CBI has also registered a case against him and his firm, iSEC Services Pvt Ltd, for allegedly tapping phones of National Stock Exchange employees illegally for around eight years. Pandey was granted anticipatory bail by the high court after a Thane court rejected his application for the relief on October 24.

Maharashtra medical university to send MBBS question papers via email after claims of exam paper leak

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

Following allegations of exam paper leak, the Maharashtra University of Health Sciences (MUHS) has decided to send the remaining question papers of the ongoing second-year MBBS examinations by email to colleges only after the students are seated in exam halls. The development comes after MUHS received two instances of emails claiming paper leak in an ongoing MBBS examination. Considering that the new practice is going to take longer for printing of question papers and distribution among candidates, all colleges have been asked to make required arrangements in advance and provide adequate time to students. The ongoing MBBS examination began on December 2. On the same day MUHS received an email claiming potential leak of the question paper of second year Pharmacology paper, hours before the start of the examination. Soon after, MUHS declared a re-exam for the paper on December 19. The MUHS again received a similar email on December 9, when Pathology examination was scheduled to be held. Instead of a re-exam, MUHS decided to change the question-paper and sent a different question paper to all colleges via email. Colleges were asked to not use the hard copies of question papers sent in advance.

Whether this will now be a standard practice to send question papers is yet under consideration of MUHS, an official said. "Emailing question papers on the spot is a good



option, but it is more time consuming and also can be met with issues such as internet and electricity shortages with few colleges located in remote areas. Varsity is evaluating all options to avoid any future paper-leaks. "The medical university has ordered a high-level inquiry committee to probe the claims of question paper leaks. "At the same time, MUHS has approached Cyber Cell of Police for a detailed investigation. But considering all the situations, in a meeting of the examination board held on Tuesday it was decided that questions papers for remaining exams will now be sent via emails to all exam centres," said Dr Sandeep Kadu, Controller of Examination (COE) at MUHS. Over 7,900 students from 50 exam centres are appearing for the ongoing second-year MBBS examination of winter session.

Pune airport sets new record with 204 flight movements in a day



GNS News Agency, Dec 13

The Pune International Airport (PIA) recorded its highest-ever flight movement on Sunday, with 204 flights operating within 24 hours—102 departures and 102 arrivals, according to airport officials. Airport director Santosh Dhoke attributed this achievement to the commencement of the winter schedule on October 27, which included the addition of several regional and international flights to the airport's fleet. This was the first time in the airport's history that it

surpassed 200 flight movements in a single day. Previously, the airport recorded exactly 200 flights on two occasions: September 16 and October 14, before the start of the winter schedule.

With expanding national and international connectivity offered by various airlines, the Pune airport continues to witness a steady rise in both passenger traffic and flight operations. Dhoke stated that the rise in local and national connectivity, driven by airline companies and supported by slot distribution from the Airports Authority of India, has been a key factor behind the rise in operations. "With the start of the winter schedule, we introduced flights to various local destinations such as Bhopal and Indore, added two flights to south India, and increased services to Delhi. Additionally, the merger of Vistara and Air India has encouraged better slot utilisation," he said. "Slot utilisation refers to the specific time allotted to airlines for their operations. However, in some cases, airlines fail to fully utilise these slots due to factors like low passenger traffic, a shortage of crew members, or aircraft unavailability," added Dhoke.

After setback in Assembly bypolls, Congress gears up for Punjab civic body polls

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

Having swept the Punjab civic body polls in 2021 when the party was well ensconced in power, the Congress is now gearing up to put on a decent show in the forthcoming polls on December 21. The elections for five municipal corporations and 44 municipal councils come on the backdrop of the Assembly bypolls to four seats which were held recently in Punjab. The Congress won only one of the four seats: Barnala. The previously held seats of Giddarbaha, Dera Baba Nanak, and Chabewal went to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).

The party has been holding meetings with screening committees to allocate tickets based on merit, with preparations described as being in full swing. State Congress president Amrinder Singh Warring says the party is focused on selecting strong, committed candidates to serve the people and ensure good governance. Senior leaders, including Warring, have been holding meetings to select candidates for the upcoming polls, especially since the nominations are already being accepted by the state election commission and the last date for filing papers is December 12. Overall, while the Congress appears ready and confident, the political landscape suggests a complex scenario in the backdrop of the summoning of Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leaders by the Akal Takht, the punishments meted out to them, the attack on Sukhbir Singh Badal, and the late lifting of the paddy crop, which affects the economic cycle in small towns and cities. Congress performance in previous polls

In 2021, the Congress won all eight municipal corporations: Bathinda, Hoshiarpur, Kapurthala, Abohar, Batala, Pathankot, Mohali, and Moga. Out of 109 municipal councils and Nagar panchayats, the Congress won 78 on its own and secured 20 more with the support of independents, totalling 98 victories. The swing in favour of the Congress in comparison to the 2015 municipal elections in Bathinda, Hoshiarpur, Moga and Pathankot districts was evident by the fact that from 11 seats during those polls, the Congress



improved its tally to 149 in 2021. These results indicated a significant dominance by the Congress in the urban local bodies of Punjab. The AAP, then in Opposition, did put up a fight but did not win any significant number of seats in most municipal bodies, and the SAD, contesting alone after parting ways with the BJP, saw a reduced influence. The then chief minister, Captain Amarinder Singh, had said the Congress's victory was not just a validation of his government's development-oriented policies and programmes but also a total rejection of the anti-people actions of the major Opposition parties, namely the SAD, the AAP and the BJP. Stating that these were the first major polls to be held in Punjab since the enactment of the farm laws, Amarinder had said the results also underscored people's angst with the BJP, which was responsible for the anti-farmer legislation with the active support of its former ally, the SAD, and the collusion of the ruling AAP in Delhi. However, before the year ended, Amarinder faced a revolt within his party, led by Navjot Singh Sidhu, and was removed as chief minister. He then floated his own political outfit. In 2022, after the Congress had been handed a crushing defeat by AAP in the Assembly polls, he merged his Punjab Lok Congress with the BJP. With the ruling parties having a track record of doing well on local body polls ranging from panchayats to municipal corporations, the Congress is hoping to put up a good fight and come up with decent numbers.

'Change ant-paced, need a revolution': Vedanta Group Chairman Anil Agarwal

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

At the inaugural session of Rising Rajasthan Investment Summit, Vedanta Group Chairman Anil Agarwal said that Rajasthan is "India's sweet spot". His industries have invested '1 lakh crore so far in the state and contribute '50,000 crore to the national exchequer of which '10,000 crore goes to Rajasthan annually. Now, he plans on tripling those figures. For years now, he has also been emphasising how the state needs more underground exploration. He spoke to Hamza Khan on his plans for the state, the "ant-like" pace of change, the need for "self-certification" and his experience with Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma.

First of all, we make 1 million tonnes of Zinc and will now make 2 million tonnes of it; we will make 300,000 barrels of oil in Cairn; and we will create 10,000 Megawatts of solar (energy). Put together, there will be '1 lakh crore investment. And I am very focused on silver too and want to double its capacity too. Today we are making 800 tonnes of silver and want to make it to 1,600 tonnes. We wish that all that is produced is consumed in Rajasthan itself and more industries are set up. We believe that 500 industries can be set up for the raw materials we produce. And we are trying to triple the oil and gas production. We have also announced a Zinc Park which is not-for-profit. If someone is looking for a job, then you should invest in the industry. There is an opportunity here.

What are the areas in Rajasthan which you think have a lot of potential?

Mainly what's below the ground, the minerals, oil and gas, they have not been explored. It can feed the whole of India. The whole world has progressed due to gold and silver. What Hindustan Zinc has done, Hindustan Copper can also do. But according to me, the government companies cannot do it. You will have to take a view.

When Bhajan Lal became the CM last year, you said that the government machinery needs to be completely overhauled and that it should be based on certain principles spoken by the Prime Minister. What was your experience that led you to say this?

I am not saying this. The whole world is saying this. The Prime Minister is also saying this... he himself gave a statement on red-tapism a few days ago. Our people are very able. But the time has come for self-certification. Like for income tax and sales tax, we deposit what we think is due, and the assessment happens later. It should be the same in every work.

If you have to set up a factory, you should not have to go and get permission. You already know that you have to follow these norms. You set it according to those norms and file its return. If the government has any objection, it will come and talk. (The government can) certify all the rules and regulations. The biggest thing is to get land. If you want to set up an industry, it takes time to get land even for a small industry. How to get land? Is it possible to get land digitally? With these things, the industry will move forward.

You came to Rajasthan in 2016 during the Resurgent



Rajasthan investment summit too, when you said that there is a need for quick clearances, simplified policies and minimum governance. We are in 2024, have you seen any difference in Rajasthan and in the country? Fark toh hua hai, par who chintti ki chaal se hua hai (There has been a difference, but with the pace of an ant). There is indeed a difference, but there should be a revolution, the trust should be built; and the government wants to do it too. If it is done vigorously, the work will move forward.

You came to the 2022 investment summit too and some MoUs were signed then, such as for Nand Ghars. What's the progress on those MoUs?

We have 3,600 Nand Ghars in Rajasthan. We are giving back to society. We have promised to build 25,000 more Nand Ghars in two years. I have one wish that no child should suffer from malnutrition in Rajasthan. Everyone should get food and get access to education, and that all the women should get at least '1,000-2,000 per month. As soon as the girls get money, things become different for them and their confidence level increases. That's what we are working on and it is happening too. There have been three investment summits in Rajasthan in the last 8 years, with MoUs worth at least '35 lakh crore being signed in the present one. However, in the past two summits, we have seen only a small percentage of these MoUs being implemented.

How can the government change this?

I can talk about myself; we fulfil the promises we make. We have an attachment with Rajasthan and I am confident that — just like Punjab which provides food to the entire country — Rajasthan can provide us with electricity, energy security and minerals in the same manner. For this, exploration is needed. The more exploration we do, the more Rajasthan will respond. I have been involved in this for the last 20-25 years and telling people that we have natural resources. Since foreigners wanted to make India a market, they said that we have nothing and that it is not good to make minerals. We have cleared both the issues. Today, the Chief Minister and the Prime Minister both have said that natural resources are very important. Exploration will lead to the development of our country. It will have a big impact. Bhajan Lal Sharma has been a CM for one year.

In fresh push for separate Coochbehar state, GCPA blocks railway lines in north Bengal



GNS News Agency, Dec 13

With a renewed push for Coochbehar to become a separate state and the inclusion of the Rajbanshi language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, the Greater Coochbehar People's Association (GCPA) blockaded railway lines in north West Bengal for over seven hours. Since the early hours of Wednesday, hundreds of GCPA members and Rajbanshi community members have started

blocking railway lines at Barobisha station in Coochbehar, located near the Bengal and Assam borders. Several long-distance trains were delayed and some were rerouted. The blockade, which started around 4 am, was lifted at 11.30 am.

"We talked to senior railway officials. They have promised to take our demands higher up. We had also proposed a meeting with officials of the Union Home Ministry over our demands. Therefore, we withdrew our blockade," said Bangshi Badan Barman, the GCPA leader. Barman is also the chairman of the Rajbanshi Development and Cultural Board and Rajbanshi Bhasha Academy set up by the state government. "However, if we find no solution to our demands which have been pending for a long time, we may restart agitation and blockades," he said. Cooch Behar is presently a district in West Bengal. Since 1998, the GCPA has been demanding a separate state comprising seven districts of north West Bengal along with the Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, and Dhubri districts of Assam. In February 2016, the GCPA blocked the New Cooch Behar railway station for four days.

Renukaswamy murder case:

Karnataka High Court reserves order on Darshan Thoogudeepa's bail plea

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

The Karnataka High Court on Monday reserved the order on actor Darshan Thoogudeepa's regular bail plea and ordered that the interim bail previously granted to him for medical reasons would continue to be in effect. On October 30, Thoogudeepa obtained six weeks of interim bail for a back surgery on medical grounds after four months of incarceration since June 11. Thoogudeepa is facing charges related to the murder of his fan and auto driver Renukaswamy. In arguing against the grant of bail, the prosecution highlighted the number and severity of the wounds inflicted on the deceased, calling it a clear case of murder. It also raised concerns that Thoogudeepa had not yet undergone back surgery, suggesting that this could lead to the misuse of the existing interim bail.



Thoogudeepa's counsel argued against the submissions made regarding the number of injuries, arguing that it was based on a months-delayed statement after the post-mortem examination. Describing the evidence in the case as "concocted", the counsel asserted that the same would be insufficient grounds to deny bail to the actor. It was further reiterated from previous hearings that the surgery timing had been dependent on the doctors. The counsel had previously stated in a hearing, "He (Thoogudeepa) has been subject to an MRI test and he is being treated with some medications. He could not be immediately given the surgical treatment... There has been a total variation in his blood pressure..."

Reserving an order in the regular bail plea, Justice Vishwajith Shetty left the interim bail in place until the final

pronunciation of the order. Thoogudeepa's counsel had earlier also raised doubts regarding the veracity of the witness testimony against him, alleging discrepancies in the locations of certain witnesses while pointing out that another witness had made a statement after a delay of 12 days. Renukaswamy's communications were also placed before the court with regard to his conduct. Renukaswamy's body was found near a stormwater drain close to an apartment complex in Sumanahalli, Bengaluru, on June 9. Seventeen people, including Thoogudeepa and his friend Pavithra Gowda, were arrested in connection with the murder case. It was alleged that the motive for the murder was stalking and abuse directed towards Gowda. The Bengaluru police in September filed a 3,991-page chargesheet, naming Gowda as accused number one and Thoogudeepa as accused number two.

Shruti Choudhry says she will follow grandfather Bansi Lal's vision, focus on groundwater quality

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

Choudhry has been assigned the irrigation and water resources and women and child development departments in the Nayab Singh Saini cabinet. Shruti Choudhry has been assigned the irrigation and water resources and women and child development departments in the Nayab Singh Saini cabinet. Keen to follow the vision of former Haryana chief minister Bansi Lal, his granddaughter Shruti Choudhry, 49, a cabinet minister in the new BJP government in the state, wants to work to improve the quality of groundwater.



to contest the Bhiwani-Mahendragarh Lok Sabha Seat, the Congress did not field her for the parliamentary polls this year. This fuelled a rift between Hooda and Kiran.

Businessman Sanjay Bhandari's extradition appeal opens in U.K. High Court

Sanjay Bhandari, a consultant in the defence sector wanted in India on alleged tax evasion and money-laundering charges, began an appeal in the High Court in London against his extradition order. The 62-year-old businessman had won permission to appeal against a November 2022 Westminster Magistrates' Court ruling clearing his extradition earlier this year.

On Tuesday (December 10, 2024), his lawyers began making their arguments in the case, which is listed for a three-day hearing this week with the judgment expected in the new year. Lord Justice Timothy Holroyde and Justice Karen Steyn began hearing representations from barristers James Stansfeld and Edward Fitzgerald at the Royal Courts of Justice on three main grounds of appeal – whether the bar for criminality had been met in the English jurisdiction, whether a prima facie case had been made and whether the accused faces a risk of violence in an Indian prison. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), appearing on behalf of the Indian authorities, will respond to the arguments during the course of the hearing – represented by barristers Ben Keith and Alex du Sautoy.

On Tuesday (December 10, 2024), they made representations to the judges to allow a video link to be generated for the following days, to allow the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to follow the proceedings from India. CBI books Sanjay Bhandari, Samsung Engineering for 'corruption' in Dahej project. "There is a real risk of violence or extortion from prisoners and prison officers," claimed Mr. Fitzgerald, during his arguments with reference to Delhi's Tihar Jail where Mr. Bhandari is to be lodged if he is extradited. Then U.K. Secretary of State Suella Braverman had ordered the extradition last year. However, Mr. Bhandari, who offered consultancy services to defence manufacturers bidding for Indian Government contracts through his firm Offset India Solutions, sought permission to appeal against the verdict of District Judge Michael Snow in the High Court.

'Doors of Himachal Bhawan open to all Himachalis... no concession to anyone'



GNS News Agency, Dec 13

Last year, Saurabh Thakur, a pradhan from Una in Himachal Pradesh, needed funds to build two pathways in his village. He decided to approach Hamirpur MP Anurag Thakur and travelled to Delhi. During his visit, he stayed at Himachal Bhawan for the first time and fell in love with the place. "I stayed for three days. The walls are adorned with photos of all the chief ministers of our state and prominent tourist spots in Himachal. Volvo buses of the Himachal Road Transport Corporation also operate from here. It felt so nice to see Himachali culture represented in the national capital," he says. HRTC's Volvo buses do operate from Himachal Bhawan, but only for one destination. "Buses run from here to Shimla in the morning and at night. For other destinations, one has to go to ISBT," says Ravinder Thakur, the front office in charge of Himachal Bhawan.

Busy making arrangements for the arrival of the Deputy Chief Minister and Advocate General, he says, "They are expected tonight. VIP movement is a regular occurrence here." "Doors are open to all Himachalis, but no concession is given to anyone," says Ravinder, who has been working here since 2021. According to the rate list displayed at the reception counter, the per-day rent for a room is Rs

1,200 for Himachalis, irrespective of their VIP or non-VIP status. For non-Himachalis, the rent is Rs 2,000. Delhi Police's Assistant Commissioner of Police, Sanjay Sharma, who is a Himachali, is a regular visitor. "The food here is good, especially the non-veg," he says. The restaurant on the first floor offers a veg Himachali thali priced at Rs 220, which includes rice, roti, missi roti, kheru, sepua vadi, chana madra, raita, dal, palda, and meetha. The non-veg Himachali thali costs Rs 250 and includes lacha parantha, chicken anardana, raita, and meetha. "The veg Himachali thali is quite popular. Around 20-30 thalis are ordered daily by both Himachalis and non-Himachalis," says Vijay Thakur, who handles billing at the restaurant. On the ground floor, a space is reserved for sales and exhibitions. "Sales go on throughout the year, but we deal in routine items, not Himachali products," says a man at the counter, requesting anonymity. He is from Uttarakhand and has been working here for the past 10 years.

The food receives praise, but does the place truly reflect the essence of Himachal Pradesh? "At Andhra Bhawan, we experience Andhra food. Similarly, Himachal Bhawan offers Himachali cuisine, but the experience could be more immersive," says Reeva Sood, a Himachal Pradesh native and agro-entrepreneur based in Delhi. "When one enters the building, Himachali folk music should play to transport visitors to the hill state. Himachali artefacts should be prominently displayed in the reception area," she suggests. "Even incorporating slate roofing, a distinct feature of Himachali architecture, somewhere in the design would make a difference." The cancellation of room bookings due to VIP visits is a cause for concern. "Once, I had a hearing at the National Green Tribunal and was staying at Himachal Bhawan. I had a booking for three to four days, but I was asked to vacate because then CM Virbhadra Singh, and the Industries Minister, Mukesh Agnihotri, required rooms for their teams," recalls an advocate from Shimla.

'Unacceptable proposition': L-G Vinai Kumar Saxena slams Delhi government over bus marshal proposal

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

Delhi Lieutenant Governor (L-G) Vinai Kumar Saxena on Tuesday replied to a proposal sent by the Delhi Cabinet urging him to draw up a scheme for bus marshals, saying "it is an unacceptable proposition" to suggest that such a scheme "should be formulated by the constitutional head of government". The Delhi Cabinet had sought a one-time relaxation to allow civil defence volunteers to be designated bus marshals until a new scheme was finalised and implemented. Saxena advised Delhi Chief Minister Atishi to direct the minister and additional chief secretary (ACS) in charge of transport to formulate the policy and then submit the matter for his consideration. "I have perused the notes of the ACS (Transport) and chief minister at pre-pages and the proposal, where it has been proposed that the Lieutenant Governor should draw up a plan... Like any other scheme of the Government, in any other state or the Government of India, such scheme has to be backed by rationale of requirement, purpose, deployment details, reservation provisions for SC/ST/OBC/EWS and most of all sufficient budgetary allocation..." Saxena said in his note.

He said that all these tasks are to be undertaken by the departments entirely under the control of the chief minister and the ministers, being transferred subjects. Pointing out that the term "bus marshals" was a "misnomer" deliberately created by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government to mislead people, Saxena said that the people deployed in such roles were civil defence volunteers and these posts were terminated by former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal. Terming the proposal "an unacceptable proposition", Saxena said, "By that absurd logic, I should also start exercising the powers of the Council of Ministers on a whole range of transferred subjects. I feel disappointed that even though the chief minister has full knowledge of the facts of the case, she has chosen to send this flippant reference in the matter."

He further said that he may have "discretion" on mat-

ters of services but the "matter at this stage is a policy matter and strictly lies in the domain of government transport being transferred subjects". Saxena also said that he had advised Atishi in the presence of the Leader of the Opposition that the government should evolve conceptual clarity on the subject and take an appropriate policy decision. "A structured cadre of Home Guard already exists under the supervisory control of Delhi Police. It is advised that the department should engage with Delhi Police for deployment of Home Guards to ensure optimal use of resources," he said. Further, he said, the transport department should spell out its policy framework and terms and conditions before such deployment. "Based on the policy decision taken by the government and the scale and nature of posts decided by the government, the matter related to creation of those posts and approval of recruitment rules framed by the department shall come up for my consideration," he said in a note. Further, Saxena said, he had already approved the call out for civil defence volunteers to mitigate air pollution. He also pointed out that it was on his directive that the home department had provided special preferences to civil defence volunteers in recruitment as Home Guard volunteers. Pointing out that the latest selection of 1,669 volunteers included 263 civil defence volunteers, he said the government has to find a permanent solution in a similar way "rather than playing with sentiments" of the volunteers who come from humble backgrounds. In response to Saxena's note, Delhi Urban Development Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj accused the BJP of misleading bus marshals for the last year and said Saxena had removed the bus marshals due to a BJP "conspiracy". A note came from the L-G's office, and in that note, the BJP has completely exposed itself. They tried to craft the note carefully, but they have fallen into their own trap... The L-G does not want to reinstate them and is making excuses. This is part of a larger conspiracy by the BJP to remove these bus marshals. Now, with the entire Cabinet repeatedly writing to you, there is no excuse left," he said.

Will the no-confidence motion against Rajya Sabha chairperson Jagdeep Dhankhar succeed?

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

On December 10, the opposition submitted a notice to move a no-confidence or impeachment resolution against Vice President and Rajya Sabha chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar. The notice accuses him of engaging in "partisan" conduct and being an "impassioned spokesperson" of the government's policies at public fora. A similar motion had been considered by the Opposition during the Budget Session in August but was ultimately shelved as the Session drew to a close. Procedure for impeachment

As the second-highest constitutional authority after the President, the Vice-President draws his or her powers from Article 63 of the Constitution. Article 64 further confers upon the post the power to serve as the "ex-officio Chairman of the Council of States (Rajya Sabha)". Thus, the Vice-President discharges the duties of both the Vice-President and Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha. The process for the removal of both the Vice President and Rajya Sabha chairperson has been laid down under Article 67. The provision stipulates that the Vice-President will hold office for a term of five years from "the date on which he enters upon his office". However, he or she may leave mid-term by submitting a resignation letter to the President. Additionally, Article 67(b) provides for the removal of the Vice-President if a majority of Rajya Sabha members pass a resolution to that effect, which must then be "agreed to" by the House of the People (Lok Sabha). However, the provision specifies that no such resolution can be moved unless at least a prior fourteen days' notice has been given. "The resolution can only be considered for discussion once the constitutionally mandated 14-day notice period has elapsed. It must then be approved by a simple majority in both Houses for passage and implementation," P.D.T. Achary, former Secretary General of the Lok Sabha,

It is however unlikely that the no-confidence motion will be taken up for discussion in the House since the Winter Session of Parliament is scheduled to conclude on December 20, which is less than 14 days away. For instance, in 2020 then Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu



Experts have pointed out that the resolution is unlikely to yield any result since the Opposition does not have the requisite numbers. However, there is no bar on the resolution being considered in the next session of Parliament

dismissed a no-confidence motion against Deputy Chairman Harivansh on the ground that it required a 14-day notice. Even if the motion is taken up in the House, it is unlikely to yield any result since the Opposition lacks the requisite numbers for its passage. Ultimately, this move appears to be more of a symbolic protest against Mr. Dhankhar's purported partisan conduct. "Since it is a constitutional resolution, it does not lapse when the session is prorogued. It can be taken up in the next session of Parliament, or even in a special session convened specifically for that purpose," Mr. Achary clarified.

'Chairperson cannot preside' Notably, even if the motion is taken up in the House and the Opposition's grievances are discussed, it would be difficult for Mr. Dhankhar to preside over those proceedings in the Rajya Sabha. Mr. Achary pointed out that Article 92 of the Constitution explicitly bars the Chairman or Deputy Chairman from presiding while a resolution for their removal is under consideration. However, the provision permits the Chairperson to speak and participate in the proceedings although he or she is barred from voting "on such resolution or any other matter during such proceedings."

Israeli strikes on Gaza kill at least 26, Palestinian medics say



GNS News Agency, Dec 13

Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip killed at least 26 people overnight and into Wednesday (December 11, 2024), including one that hit a home where displaced people were sheltering in the isolated north, killing 19, according to Palestinian medical officials. That strike occurred in the northern town of Beit Lahiya near the border with Israel, according to the nearby Kamal Adwan Hospital, which received the bodies. Hospital records show that a family of eight were among those killed, including four children, their parents and

two grandparents. Another strike in the built-up Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza killed at least seven people, according to the Awda Hospital. Records show the dead included two children, their parents and three relatives. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military. Israel has been waging a renewed offensive against Hamas militants in northern Gaza since early October. The military says it tries to avoid harming civilians and accuses militants of hiding among them, putting their lives in danger. The army said militants in central Gaza fired four projectiles into Israel on Wednesday, two of which were intercepted. The other two fell in open areas, and there were no reports of casualties. The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250 people, including children and older adults. Around 100 hostages are still inside Gaza, at least a third of whom are believed to be dead. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed over 44,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to local health officials. They say women and children make up more than half the dead but do not distinguish between fighters and civilians in their count. Israel says it has killed over 17,000 militants, without providing evidence.

South Korean Ex-Defense chief Kim Yong Hyun tried to kill himself after being arrested over martial law case

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

South Korea's former Defence Minister Kim Yong Hyun was stopped from attempting suicide while in detention over last week's martial law, officials said, as police were trying to search President Yoon Suk Yeol's office Wednesday in their intensifying investigation. The main liberal Opposition Democratic Party also plans to submit a new motion to impeach Mr. Yoon for his December 3 declaration that imposed martial law in South Korea for the first time in more than 40 years. Its first impeachment attempt against Mr. Yoon last Saturday failed, with ruling party lawmakers boycotting a floor vote.

Mr. Yoon's ill-conceived power grab has paralyzed South Korean politics, frozen its foreign policy and rattled financial markets, greatly reducing his chances of completing his five-year term and casting a turbulent shadow over one of Asia's most robust democracies. Shin Yong Hae, commissioner general of the Korea Correctional Service, told lawmakers Wednesday (December 11) that Kim tried to kill himself the previous night at a detention center in Seoul. He said that Kim's suicide attempt failed after centre officials stopped him and that he is in a stable condition now. At the same parliament committee meeting, Justice Minister Park Sung Jae confirmed Kim's failed suicide attempt. Kim was arrested early Wednesday after a Seoul court approved a warrant for him on allegations of playing a key role in a rebellion and committing abuse of power. Kim became the first person formally arrested over the Dec. 3 martial law decree. Kim, one of Mr. Yoon's close associates, has been accused of recommending martial law to Yoon and sending troops to the National Assembly to block lawmakers from voting on it. Enough lawmakers eventually managed to enter a parliament chamber and they unanimously rejected Mr. Yoon's decree, forcing the Cabinet to lift it before daybreak on Dec. 4. Prosecutors have up to 20 days to determine whether to indict Kim.

Later Wednesday, National Police Agency Commissioner General Cho Ji Ho and Kim Bong-sik, head of the metropolitan police agency of the capital, Seoul, were detained over their actions during martial law, police said. They were accused of deploying police forces to the National Assembly to block lawmakers' voting together with troops. The country's main law enforcement institutions are focusing on finding whether Yoon, Kim and others involved in imposing martial law committed the crime of rebellion. A conviction on the charge of rebellion carries a maximum death sentence.

South Korean police said they sent officers to search Mr. Yoon's office on Wednesday to look for any evidence related to the martial law introduction. Local media reported the search was underway, but police and the presidential office couldn't immediately confirm the reports. Some observers earlier said the presidential security service won't likely permit searches of Mr. Yoon's office, citing a law that prohibits searches of sites with state secrets without approval from those in charge of those areas.

Mr. Yoon on Saturday apologized over the martial law decree, saying he won't avoid legal or political responsibility for the declaration. He also said he would leave it to his



party to chart a course through the country's political turmoil, "including matters related to my term in office." In his martial law announcement, the conservative Yoon stressed a need to rebuild the country by eliminating "shameless North Korea followers and anti-state forces," a reference to his liberal rivals who control parliament. Since taking office in 2022, Yoon has had near-constant friction with the Democratic Party, which introduced motions to impeach some of his top officials and launched a political offensive over scandals involving Yoon and his wife.

Opposition parties and many experts say the martial law decree was unconstitutional. They say a president is by law allowed to declare martial law only during "wartime, war-like situations or other comparable national emergency states" and South Korea wasn't in such a situation. They argue that deploying troops to seal the National Assembly to suspend its political activities amounted to rebellion because the South Korean Constitution doesn't allow a president to use the military to suspend parliament in any situation. During a parliamentary hearing Tuesday, Kwak Jong-keun, commander of the Army Special Warfare Command whose troops were sent to parliament, testified that Yoon called him and asked for the troops deployed at parliament to "quickly destroy the door and drag out the lawmakers who are inside." Kwak said he didn't implement Yoon's order. At the same hearing, senior officer Kim Dae-woo of the military's counterintelligence agency said his commander, Yeo In-hyung, asked him if an army bunker in Seoul had space to detain politicians and other figures after martial law was imposed. Yeo is considered a close associate of Kim Yong Hyun.

If Yoon is impeached, his presidential powers would be suspended until the Constitutional Court decides whether to restore his powers or remove him from office. If he is dismissed from office, a new presidential election would be required. The leader of Yoon's conservative party pledged to arrange his stable exit from power, saying the party will coordinate with Cabinet members over state affairs and that Yoon will be sidelined from duties during a transition to an early election. However, the plans have been widely criticized as unrealistic and unconstitutional. The constitution explicitly states that impeachment is the sole method for suspending presidential powers and that the authority to command the military rests solely with the president. The Defense Ministry said this week that Yoon remains in charge of the country's military forces.

Iran's Khamenei says fall of Syria's Assad was result of 'U.S.-Israeli plan'

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Wednesday (December 11, 2024) that the toppling of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was the result of a plan by the United States and Israel. One of Syria's neighbours also had a role, he said. He did not name the country but appeared to be referring to Turkey, which has backed anti-Assad rebels. Mr. Assad's overthrow is widely seen as a major blow to the Iran-led "Axis of Resistance" political and military alliance that opposes Israeli and U.S. influence in the Middle East. "What happened in Syria was mainly planned in the command rooms of America and Israel. We have evidence of this. A neighbouring government of Syria was also involved," Mr. Khamenei said in a speech reported by Iranian state media.

The neighbour had a "clear role and continues to do so," he said.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member Turkey, which controls swathes of land in northern Syria after several cross-border incursions against the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia, has been a main backer of opposition groups aiming to topple Mr. Assad since the outbreak of the civil war in 2011. Iran spent billions of dollars propping up Mr. Assad during the war and deployed its Revolutionary Guards to Syria to keep its ally in power.

Hours after Mr. Assad's fall, Iran said it expected relations with Damascus to continue based on the two countries' "far-sighted and wise approach" and called for the establishment of an inclusive Government representing all segments of Syrian society. In his speech, Mr. Khamenei



Iran's Supreme Leader blames U.S., Israel, and possibly Turkey for toppling Syrian President Assad, vows regional strength

also said the Iran-led alliance would gain in strength across the entire region. "The more pressure you exert, the stronger the resistance becomes. The more crimes you commit, the more determined it becomes. The more you fight against it, the more it expands," Mr. Khamenei said. "Iran is strong and powerful—and will become even stronger," he said.

Trump promises to end birthright citizenship: What is it and could he do it?

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

President-elect Donald Trump has promised to end birthright citizenship as soon as he gets into office to make good on campaign promises aiming to restrict immigration and redefining what it means to be American. But any efforts to halt the policy would face steep legal hurdles. Birthright citizenship means anyone born in the United States automatically becomes an American citizen. It's been in place for decades and applies to children born to someone in the country illegally or in the U.S. on a tourist or student visa who plans to return to their home country. It's not the practice of every country, and Trump and his supporters have argued that the system is being abused and that there should be tougher standards for becoming an American citizen. But others say this is a right enshrined in the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, it would be extremely difficult to overturn and even if it's possible, it's a bad idea. Here's a look at birthright citizenship, what Trump has said about it and the prospects for ending it. During an interview Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press", Mr. Trump said he "absolutely" planned to halt birthright citizenship once in office. "We're going to end that because it's ridiculous," he said.

Trump and other opponents of birthright citizenship have argued that it creates an incentive for people to come to the U.S. illegally or take part in "birth tourism," in which pregnant women enter the U.S. specifically to give birth so their children can have citizenship before returning to their home countries. "Simply crossing the border and having a child should not entitle anyone to citizenship," said Eric Ruark, director of research for NumbersUSA, which argues for reducing immigration. The organization supports changes that would require at least one parent to be a permanent legal resident or a U.S. citizen for their children to automatically get citizenship. Others have argued that ending birthright citizenship would profoundly damage the country. "One of our big benefits is that people born here are citizens, are not an illegal underclass. There's better assimilation and integration of immigrants and their children because of birthright citizenship," said Alex Nowrasteh, vice president for economic and social policy studies at the pro-immigration Cato Institute. In 2019, the Migration Policy Institute estimated that 5.5 million children under age 18 lived with at least one parent in the country illegally in 2019, representing 7% of the U.S. child population. The vast majority of those children were U.S. citizens. The nonpartisan think tank said during Trump's campaign for president in 2015 that the number of people in the country illegally would "balloon" if birthright citizenship were repealed, creating "a self-perpetuating class that would be excluded from social membership for generations."

In the aftermath of the Civil War, Congress ratified the 14th Amendment in July 1868. That amendment assured citizenship for all, including Black people. "All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside," the 14th Amendment says. "No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States."

But the 14th Amendment didn't always translate to everyone being afforded birthright citizenship. For example, it wasn't until 1924 that Congress finally granted citizenship to all Native Americans born in the U.S. A key case in the history of birthright citizenship came in 1898, when the U.S.



Supreme Court ruled that Wong Kim Ark, born in San Francisco to Chinese immigrants, was a U.S. citizen because he was born in the States. The federal government had tried to deny him reentry into the county after a trip abroad on grounds he wasn't a citizen under the Chinese Exclusion Act. But some have argued that the 1898 case clearly applied to children born of parents who are both legal immigrants to America but that it's less clear whether it applies to children born to parents without legal status or, for example, who come for a short-term like a tourist visa. "That is the leading case on this. In fact, it's the only case on this," said Andrew Arthur, a fellow at the Center for Immigration Studies, which supports immigration restrictions. "It's a lot more of an open legal question than most people think."

Some proponents of immigration restrictions have argued the words "subject to the jurisdiction thereof" in the 14th Amendment allows the U.S. to deny citizenship to babies born to those in the country illegally. Trump himself used that language in his 2023 announcement that he would aim to end birthright citizenship if reelected. Trump wasn't clear in his Sunday interview how he aims to end birthright citizenship.

Asked how he could get around the 14th Amendment with an executive action, Trump said: "Well, we're going to have to get it changed. We'll maybe have to go back to the people. But we have to end it." Pressed further on whether he'd use an executive order, Trump said "if we can, through executive action." He gave a lot more details in a 2023 post on his campaign website. In it, he said he would issue an executive order the first day of his presidency, making it clear that federal agencies "require that at least one parent be a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident for their future children to become automatic U.S. citizens." Trump wrote that the executive order would make clear that children of people in the U.S. illegally "should not be issued passports, Social Security numbers, or be eligible for certain taxpayer funded welfare benefits." This would almost certainly end up in litigation.

Nowrasteh from the Cato Institute said the law is clear that birthright citizenship can't be ended by executive order but that Trump may be inclined to take a shot anyway through the courts. "I don't take his statements very seriously. He has been saying things like this for almost a decade," Nowrasteh said. "He didn't do anything to further this agenda when he was president before. The law and judges are near uniformly opposed to his legal theory that the children of illegal immigrants born in the United States are not citizens."

Trump could steer Congress to pass a law to end birthright citizenship but would still face a legal challenge that it violates the Constitution.

Russia transported Assad in 'most secured way': Deputy FM Sergei Ryabkov

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

Russia transported Bashar al-Assad, who was ousted as Syria's president by a lightning rebel offensive, very securely to Russia, the country's deputy foreign minister, Sergei Ryabkov, told NBC News in an interview aired on Tuesday. The Kremlin said on Monday that President Vladimir Putin had made the decision to grant asylum in Russia to Assad. His fall is a big blow to Iran and Russia, which had intervened in Syria's 13-year civil war to try to shore up his rule despite Western demands that he leave power. "He is secured, and it shows that Russia acts as required in such an extraordinary situation," Mr. Ryabkov told NBC, according to a transcript on NBC's website. He added that he would not elaborate "on what happened and how it was resolved."

Asked whether Russia would hand over Assad for trial, Mr. Ryabkov said: "Russia is not a party to the convention that established the International Criminal Court." Moscow has supported Syria since the early days of the Cold War, recognising its independence in 1944 as Damascus sought to throw off French colonial rule. The West saw Syria as a Soviet satellite. On Tuesday, Syria's new interim leader announced that he was taking charge of the country as care-



taker prime minister with the backing of the former rebels who toppled Assad. Separately, Mr. Ryabkov said that Russia would "definitely be prepared to consider" another prisoner swap, similar to the August exchange that involved Wall Street Journal reporter journalist Evan Gershkovich and ex-U.S. Marine Paul Whelan. A new deal would be "a healthy step forward, especially at the beginning of the next administration," Mr. Ryabkov told NBC, adding he would not want to "pre-empt anything."

Ukraine hits Russian border regions, sets oil depot ablaze

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

Ukraine attacked Russian border regions with missiles and drones early Wednesday (December 11, 2024), sparking a fire at an oil depot and damaging an "industrial facility", officials said. Two separate attacks targeted Russia's southern Rostov region and western Bryansk region, both of which have been hit by cross-border Ukrainian fire throughout Moscow's nearly three-year invasion. Videos purportedly taken in the Bryansk region showed a distant fireball illuminating the night sky over an urban area, while air raid sirens could be heard in footage from the southern Rostov region. Kyiv said it struck an oil depot being used to "supply the Russian occupation army" in the Bryansk region, while the governor of Russia's Rostov region said a Ukrainian missile attack damaged an "industrial enterprise" in the port city of Taganrog.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky hailed "tangible blows against Russian targets last night" that he said would help bring the war to an end. In a post on Telegram he said Ukraine had hit "military facilities on the territory of Russia, as well as facilities of the fuel and energy complex, which is working for aggression against our state and people". Kyiv has ramped up strikes on Russian oil and gas facilities this year, curbing Moscow's energy industry and causing billions of dollars' worth of damage.

The Ukrainian army said Russia was using the facility in Bryansk as a loading point for the Druzhba oil pipeline, a key supply route for Russian oil heading to much of central Europe. "A massive fire broke out," Ukraine's general staff said in a statement. It did not comment on the strike on the



Rostov region. The Russian governor of the Bryansk region, Alexander Bogomaz, said that Ukraine had attacked a "production facility" with drones but that the blaze had since been extinguished. Refineries and oil depots are a huge driving force behind Russia's economy, with some facilities being given their own air defence systems to ward off attacks. Major companies have redirected oil to sites further away from Ukraine, as some Ukrainian drone strikes have reached hundreds of kilometres into Russian territory. Ukraine says its attacks are "fair" retaliation for Moscow's strikes on its own energy infrastructure that have cut power to millions of people.

E-commerce firms must ensure transparency, uphold consumer interest: Pralhad Joshi



rate product details, clear pricing and disclose the country of origin and with clear return and the refund policy at the same time ensuring the product quality," he said. The minister also said that many-a-times platforms try and promote one particular brand, and when complaints are flagged by consumers, they claim they are just operating as a platform. The minister's statements assume significance as e-commerce giants have been facing allegations of deep discount, preferential treatment of sellers, and predatory pricing in the India market. Joshi further said that the e-commerce momentum in India is being fuelled by strong economic growth, robust digital infrastructure, and low-cost data. "...our consumer base is good and because of economic policies... India's economy is growing... we are the fastest-growing economy of the world, and we are the fifth-largest economy of the world. We are going to become third largest economy of the world very shortly. That means we will have that much of a customer base," he said. The minister, however, emphasised the need for e-commerce companies to prioritise consumer interest. "...mega company like Amazon, you are already trying to create awareness on the consumer protection," he said.

Joshi recalled an incident when his wife ordered a 'sari' but was forced to lodge a complaint when the product delivered turned out to be a low-quality one. "...my wife's experience... she ordered a sari, and when it actually came, it was a different one, very low quality one. But ultimately, to get the refund, my wife was forced to lodge a complaint," he said, adding that companies should ensure that consumers do not face such issues. India, he observed, is taking remarkable strides in sustainability, driving significant initiatives to advance the renewable energy goals. "In 2014, we were just generating 75 gigawatt (GW) of renewable energy... Today, India has crossed 212 gigawatt of renewable energy. Installed capacity is more than 43 per cent and our goal is to achieve 500 gigawatt by 2030, that is 50 per cent of our energy needs will be met by renewable energy by 2030," Joshi, who is also Minister for New and Renewable Energy, said.

Minister for Consumer Affairs Pralhad Joshi on Tuesday asserted that e-commerce companies have a significant role to play in ensuring transparent, trustworthy, and safe shopping environment for all consumers. Speaking at Amazon smbhav Summit, Joshi outlined the government's all-out efforts to ensure that consumer rights are protected through slew of measures such as Consumer Protection Act, establishment of central consumer protection authority, consumer helplines, and specific rules to protect consumers from unfair trade practices in e-commerce sector.

The future of e-commerce in India is bright, inclusive and transformative, the minister said emphasising the sheer size and potential of India market. "While this digital revolution offers incredible opportunities, our government believes it is equally important for our consumers to feel confident and make informed choices, and for the e-commerce platforms to gain the trust and the confidence of the consumer is equally very, very, very important," Joshi pointed out. The rapid growth of e-commerce also brings with it the risk, specially around consumer protection and rights of users, he cautioned. "Our government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has taken multiple initiatives to create a trusted and the safe e-commerce environment," he said. Rules are in place to protect the consumers from the unfair trade practices in the e-commerce sector.

"Online platforms are now required to provide accu-

Economic growth may come at a premium now, optimise rather than maximize oversight: CEA to regulators

Regulators have to self-regulate their unelected powers and should "optimize rather than maximize" oversight as economic growth may come at a premium now, Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran said Wednesday. In his comments at the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII's) Global Economic Policy Forum in New Delhi, Nageswaran also said regulators should "live by the same principles of transparency" that apply to regulated entities, including exhaustive disclosures around proposed regulations. "In our country, we have focused more on making sure that not a single act of deviant behavior goes unpunished, and that is something we need to reflect on. Where is the trade-off? Especially in the current context, where I think growth is going to be at a premium," Nageswaran said. "Therefore, what is it that the regulator has to optimize rather than maximize in this case? That is the question that the regulators have to ask themselves," he added.

Nageswaran's remarks come after the former Reserve Secretary Sanjay Malhotra, now the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor, cautioned against the overreach of tax officers, asking them to prioritise economic interests over revenue targets. "We are here not only for revenue but also for the whole economy of the country. So, if in the process of garnering some small revenue, we are hurting the whole industry, or the economy of the country, it is certainly not the intent. Revenue comes in only when there is some income, therefore, we have to be very cautious so that we do not, as they say, kill the golden goose," he said last week at an event organised by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI).

Highlighting the need for greater transparency, Nageswaran stressed that regulators must justify their actions with clear goals and timelines. "The same principle of transparency and social costs and benefits that we want to apply to regulated entities should also apply to the regulators themselves," he said. Nageswaran outlined a framework for regulatory accountability, including information



sharing on why a regulation is proposed, the data backing it, the objectives it seeks to achieve, and criteria for its eventual repeal. "There has to be accountability on the part of the regulator and they have to be conscious of the fact that they represent unelected power," he said, adding that regulators must self-impose checks to wield power responsibly.

Drawing a distinction between financial and non-financial sectors, Nageswaran argued that regulatory approaches must differ. In non-financial sectors, except for natural monopolies and utilities, he argued competition can often serve as an alternative to regulation. "You can expect competition to take care of much of the roles that regulators are expected to perform, so as long as you create a competitive environment as close to the theoretical perfect competition," he said. In the financial sector, Nageswaran said regulators have a tendency to lean towards "excessive regulation" because the effects of a problem would be systemic and not sectoral. "And two, when things go wrong, it is the state that is expected to bail out the overall economy. If I am going to be asked to pitch in the resources required to set the problem right, then naturally I have to have a say in making sure how that system is run as well," he said.

45% of startups from tier 2 & 3 cities; sector-focused steps planned: DPIIT Secy

startupSteel companies are grappling with several challenges in international markets, leading to a sharp decline in exports and a significant rise in steel imports into India. (Representational image: Pexels) Around 45 per cent of Indian startups are emerging from tier two and tier three cities, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Secretary Amardeep Singh Bhatia said on Wednesday, adding that sector-specific interventions are being developed to deepen the startup movement. Addressing the CII Global Economic Policy Summit, Bhatia said that ways to further integrate it with global value chains are being looked at and tariffs have been reduced. The weighted average tariffs have reached near global levels but there is pressure from domestic industries to raise tariffs, the secretary said. "We have established a robust startup ecosystem that is no longer confined to small pockets but is spreading across the country. In fact, 45 per cent of our



startups are from tier two and tier three cities, which is very encouraging. Sector-specific interventions are being designed to further expand this movement," Bhatia said. On trade, Bhatia said, "Significant work has been done to lower tariffs, bringing the weighted average in line with global levels. However, domestic industries continue to push for tariff increases. We need to analyse why these demands persist and why we are not competitive enough." This comes as the

Steel Ministry has urged the Commerce and Industry Ministry to raise tariffs on steel imports by 25 per cent. While large steel producers support the increase, medium and small-scale downstream industries argue it could hurt exports. Moreover, there are risks of increase in steel tariffs on steel in the US as US President-elect Donald Trump has signalled potential fresh tariffs on imported steel to safeguard the American steel industry. Trump

said that he would even block Nippon Steel, a Japanese company, from acquiring the Pennsylvania-based steel manufacturer, US Steel. Steel companies are grappling with several challenges in international markets, leading to a sharp decline in exports and a significant rise in steel imports into India. During the first half of the ongoing financial year, steel imports into India surged by approximately 41 per cent, while exports declined by 36 per cent, official data showed.

Indian cuisine declared 12th best in the world by Taste Atlas



The top five cuisines in the world were Greek, Italian, Mexican, Spanish, and Portuguese. The top five cuisines in the world were Greek, Italian, Mexican, Spanish, and Portuguese. Indian cuisine has been recognised globally yet again, securing the 12th spot in Taste Atlas's prestigious list of the 100 Best Cuisines in the World for 2024-25. This year-end ranking by the popular food and travel guide is to highlight the diverse and rich culinary traditions of various countries. The rankings were determined based on 477,287 valid ratings for over 15,000 foods in Taste Atlas's extensive database. The top five cuisines in the world were Greek, Italian, Mexican, Spanish, and Portuguese. While India narrowly missed a spot in the top 10, its robust flavours and iconic dishes ensured its place among the finalists. Iconic Indian dishes and restaurants Taste Atlas spotlighted some quintessential Indian dishes, while putting the cuisine on the 12th spot, which are a must-try for food enthusiasts: Amrisari Kulcha Butter Garlic Naan Murgh Makhani (Butter Chicken) Hyderabad Biryani In the same vein, legend-

ary Indian restaurants like Dum Pukht (New Delhi), Glenary's (Darjeeling), Ram Ashraya (Mumbai), and Shree Thaker Bhojanalay (Mumbai) were acknowledged for their contributions to India's culinary heritage. Several Indian dishes found a place in Taste Atlas's list of the 100 Best Dishes in the World: Murgh Makhani: Ranked 29th Hyderabad Biryani: Ranked 31st Chicken 65: Ranked 97th Keema: Ranked 100th Indian cities also made a significant impact in the rankings of the 100 Best Food Cities globally: Mumbai: Secured an impressive 5th spot Amritsar: Ranked 43rd Delhi: Surprisingly ranked at 45th, leagues behind Mumbai Other cities like Hyderabad (50th), Kolkata (71st), and Chennai (75th) also featured in the list. This recognition adds to the numerous accolades Indian cuisine has received from Taste Atlas throughout 2024. The diversity and richness of Indian food continue to resonate globally, showcasing the nation's cultural and culinary depth. As we celebrate Indian cuisine's achievements, food lovers worldwide are encouraged to explore our unmatched flavours, textures, and traditions.

People who are good at reading have different brains

The number of people who read for fun appears to be steadily dropping. Fifty per cent of UK adults say they don't read regularly (up from 42 per cent in 2015) and almost one in four young people aged 16-24 say they've never been readers, according to research by The Reading Agency. But what are the implications? Will people's preference for video over text affect our brains or our evolution as a species? What kind of brain structure do good readers actually have? My new study, published in Neuroimage, has found out.

I analysed open-source data from more than 1,000 participants to discover that readers of varying abilities had distinct traits in brain anatomy. The structure of two regions in the left hemisphere, which are crucial for language, were different in people who were good at reading. One was the anterior part of the temporal lobe. The left temporal pole helps associate and categorise different types of meaningful information. To assemble the meaning of a word such as leg, this brain region associates the visual, sensory and motor information conveying how legs look, feel and move. The other was Heschl's gyrus, a fold on the upper temporal lobe which hosts the auditory cortex (the cortex is the outermost layer of the brain). Better reading ability was linked to a larger anterior part of the temporal lobe in the left hemisphere compared to the right. It makes sense that having a larger brain area dedicated to meaning makes it easier to understand words and, therefore, to read. What might seem less intuitive is that the auditory cortex would be related to reading. Isn't reading mainly a visual skill? Not only. To pair letters with speech sounds, we first need to be aware of the sounds of the language. This phonological awareness is a well-established precursor to children's reading development.

A thinner left Heschl's gyrus has previously been related to dyslexia, which involves severe reading difficulties. My research shows that this variation in cortical thickness does not draw a simple dividing line between people with or without dyslexia. Instead, it spans the larger population, in which a thicker auditory cortex correlates with more adept reading. Reading is likely to shape the structure of the left Heschl's gyrus and temporal pole. Reading is likely to shape the structure of the left Heschl's gyrus and temporal pole.

Is thicker always better? When it comes to cortical structure, no, not necessarily. We know the auditory cortex has more myelin in the left hemisphere of most people. Myelin is a fatty substance that acts as an insulator for nerve fibres. It increases neural communication speed and can also insulate columns of brain cells from each other. Neural columns are believed to function as small processing units. Their increased isolation and rapid communication in the left hemisphere can be thought to enable the fast, categorical processing necessary for language. We need to know if a speaker uses the category d or t when saying



dear or tear rather than detecting the exact point where the vocal folds start vibrating. According to the "balloon model" of cortical growth, the larger amount of myelin squeezes out left-hemispheric cortical areas, making them flatter but more extended. So while the left auditory cortex may be thicker in good readers, it is still thinner (but much more extended) than the corresponding right cortex. This hypothesis was corroborated in the recent research. The left hemisphere had generally larger but thinner cortical areas with a higher degree of myelin. So is thinner better, then? Again, the answer is no, not necessarily. Complex abilities that require integrating information tend to benefit from a thicker cortex. The anterior temporal lobe with its complex way of integrating information is indeed the thickest structure of all cortical areas. An underlying mechanism might be the existence of more overlapping, interacting neurons which process information more holistically. Phonology is a highly complex skill, where different sound and motor features are integrated into speech sounds. It appears to correlate with a thicker cortex in an area near the left Heschl's gyrus. While it is unclear to what extent phonology is processed in Heschl's gyrus, the fact that phoneticians often have multiple left Heschl's gyri suggests it is linked to speech sounds.

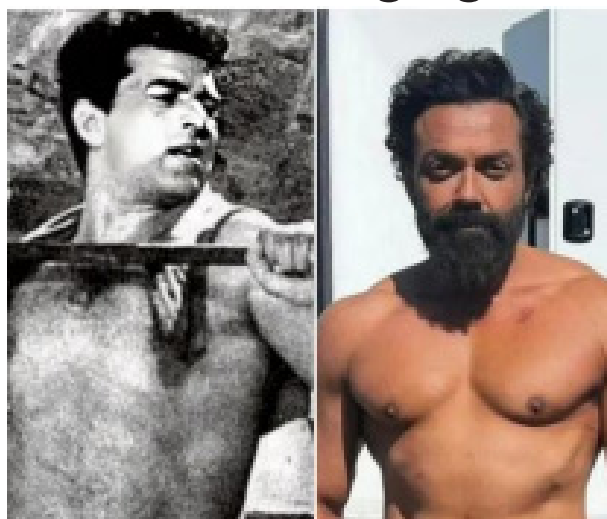
Clearly, brain structure can tell us a lot about reading skills. Importantly, though, the brain is malleable — it changes when we learn a new skill or practice an already acquired one. For instance, young adults who studied language intensively increased their cortical thickness in language areas. Similarly, reading is likely to shape the structure of the left Heschl's gyrus and temporal pole. So, if you want to keep your Heschl's thick and thriving, pick up a good book and start reading. Finally, it's worth considering what might happen to us as a species if skills like reading become less prioritised. Our capacity to interpret the world around us and understand the minds of others would surely diminish. In other words, that cosy moment with a book in your armchair isn't just personal — it's a service to humanity.

35-50 percent of women in Telangana are abdominally obese

Hyderabad: Women in Telangana State are more vulnerable to chronic illnesses like diabetes, hypertension and diseases related to heart, kidneys and strokes than their counterparts in northern India due to high prevalence of abdominal obesity. The prevalence of abdominal obesity among women in the state is between 35 per cent and 50 per cent. This means that out of 100 women aged between 30 years and 49 years, 35 per cent to 50 per cent are abdominally obese. Such a high percentage of abdominal obesity is also a clear indication of lack of physical activity among women. "Physical inactivity is highest amongst the South Indian population (72 per cent), making South India more vulnerable to obesity and subsequently to chronic illnesses. The rural economy is undergoing an economic transition and has resulted in withdrawal of significant proportion of female work force from economic activity. This also indicates the possibility of decreased physical activity in women, particularly in rural areas," a study titled 'Abdominal obesity in India: analysis of the National Family Health Survey-5' published in The Lancet (May, 2023), said.

Based on The Lancet analysis, prevalence of abdominal obesity is high to very high across all the Southern States. The range of prevalence of abdominal obesity among women varies from 35 per cent to more than 50 per cent in the entire South India. "Reduced physical activity owing to organised work and mechanised transport, particularly for the wealthier sections of the society, has led to the adoption of a sedentary lifestyle. Consumption of fat-rich diet is one of the factors that explain the higher prevalence of abdominal obesity in the wealthier sections. As per a research study, higher income groups consumed a diet where 32 per cent of energy was derived from fat, while for the lower-income groups, only 17 per cent of energy was derived from fat," the researchers in the The Lancet study said. Quite surprisingly, the abdominal obesity prevalence among men, when compared to women is quite low. Overall, the prevalence of abdominal obesity in the country is 40 per cent in women and just 12 per cent in men. "The association of abdominal obesity in women is stronger with older age groups, urban residents, wealthier sections, and non-vegetarians.

‘It started with Dharmendra’: Sunny Deol and Bobby Deol recall father’s shirtless scene, talk about changing beauty standards for men



Actors Sunny and Bobby Deol opened up about changing beauty standards for men in the latest edition of SCREEN Live, held in Mumbai this week. The brothers said that their father, the legendary Dharmendra, paved the way for them to go shirtless on screen. Sunny also spoke about being naturally fit and not relying on artificial supplements, while Bobby spoke about being ‘waxed’. The brothers were shown a picture of a shirtless Sunny, displaying his hairy chest in a pool, and asked to comment on the changing

ideas of male beauty. Bobby replied, “It started with my dad. I remember Phool Aur Patthar, and it wasn’t about showing his body. It was about what the character was going through. He removed his shirt because there was an old lady sitting there... It was so amazing, that scene. Bhaiya would know more about it because papa would’ve explained to you...”

Sunny said, “In the sequence, papa is drunk and the old lady is shivering. His character is a drunk, he’s a robber, he was an anti-hero. He sees this lady who is shivering, so he just takes of his shirt and puts it on her. It was just a matter of fact.” When it was pointed out that standards of male beauty have changed since then, and that hairy chests are no longer considered aesthetic, Bobby replied, “Yes, I’m waxed. I actually have less hair growth.” Sunny said, “I have nothing against what people are doing. I have nothing against youngsters; it becomes a fashion and they follow it. But you should not be ashamed of what you are and how you are. Manliness isn’t about having hair on your chest or not, it’s about the strength within. I would advise youngsters, you do sports, you do weight training because you enjoy it. You don’t want to become a bodybuilder. Don’t try to take shortcuts with steroids. Stay away. It’ll build you up, right, but later on it’s going to affect your health very badly.” Sunny and Bobby also spoke about their brotherly relationship, and the bond that they share as a family. They also addressed recent successes, and hinted at the future. Sunny confirmed that he will play Hanuman in Nitesh Tiwari’s ambitious two-part adaptation of the Ramayana, starring Ranbir Kapoor.

AR Rahman should thank me for allowing him to work in Hollywood’: Ashutosh Gowariker says Slumdog Millionaire got in the way of their partnership

Director Ashutosh Gowariker reflected on his long working relationship with composer AR Rahman, with whom he has collaborated on all but three of his films. He said that Rahman was supposed to compose the music for his 2008 release *What’s Your Raashee?* but he couldn’t because he was getting Hollywood offers. It was in 2008 that the film *Slumdog Millionaire* was released, winning Rahman two Oscars. In an interview, Gowariker said that he tells Rahman that he deserves thanks for ‘allowing’ him to pursue Hollywood offers. Chatting with Mirchi, he said, “Rahman and I had to take a gap after *Jodhaa Akbar* because he started getting Hollywood offers. He was offered *Slumdog Millionaire*. I wanted him to do *What’s Your Raashee?* as well, but it couldn’t happen. Even today, I sometimes tell Rahman, ‘You should thank me for the Oscars you’ve won, because I allowed you to go to Hollywood.’”

Asked how he communicates with Rahman, Gowariker said, “Rahman is a very sharp man, and he immediately grasps the crux of the idea. He is able to visualise the situations immediately. It takes time, because ultimately, he’s catering to you. He isn’t making his own album. But he deserves that time.” Rahman recently spoke about working



on *Slumdog Millionaire* in secret, because people had advised him not to. “I met Danny Boyle in Mumbai, and he really wanted me to do the music for the film. I called my agent, who said, ‘Reject it straight away! He is very complicated, works with multiple composers and might throw your music out.’ But I remembered Danny’s face, which was full of love and respect. I thought these two things weren’t tallying!” the composer recalled at the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne recently. *Slumdog Millionaire* ended up winning the Best Picture Oscar, but Rahman worked on only a couple of Hollywood projects afterwards.

Allu Arjun’s Pushpa 2 becomes fastest ever film to cross Rs 1000 cr: Dangal to RRR, complete list of films in coveted club

Going by the fanfare surrounding the release of Allu Arjun and Rashmika Mandanna’s *Pushpa 2*, it was no surprise that the film would break many box office records. However, for it to become the fastest Indian movie to enter the Rs 1000 crore club is an extraordinary feat that few could have predicted. Achieving this milestone in just six days, *Pushpa 2* has set a new benchmark. As the film celebrates this historic success, let’s take a look at all the other Indian movies that have made their way into the coveted Rs 1000 crore club.

Dangal

Aamir Khan and Nitesh Tiwari’s 2016 sports drama was the first Hindi film to join the Rs 1000 crore club. According to Sacnilk, the film’s lifetime worldwide collection stands at an impressive Rs 2070.3 crore, making it Aamir Khan’s highest-grossing film to date. The movie was a massive hit overseas, particularly in China. Based on the life of wrestling coach Mahavir Singh Phogat and his daughters Geeta Phogat and Babita Kumari, whom he trained to become wrestlers, *Dangal* starred Sanya Malhotra and Fatima Sana Shaikh in lead roles.

Baahubali 2: The Conclusion

SS Rajamouli’s epic action film *Baahubali 2: The Conclusion*, released in 2017, was the second Indian movie and the first regional film to enter the Rs 1000 crore club. The *Baahubali* sequel, starring Prabhas, earned Rs 1788.06 crore worldwide. The film featured a stellar cast, including Rana Daggubati, Anushka Shetty, Tamannaah Bhatia, Ramya Krishnan, Sathyaraj, Nassar, and Subbaraju.

RRR

SS Rajamouli is the only filmmaker to have two films in the Rs 1000 crore club, with his second entry being the Oscar-winning magnum opus *RRR*. Starring Ram Charan and Jr NTR in lead roles, the film amassed Rs 1,230 crore worldwide. *RRR* received international acclaim, bagging an Academy Award and a Golden Globe for its exceptional music.

KGF: Chapter 2

Prashanth Neel’s *KGF: Chapter 2*, released in 2022, became the first Kannada film to enter the Rs 1000 crore club. The film collected Rs 1,215 crore worldwide. Produced on a budget of Rs 100 crore, it is the most expensive Kannada film ever made. The Yash-starrer also featured Sanjay Dutt, Raveena Tandon, Srinidhi Shetty, and Prakash Raj in pivotal roles.

Kalki 2898 AD

Prabhas and Deepika Padukone’s *Kalki 2898 AD* is the highest-grossing film of 2024, with a worldwide collection of Rs 1042.25 crore. Directed by Nag Ashwin, the film features a powerhouse ensemble cast, including Amitabh Bachchan, Kamal Haasan, and Disha Patani.

Jawan and Pathaan



The year 2023 was nothing short of spectacular for Shah Rukh Khan, who delivered two massive hits—*Jawan* and *Pathaan*—both of which entered the Rs 1000 crore club. *Jawan* collected Rs 1,160 crore worldwide, while *Pathaan* earned Rs 1,055 crore. In *Jawan*, Shah Rukh portrayed a rebellious character exposing corruption in India, while in *Pathaan*, he took on the role of an Indian secret agent on a mission to save the country.

Kapoor clan meets PM Modi; Extends invitation for Raj Kapoor's centenary celebrations

Mumbai: The first film dynasty of Hindi cinema, the Kapoor family is currently in Delhi. The members of the family including Ranbir Kapoor, his wife Alia Bhatt, his mother Neetu Kapoor, actress Kareena Kapoor Khan, her husband Saif Ali Khan, and actress Karisma Kapoor met PM Narendra Modi in the national capital. The family extended the invitation to PM Modi for the centenary celebration of legendary filmmaker-actor Raj Kapoor. Earlier during the day, the family was spotted at the Mumbai airport as they were clicked while leaving for Delhi. While Ranbir Kapoor was dressed in a sharp black jodhpuri suit, Alia twined with Kareena as the former opted for a radiant red saree. Kareena donned a red and silver suit. Saif Ali Khan was seen in a white kurta, pyjama, beige jacket and red shoes. Neetu Kapoor and Karisma twined in white and golden suits. December 14, 2024 marks the centenary of Raj Kapoor, who is widely regarded as one of the biggest cinematic forces of India.

Pushpa 2: Vikramaditya Motwane slams makers for ‘monopolising’ multiplexes, says ‘36 shows a day in a single multiplex...’



Lootera filmmaker, Vikramaditya Motwane has slammed the makers of *Pushpa 2* for monopolising multiplexes by bringing them under contract to screen no other film for first ten days of its release. The reaction came after Zoom quoted an anonymous source from a popular multiplex chain sharing, “If we play any other film for even one show, action is likely to be taken against us.” Taking to his Instagram handle, Motwane, who previously had questioned the number of shows being screened across theatres, giving no screens to Golden Globes-nominated film *All We Imagine As Light*, shared a screenshot of the quote and

wrote, “Ah the plot thickens... not that we should start feeling sorry for our favourite multiplex chain (yeah you know the one). The irony of them being strong-armed after they have done the exact same thing in the past multiple times to producers is just...” He added, “Either way, this is a terrible precedent to set. Multiplexes cannot and should not be monopolised in this way. If every big film started doing this it would be disastrous.”

Previously, the CTRL filmmaker had shared a screenshot of BookMyShow displaying *Pushpa 2* shows. He wrote, “And yet, Payal’s incredible successes will mean f*** all to us because we will throw her film out, not let it breathe or find an audience, and will have 36 shows a day of one film in a single multiplex. Congratulations. We deserve this.” As of today, there are a minimum of six shows and maximum 26 shows per location scheduled alone in Delhi-NCR. Meanwhile, in Mumbai, a minimum of two shows and maximum 19 shows are scheduled at various multiplexes. On the other hand, only single show has been scheduled for the Malayalam version of *All We Imagine as Light* across Mumbai. A show at PVR: Citi Mall, Andheri West at 7:05 PM. A similar situation is witnessed in Kochi, where a single show has been scheduled at 9:35 PM at PVR: Forum Mall. The movie is nowhere available in Delhi-NCR. The film had a limited release on September 21 in Kerala, followed by an increased number of shows on November 29 after it received positive reviews. Payal Kapadia’s film became first Indian film to compete in the main competition at Cannes and win Grand Prix in 30 years. Recently, it was nominated under the Best Director and Best Foreign Language Film categories at the 82nd Golden Globe Awards.

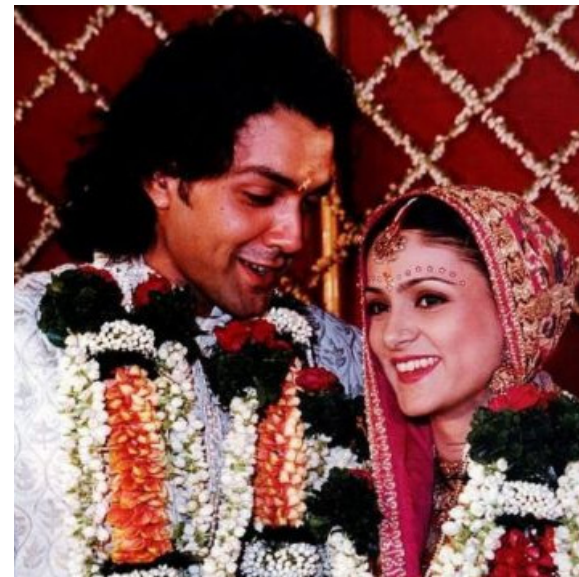
Meanwhile, *Pushpa 2*, the sequel to Allu Arjun’s 2021 film is headed towards crossing Rs 1000 crore mark globally since its release on December 5. According to Sacnilk, The film has about 1600 shows in Telugu 2D and over 6700 shows scheduled in Hindi across India.

Bobby Deol shares his love story with wife Tanya Deol, calls her ‘my backbone’: ‘Despite us being a joint family, she stood by us’

Bobby Deol, who recently made headlines for his powerful roles in movies like *Animal* and *Kanguva*, has a beautiful love story that he cherishes for life. The actor met his now-wife Tanya, about thirty years ago when both of them happened to visit Mumbai’s iconic Italian cafe, Trattoria, at the same time. It was love at first sight for the actor, who chased the girl of his dreams until she fell for him too. At the third edition of SCREEN LIVE, Bobby Deol recalled chasing his wife Tanya Deol, who initially was not interested in him. Speaking about his wife, Bobby Deol said, “She’s my woman, my life, everything. She is the best thing that could have happened to me. I met her, I chased her... she was from South Bombay, she didn’t give me any attention, but I still chased her. Somewhere I knew, she will fall in love with me. And then she did. We met, and in two months, we decided to get married. By this time, my parents were just dying for me to get married.”

He added how Tanya has been his support system throughout. “We have been married for almost 29 years and she has been with me through everything. It is the most difficult thing to leave everything behind and become part of another family. I have sisters, so I know the feeling. Despite ours being a joint family, she stood by us the whole time. She takes care of everything I do. I am very blessed. I don’t want to brag much, nazar lag jayegi. But she is my Taanu.”

Previously, in an interview with Abu Jani and Sandeep Khosla, Tanya shared her side of the story. She said, “We first met at Trattoria. I was there for a cup of coffee. He knew one of my friends. After that, I saw him for a couple of nights. But, I didn’t care. I didn’t know who he was and neither did I bother. I saw his film after I started dating him. We



were playing cards at one of the parties, and he kept losing to me, and he refused to pay. He said, ‘I will take you out for a meal.’”

She added, “A while later, he called me up at an absurd hour at night and I was fast asleep. I picked up the call, and I said, ‘I will call you back tomorrow.’ He said, ‘You don’t know who I am’ and I said, ‘It’s okay’ and I put the phone down. The next day, I checked with my friends if it was them who called me, but none of them had a clue. A week later, he called me again. And we ended up talking for about eight hours.”

Saira Banu reveals Dilip Kumar often gave away her handpicked, expensive birthday gifts: ‘How could a man part so easily with things so precious?’

Though Indian cinema has witnessed the budding, blooming and withering of countless actors, it is doubtful whether anyone has or ever will command as much reverence as Dilip Kumar. Regarded as one of the finest acting talents in the history of Indian cinema, Dilip Kumar was often hailed as Abhinay Samrat (Emperor of Acting). Over three years after his passing, his extraordinary legacy remains alive in the hearts of millions, with his wife, legendary actor Saira Banu, standing as his most devoted admirer. On the occasion of his 102nd birth anniversary on December 11 (Wednesday), Saira, who never misses a chance to celebrate his memory, took to social media to recount personal stories from their life together. Describing their bond, she emphasised that they were deeply connected in mind and soul. Saira also noted that for those fortunate enough to know him personally, Dilip was nothing less than a gift. She also shared a collage video showing some adorable moments from their life.

“A few people walk into your life to stay, becoming a part of you in every possible way. That’s what happened when Dilip Sahib entered my life to stay with me forever. We are one in our thoughts and being. The days may change, and the seasons may pass, but Sahib has always been there, walking with me hand in hand. Today, on his birthday, I reflect on what a gift he is not just to me but to everyone fortunate enough to know him.” Saira shared that while Dilip always maintained the image of a gentleman in the public eye, he would let down his guard and become like a child when he was with her. “To the world, Dilip Sahib was the epitome of mannerisms, poise, chivalry, and a presence that could silence a room. Yet, whenever he was around me, he became something else entirely. He shed the aura of a legend and let the child within him emerge playful, carefree, and unburdened by the weight of worldly chaos. He laughed with ease, teased with the innocence of a boy, and lost himself in the simplest of moments, as though the world beyond us had ceased to exist,” she wrote.

Saira Banu further said that one thing she could say

for certain about Dilip was that he could never sit still. Mentioning that he loved to travel, she said whenever he had days off from shooting, he would ask her and others to accompany him to various beautiful destinations. She added that her brother Sultan’s children, among other members of the family, would also often join him on these trips, creating some of their fondest memories together.

“His spontaneity still amazes me. I remember one such moment vividly. I had gone to the airport just to see him off, bidding him goodbye as he prepared to leave. He turned to me and asked, ‘Saira, what are you up to?’ I casually replied, ‘My shoot got cancelled, so nothing.’ What happened next left me astonished that he took me along with him! In those days, flight tickets were booked directly at the counter. Sahib promptly sent his secretary to secure a ticket for me and took me along with him. Now, picture this: I was dressed in a simple cotton salwar kameez, with no change of clothes and no preparation whatsoever. Yet, Sahib brought me to this grand wedding. I attended the entire ceremony in that simple attire, while Dilip Sahib walked beside me, hand in hand. His simplicity defined him, and it was this very trait that allowed him to effortlessly surprise me and draw me into his world,” she shared.

“Speaking of surprises, as meticulous as I am, I would spare no effort in making his birthdays special. I would hand-pick fine cashmere sweaters, select elegant cufflinks, and choose exquisite watches for Sahib. Yet, much to my amusement, he would give them away without hesitation to anyone who admired them. At first, I couldn’t understand it. How could a man part so easily with things so precious? But soon, I realised that Dilip Sahib was so fulfilled and content within himself that no material possession could rival the treasures of his art, his family, and the love he gave and received,” Saira added. Pointing out that it wasn’t just Dilip but that she had observed this quality in many iconic legends, Saira Banu noted that many of them seemed untouched by material desires, living so completely in their own being and their purpose.

Treesa-Gayatri show sturdy defense, but run out of firepower in third set to lose to World No 1 Liu-Tan



GNS News Agency, Dec 13

World No 1 Chinese Olympic silver medallists Liu Sheng Shu and Tan Ning, found unexpected resistance in Indians Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand, before they could quell their challenge 20-22, 22-20, 21-14 in the opening group match of the World Tour Finals. Twice, the Chinese led 18-14 in first two sets but were pulled into extended points past deuce, before they pulled out the heavy guns and stomped away in the decider. The Indians might have lost in 81 minutes. And they have a strong of losses against unheralded names in the game on the circuit while nursing niggles. But the pair of 21-year-olds gave enough indication of the next gear they are capable of pushing at the big occasions.

But first the mistakes. End-game surge of aggression is expected from Liu-Tan, one of the most attacking pairings on the circuit. And allowing a large 5-11 deficit in the decider, was leaving it for too late, even if they edged to 13-15 as Treesa smashed steep from the net. The Chinese simply stepped up half a notch higher thereafter and raced to the win. They were bound to, after the Indians twice gave them almighty scares, and even won the opener. Liu-Tan are the Tour's biggest sensations of the last year winning 10 titles in 21 months. They once decimated the Indians 21-3 when both were facing injury issues. They would move 3-0 up in a jiffy, and stay on course at 13-8, 15-10, 18-14 as Tan's flick serve gave the Chinese early advantage in most

rallies. Treesa had been smashing at the Chinese bodies and keeping Indians in the hunt, but it was Gayatri who stepped up the aggression at the forecourt and raised the Indian tempo. Defensively the Indians were top notch in the first two sets, and their errors were next to negligible, a massive big-match play improvement. Both Treesa and Gayatri played smart lifts that floated to the back, earning themselves time and denying the Chinese the right length to smash back.

After levelling at 19-19, the Indians would finally convert their second set point, as Treesa's sliced drops repeatedly caught the Chinese on the lunge. Gayatri is known to cleverly manoeuvre shuttle around the court, but Treesa has been nicely nuancing her all-out attack with soft shots. The speed, Indians could match, silencing the Chinese crowd. But the strength, Liu-Tan still held an edge over, and showed their power game to once more set up a fight at the clutch. Treesa-Gayatri came from 14-18 down to level at 18-18 in the second set. The Chinese would finish on the right side of the 22-20 scoreline this time, but even as rallies gpt longer, they were made to work hard – taking 33 minutes, as against the first where Indians took the lead in 23.

The Indian rubber game win percentage is rather low – below 60 percent according to Statminton – and it showed when they stagnated at 5-11 down in decider. Treesa's front court steep smashes got them to 13-15. But Liu-Tan were inching forward at 18-13 with their signature end game bombastic of an attack, striking shuttle very high. Nailing deciders vs Top 5 remains a challenge for the Indians. They next take on Pearly Tan-Thinaah Muralitharan of Malaysia, against whom they have an abysmal 1-6 record. Pearly is a monster smasher, holds records and all, and together Tan-Thinaah love the long gruelling matches. However they lost to Japanese Nami Matsuyama and Chiharu Shida 21-13, 17-21, 18-21 in 74 minutes. When Treesa-Gayatri force a decider, or are dragged into one, they will need to be alert in the first half of the third set – historically where they are slightly sluggish or tired.

I was deeply in depression...I felt like I was part of a gang: Lou Vincent opens on match-fixing scandal



GNS News Agency, Dec 13

New Zealand batsman Lou Vincent (R) drives a delivery as he is watched by South Africa wicketkeeper Mark Boucher during his 90 run innings in their One Day International at the Newlands stadium in Cape Town, Former New Zealand player Lou Vincent opens up about his battle with depression and how it led to him getting involved in a match-fixing scandal in the early 2000s in what was known as the Indian Cricket League at the time. "So I didn't have the mental package to be a professional sports player. So at 28, I was deeply in depression and then went to India, and was dragged, sucked into that fixing world. It was pretty easy to see how it happened," Vincent recalled speaking to The Telegraph.

"I felt like I was part of a gang. It almost made me feel better, because I am thinking: 'I am part of a match-fixing

gang, I am with a group that's going to have my back and nobody knows our little secret," he added. "I literally raised myself from the age of 12, so I was always quite malleable to people around me. Because I wanted to be loved, you're easily led astray," he conceded. "And, you know, that contributed massively towards my professional career of just wanting to be liked, wanting to be loved, and sort of sharing how I was feeling on tour," the former Kiwi player said. "If I was a little bit homesick or not scoring enough runs, I would tell the coach, the captain and then all of a sudden you get dropped because they think he's not going to give 100 per cent for New Zealand tomorrow, because he's a little bit lonely," he revealed. The 46-year-old started his career with a blistering ton against Australia. As he got involved in the match-fixing saga his career had to come to a premature end at the age of 29 after representing New Zealand in 23 Tests and 108 ODIs. In the year 2014, he was given 11 life bans by England Wales Cricket Board. "When you're in that world, it's hard to get out. There's always a very underlying threat of 'we know you, we know your kids'. You know, there's never a direct threat. But they make it very clear that they're involved with some pretty heavy underground gangs.

"And, 'you owe us, and you always will owe us'. Even if you've completed the fixing, they own you. It's hard to get out, and the only way to get out was literally the way I did (confess)," added Vincent. "Coming clean and approaching the players' association and telling them what was happening, 'where do we go from here?', was the start of turning it around. The ECB were great to deal with," said Vincent who now has the permission to be involved in domestic cricket.

How a prospective sponsorship deal by ECB can again raise concerns over strict food laws

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

While England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) is set to extend its marquee tournament the Hundred's controversial sponsorship with a fast food company, the yet to be announced decision will face its challenges. As reported by The Guardian, ECB is set to extend the 4 million pounds deal with KP Snacks, one of the United Kingdom's biggest fast food companies, for the next five years of the Hundred. "The Guardian has learned that talks between the ECB and KP are at an advanced stage over a contract that will see brands such as Hula Hoops, McCoy's, Tyrells and Butterkist promoted on players' shirts for another four years. The original KP contract was worth about £4m to the ECB over five years and the company wants to extend on similar terms," the report in The Guardian stated.

The Hundred, ECB's innovative format where each team faces 100 balls, was launched in 2019 but the first edition of the tournament happened in 2021 due to the delay caused by Covid-19. While the tournament has seen four seasons, ECB had announced a 4 million pounds sponsorship deal with KP Snacks in 2019. The last four seasons have seen KP Snacks brands like Hula Hoops, McCoy's, Tyrells and Butterkist being displayed on the participating eight teams in men and women's competitions. As per The Guardian, the new sponsorship deal will also be not affected by the pre-9pm ban on junk food advertising set to come into force in October 2025. The Hundred games are played in the afternoon and early evenings to target family and young audiences. According to the newspaper, a loophole in the legislation results in fast food and snacks advertising being permitted with them not showing the actual products. "ECB faced strong criticism from health campaigners and MPs when the initial five-year deal with KP as title sponsors of the Hundred was announced in 2019, six months before the competition's planned launch, which ended up being delayed until 2021 by the Covid-19 pandemic. The short-format competition was specifically designed by the ECB to appeal to children and was marketed to families with considerable success. Research by the board after the first season in 2021 showed that 19% of all tickets were sold to children, and that 55% of ticket buyers had never previously purchased a ticket for cricket in this country," the report further stated. ECB is already in process for selling off its 49 percent stake in the eight fran-



chises in the tournament with the second round of the three-part bidding process closing on Monday and bidders including Ambanis, owners of IPL side Mumbai Indians, from India and Kriqthead Capital, owners of Birmingham City. Earlier in 2019, the Obesity Health Alliance had criticized the deal. "Junk food brands sponsoring sporting events is just another way they make sure their unhealthy products take centre stage in children's minds," the watchdog had said in a statement.

In 2022, ECB and KP Foods were embroiled in a controversy after an email sent by ECB's to its mailing list and a KP Foods Instagram advertising about a chance to win tickets for the Hundred were found to have breached the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) code. According to BBC, the advertisement was sent to an ECB mailing list of 29,276 ticket buyers, 326 of which were under the age of 16. The email contained the logs of The Hundred and KP brand McCoy's and originals. "The email banned by the ASA contained the logos of The Hundred and KP brand McCoy's and carried the text 'we've teamed up with McCoy's, Official Team Partner of the Manchester Originals, to offer you the opportunity to claim a free bat and ball to celebrate The Hundred' BBC had reported. ASA had received two complaints post which they took the action. "We told The England and Wales Cricket Board Ltd and KP Snacks Ltd to take reasonable steps in future to ensure that HFSS [foods high in fat, salt and sugar] product ads were not directed at children through the selection of media or the context in which they appeared," the Advertising Standards Authority had said in a statement in 2022.

What happens if Gukesh vs Ding Liren World Chess Championship match is still tied after game 14

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

We're a few hours away from the start of the 13th installment of the Gukesh vs Ding Liren fight for the world chess championship's crown. After 12 games, both players have won two games each, with the remaining eight games ending up in draws. This leaves the fate of the 2024 World Chess Championship in the hands of the remaining two games. But what happens if the two classical games cannot decide the world champion? In case both players are tied on points after 14 games, the fate of who gets to call himself the world champion for at least one more year will be decided in games played in faster time controls. There is a pattern laid out by FIDE and the organisers for the 2024 World Chess Championship for the tiebreaks (games that are played in faster time controls). What is the tiebreak system at the World Chess Championship? The first phase of the tiebreaks will see Gukesh and Ding Liren face off in a four-game playoff. In this playoff, each



player has just 15 minutes on the clock and will earn an increment of 10 seconds for every move. Just to contrast this with the current time controls that Gukesh and Ding are playing under, both players have 120 minutes each to make the first 40 moves. Once they make their 40th move, they get 30 additional minutes for the rest of the game and increments of 30 additional seconds for every move from move number 41. So far, this has led to at least one game stretching over five hours. But if this phase of the

tiebreaks played across four games does not yield a winner, the time controls at the World Chess Championship get quicker. Both players will be needed to play a two-game playoff with both players having just 10 minutes on the clock at the start. Gukesh and Ding will earn an increment of five seconds for each move. If this still doesn't throw up a champion, the regulations stipulate that the games will get even quicker. There will be a two-game playoff with a time control of three minutes per player (with two-second increments per move). How much money will players earn if the World Chess Championship is decided in tiebreaks? Each player receives \$200,000 for each game won at the World Chess Championship. The remaining balance of the prize fund shall be split equally between the players. This means both players have already pocketed almost Rs 3.4 crore for their two wins. But if the winner of the World Chess Championship is decided on tie-break, the prize money shall be divided as follows:

Equalling Dutee Chand's record wasn't the target, breaking it was: Abinaya Rajarajan after matching national U-18 100m mark

GNS News Agency, Dec 13

It's been almost seven years since her first "competitive race," but 18-year-old Abinaya Rajarajan remembers all the details as if it took place just moments ago. "I didn't know anything about running. I ran barefoot in my school uniform skirt," she said, just days after matching double Asian Games silver medallist and two-time Olympian Dutee Chand's Under-18 100m record at the Youth Nationals in Bhubaneswar. Abinaya went all out in the heats on Sunday, clocking 11.62 seconds to match Dutee Chand's decade-old junior national record. In the final, the Tamil Nadu sprinter won the gold but couldn't improve on her earlier mark. Even though Abinaya was disappointed at not breaking Dutee's record, the timings are very encouraging for a youngster who started running just to "skip maths classes." "I was in Class 6, and there was a zonal meet coming up. I asked my teacher which was the shortest race, and was told it's the 100m. So that's how I got into sprints. The prospect of missing maths classes was the only reason I signed up for the event," she recalls. The results at the Zonals surprised not only her teachers but Abinaya herself. Competing in her school uniform, she beat trained runners with ease. The trend continued thereafter, and it didn't take long for Abinaya to get bitten by the sprinting bug. "When I started beating athletes without training, I realised I was naturally gifted. That's when I thought I should take up sprinting more seriously," she said.

Abinaya knew what the next logical step would be: professional training. She joined a sports club in her village, Kalluthu, in the Tenkasi district of Tamil Nadu when she was in the 9th standard. However, lack of facilities soon began to hamper her progress. "We didn't have a synthetic track, and the nearest stadium was in Tirunelveli, about 40 km away. Travelling every day wasn't a feasible option," she said. That's when Abinaya's family decided to take a leap of faith. They left their village home and moved to



Tirunelveli to ensure she got better training facilities. "I always wanted my daughter to become an athlete. She would reach the semis of all competitions and then exit. We knew she needed to train regularly on synthetic tracks to graduate to the next level," said her father Rajarajan, who runs a stone quarry business.

Initially, the move didn't yield results. The desired improvements weren't coming. But Abinaya didn't lose hope, and it took almost two years to find her footing. After finishing school, she accepted the Sports Authority of India's offer to train at their centre in Trivandrum. She hasn't looked back since. Last year, she was part of the bronze medal-winning 4x100m relay team at the U20 Asian Championships. The Bhubaneswar junior nationals were Abinaya's last shot at Dutee Chand's youth record, as she will have to compete in the U20 category from next season. "I was really disappointed that I missed the mark. Equalling the record is fine, but I would have been happier breaking it. I was targeting 11.52 seconds in the final but couldn't pull it off," she said in a disappointed tone. Her father, however, shows no disappointment with her performance. "I have read so much about Dutee. It's a huge achievement that she has equalled Dutee's record. I didn't expect her to match such a great runner's mark in such a short time," he said proudly.

'I just wanted to get away from the guard': Lachie Burt - The beer snake man explains on what he was doing at sight screen which caused disruption of play in Adelaide

Lachie Burt, often now referred to as the beer snake man, disturbed the game in Adelaide Oval on Friday during the second test of the Border Gavaskar Trophy by running with a beer snake (a pile of beer cups stacked together, making a snake-like figure) near the sight screen throws light on the incident. "In my head at that time, I just wanted to get away from the guard, so I saw the space and hopped over the tiny white rope," he told 9News.



"I didn't really have time to stop and think what I was doing right now and what the effects were going to be because of it," said Lachie Burt. "I did feel a bit silly, it wasn't the right thing... sorry Marnus." "It's probably not the right thing to do, but no one got hurt," Burt said. Burt felt that the

small hiccup didn't matter much as the game went on after the incident without being impacted "I didn't jump the fence or anything. It was one ball, and Marnus (Labuschagne) got a four after that, so no worries." He was then taken out of the Adelaide Oval for the rest of the day's play. While the

Adelaide Oval management has not commented specifically on the instance involving Burt, they have mentioned that they were satisfied with the overall behavior of the crowd. The Beer Snake Man had interrupted the game as he ran across the sight screen with a tall beer snake after

piling up his cups of beer. Marnus Labuschagne, who was the batter, moved away as Lachie came in front of the sight screen, causing a small scuffle in the middle as Mohammed Siraj chucked the ball at Labuschagne as he was just about to finish his run-up.