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RTC to operate Pushpak buses from Lingampalli to RGIA

Hyderabad: The Telangana State Road and Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) will operate Pushpak bus services from Lingampalli to the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA) in Shamshabad starting December 15. The Lingampalli to the RGIA Pushpak bus service route will connect different localities including Alwyn X Road, Hafizpet, Kondapur, Kothaguda and Gachibowli. RTC authorities said the route and schedule of the buses were planned for the convenience and comfort of the passengers, particularly those traveling to the airport. The first bus from Lingampalli to RGIA starts at 5.45 am with the last bus leaving at 8.45 pm.

Tight security arrangements at Group-II examination centers District SP

In the wake of the Group-II examinations to be held under the auspices of TGPSC on December 15 and 16, Section 163 BNSS Act-2023 (Indian Citizen Safety Code) will be implemented at the examination centers, District SP Ravula Giridhar IPS said today. He said that restrictions will be in effect from 6:00 am on December 15 to 6:00 pm on December 16 during the Group-II examinations to be held at 31 examination centers across the district on December 15 and 16.

He said that all the candidates from across the district will appear, and a total of 200 police officers and staff have been made strong security arrangements for these exams to be held at 31 exam centers in Wanaparthy district.

Haryana Police use tear gas shells, water cannons to disperse protesting farmers; 15 injured



GNS News Agency, Dec 14

Hyderabad: Haryana police, farmers Farmers shout slogans as security personnel use water cannons to disperse them during their agitation at the Shambhu border. Fifteen people got injured Saturday after the Haryana Police used tear gas shells and water cannons on a farmers' rally at the Shambhu border on National Highway-44. The police said around 100 farmers under the banner of Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) and Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) (non-political) began marching towards the Shambhu border. The farmers were reportedly told to move back but they tried to remove the iron mesh attached to the cemented barricade, leading to police action.

The first tear gas shell was used around 12.50 pm and nearly 11 farmers had been injured and taken to hospital by 1.30 pm. "We fell short of ambulances and the next three to four injured were transported in private vehicles... We suspended the march as the rest of the farmers were also feeling breathless," said Tejveer Singh, Spokesperson, BKU Shaheed Bhagat Singh (Haryana) – a constituent of KMM. Sarwan Singh Pandher, Coordinator, KMM and SKM (non-political), said, "They (police) used dirty water on our jatha (group) and expired tear gas shells. They even used strong chemical-laden sprays causing eye irritation." However, Haryana security forces denied using dirty water. Meanwhile, a farmer from the Ludhiana district attempted suicide at Shambhu on Saturday afternoon. He was rushed to the civil hospital in Rajpura and was under treatment. In September, farmer Gurmeet Singh, 53, from Mansa district had died by suicide at Khanauri border. It needs to be mentioned that the protesting farmers had tried to breach the Shambhu border on December 6 and 8 as well. On Friday, Parth Gupta, Deputy Commissioner, Ambala, told media persons that they cannot allow farmers to march ahead without permission from the Delhi Police. Farmer organisations have been protesting at the Shambhu and Khanauri borders since February 13 over a host of demands including seeking a legal guarantee for the Minimum Support Price for farm produce.

India is 'Mother of Democracy': PM Modi



GNS News Agency, Dec 14

New Delhi: Calling India the "Mother of Democracy", Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said the Constitution is the foundation of the country's unity. Speaking on the second day of debate on 75 years of the Constitution's adoption, PM Modi cited remarks by Dr B.R. Ambedkar highlighting the importance of collective decision-making for nurturing a feeling of unity. "I am pained to say that after Independence, due to vested interest, there was an attack on the basic character of the country that celebrated unity in diversity. Making unity in diversity a part of our lives will be the biggest tribute to Dr Ambedkar," the Prime Minister said while speaking in the Lok Sabha.

Referring to Article 370 as a hurdle in the unity of the country, PM Modi said this was the reason why our government buried it as "unity is our priority". He credited GST as a tool of economic unity that promoted the motto of "One Nation, One Tax", highlighting "One Nation, One Ration Card" as another initiative for strengthening unity in the nation. "We live the slogan of unity in diversity. That is why we started the 'One Nation, One Health Card' for nationwide provision of health insurance," the Prime Minister said. "One Nation, One Grid" was another initiative that removed disparity in electricity availability in different parts of the country, and we lit up the dark parts of the country, PM Modi said, highlighting his government's efforts to remove disparities in infrastructure development as well. Citing the example of optical fiber link for all panchayats, he said the government wants to prevent a situation of "haves and have nots" in the field of digital services. The New Education Policy has also promoted mother tongue and fulfilling the mandate of the Constitution, we have given even regional and poor students to pursue higher studies in their own language, PM Modi said. He also highlighted the achievements of women, especially in space technology, crediting the statute for offering inspiration for women-led development and highlighted that a woman is the President of the country. "Very soon we will be the 3rd largest economy and by the 100th year of Independence we are committed towards becoming a development nation," PM Modi said.

Hyderabad police sets strict New Year Eve guidelines: No obscenity, drugs, or loud music allowed

Hyderabad: No obscenity, no nudity, no drugs and no high sound levels. For the upcoming events to be organized as part of New Year eve celebrations, the Hyderabad police have laid down the ground rules. A caution of serious action against those found violating the guidelines has also been appended. The organisers of the New Year events in the city will have to ensure decency of apparel, dance acts, gestures and words, at the celebrations apart from making sure there is no obscenity and nudity in any of the performances, the guidelines issued by the Hyderabad police said.

Also, the concept of "designated driver for a day" who can safely take home co-passengers without him or her indulging in drinking beyond limit is to be explained to the customers as well as displayed at prominent places for their safety. The guidelines asked the organizers to keep a close watch on sale of narcotics substances at the venue failing which strict legal action will be initiated against them. Likewise, no minors should be permitted in events organised for couples and in pubs and bars. In the guidelines, Hyderabad Police Commissioner, CV Anand said, "No person should be allowed to use drugs or narcotics and psychotropic substances and if the managements fail to prevent the same, it would lead to culpability of management



and action will be taken as per law. Special attention should be on parking areas and other places where drugs are clandestinely sold." He said the organizers should maintain the sound levels below 45 decibels, fix surveillance cameras with recording facilities to monitor the events and appoint adequate security guards for security access and traffic management. In their bid to curb drunk driving, the police said that it is the responsibility of the management of pubs or bars to make necessary arrangements to provide drivers or cabs to the customers who are in a drunken state.

Allu Arjun Released from Chanchalguda Jail, says he respects law



GNS News Agency, Dec 14

In a significant development, renowned actor Allu Arjun was released from Chanchalguda Jail at 6:30 AM today. He exited through the back gate of the facility, accompanied by his father and uncle, Allu Aravind and Chandrasekhar. Following his release, Allu Arjun and his family went to Geetha Arts office, where they are currently situated before heading to his residence. The scene outside Allu Arjun's home remains bustling, reflecting the

actor's immense popularity and fan following. Tollywood actor Allu Arjun addressed the media upon his release from jail, expressing gratitude to his supporters during a challenging time. In an emotional statement, he said, "Thank you to everyone who supported me. I am fine because of your love, but don't worry. I will respect the law and cooperate with the investigation." Arjun also extended his condolences to the family of the woman who tragically lost her life in a recent stampede incident. "I express my condolences to the family of the woman who died in the stampede. This has never happened before," he noted, highlighting the severity of the situation. The actor had previously been remanded to Chanchalguda Jail for 14 days by the Nampally court, in connection with a stampede incident that occurred near Sandhya Theater. However, the Telangana High Court intervened, granting Allu Arjun interim bail for four weeks. His legal team submitted a surety of Rs 50,000 to the jail superintendent to facilitate the release. It is worth noting that Allu Arjun spent the entire night in custody, as the bail documents were delivered to the jail authorities late Friday night. The actor's legal team is expected to engage further with authorities as the situation develops.

New Delhi-Jeddah Indigo flight makes emergency landing in Karachi

GNS News Agency, Dec 14

Karachi: An IndiGo flight en route to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, was on Saturday forced to make an emergency landing at the Jinnah International Airport in Pakistan's Karachi city following a medical emergency onboard. The aircraft, which departed from New Delhi, was in Pakistani airspace when a male passenger fell seriously ill, according to sources from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). According to Geo News, the passenger was a 55-year-old Indian man. "The pilot of the Indian airlines contacted the air traffic control at the Karachi airport after the passenger did not get better even after he was given oxygen," the source said. "The air traffic control allowed the IndiGo aircraft to land



in Karachi on humanitarian grounds where a medical team has now gone into the aircraft to provide emergency treatment to the passenger," he added.

One Nation, One Election Bill to be tabled in Lok Sabha on Monday

GNS News Agency, Dec 14

New Delhi: Four days after approval by the Union Cabinet, the Bills to enable simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha as well as State and Union Territory Assemblies will be introduced in the Lower House on Monday. The Bills will be introduced by Union Minister for Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal. The Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the 'One Nation, One Election' reform on Thursday. Meghwal will be presenting two Bills in the Lok Sabha — the Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill as well as the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill.

According to the Centre, this legislation will not only streamline the electoral process, but will also foster greater efficiency, and reduce the financial and administrative burden associated with conducting multiple elections at different times. The High-Level Committee on Simultaneous Elections headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind had recommended holding concurrent elections for the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies followed by synchronised local body polls within 100 days. However, critics have argued that implementing synchronised elections could pose logistical and constitutional challenges. The AAP, the Congress, Samajwadi Party and Trinamool Congress among others have raised concerns about the impact of simultaneous polls on regional autonomy and fairness. "This is a controversial issue. Ours is a federal structure in which it is not possible to implement the 'One Nation, One Election' system. The Opposition has not been taken into confidence



on the issue. All stakeholders must be taken into confidence before taking such a big decision," a Congress leader said. Opposition leaders highlight potential difficulties in dissolving Assemblies mid-way or addressing situations where a State or the Union government falls before completing its tenure. Proponents of the Bill on the other hand argue that it will usher in a new era of stability and continuity in policymaking, as governments will no longer have to operate in a perpetual election mode. NDA partners including JD-U and the LJP have voiced strong support for the Bills highlighting the potential to reduce costs and ensure policy continuity. The government has clarified that the two proposed legislations provide for 'mid-term' polls for Parliament or a State Assembly in case a government falls but it will only be for the 'unexpired' portion of the five-year fixed term.

Arvind Kejriwal writes to Amit Shah for meeting to discuss law and order in Delhi



GNS News Agency, Dec 14

Former Delhi Chief Minister and AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal has written a letter to Union Home Minister Amit Shah requesting a meeting to discuss concerns regarding law and order in Delhi. The AAP convener has raised concerns and pointed out that despite Delhi's law and order being under the central government's control, the city is increasingly being recognized as the "crime capital" across the country India and abroad. He cited worrying statistics, including Delhi's top ranking in crimes against women and murder cases among 19 major metro cities in India. Additionally, Mr. Kejriwal noted the rise in extortion gangs, bomb threats at airports and schools, and a significant 350% increase in drug-related crimes, all of which have contributed to growing security concerns among residents. In a letter to Home Minister Amit Shah, Mr. Kejriwal wrote, "Delhi's law and order is under the Central Government, but Delhi is now being known as the capital of crime." "Delhi ranks number one in crimes against women among 19 metro cities of India, Delhi ranks number one in murder cases and extortion gangs are active across the city," said Mr. Kejriwal. He further said that Delhi is now being recognized as the crime capital in the country and abroad. Earlier this week, Mr. Kejriwal

attacked Home Minister Amit Shah and said that the Bharatiya Janata Party is no longer able to handle the law and order situation in the national capital. "Amit Shah ji has ruined Delhi. He has turned Delhi into a jungle raj. People are living a life of terror everywhere. BJP is no longer able to handle the law and order situation in Delhi. The people of Delhi will have to unite and raise their voices," Arvind Kejriwal posted on X.

Heavy rain continues to lash Tamil Nadu, orange alert for three districts

GNS News Agency, Dec 14

Chennai: The Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC) has issued an orange alert for Tenkasi, Thoothukudi, and Tirunelveli districts of Tamil Nadu for Saturday. A yellow alert has also been issued for 11 other districts in the State.

On Saturday, Chennai city and its suburbs are expected to receive light rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning in some areas. The skies may remain partly cloudy, with maximum and minimum temperatures forecasted at 30-31 degrees Celsius and 24-25 degrees Celsius, respectively. The coastal and delta regions of Tamil Nadu are likely to experience heavy rains starting December 16. The RMC has also forecast the formation of another low-pressure area in two days, which could trigger intense rainfall. S Balachandran, Additional Director-General of Meteorology, Chennai, noted that the active Northeast Monsoon has been influencing the formation of back-to-back weather systems, calling for studies and better disaster management preparedness.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

World chess champ

IT'S been Gukesh Dommaraju's year. In September, he led the Indian team to a historic gold medal at the biennial Chess Olympiad. Now, the 18-year-old prodigy from Chennai has fulfilled a childhood dream by becoming the youngest world champion in chess history. He is the first Indian to hold the title after Vishwanathan Anand. Twists and turns marked the 14 games in Singapore. Gukesh and China's Ding Liren, the reigning champ, were tied with two wins each before the final game. Just when a draw seemed imminent, setting the stage for high-speed games to break the tie, Ding committed a dramatic blunder. He was gracious in defeat, marking the end of the three-week match that kept fans riveted across the globe. Former world champions Magnus Carlsen and Vladimir Kramnik may have criticised the quality of play, but in the larger scheme of things, it's the game of chess that won.

Gukesh's victory signals a generational shift in the chess world. Yet, the new champion does not harbour any illusions. He remains outside the world's top three by rating, and is not even the highest-rated Indian. That spot goes to 21-year-old Arjun Erigaisi. In his post-match press conference, Gukesh acknowledged that 'becoming the world champion doesn't mean that I'm the best player in the world, there's obviously Magnus.' The 34-year-old Norwegian, who is regarded as possibly the greatest chess player of all time, said Gukesh has shown the potential to establish himself as the 'number two player in the world, who knows, maybe the number one'.

The surging popularity of chess as a spectator sport could ignite a new wave of enthusiasm. Gukesh's achievement also cements India's growing influence in the chess world. What's needed is more government and private support to nurture a robust ecosystem.

How bloodied suitcase at railway station led police to unravel revenge murder of Mumbai man with speech and hearing impairment

GNS News Agency, Dec 14

On the night of August 4, Railway Police Constable Santosh Kumar Yadav was on patrolling duty at platform number 11 of the Dadar railway station when he noticed a man struggling to push a red trolley bag. Yadav approached the man to offer assistance but found the bag too difficult to move. Sensing something was amiss, he looked closely and spotted blood seeping from the suitcase. At that moment, the police unknowingly uncovered a murder: that of a 40-year-old man in a small apartment in Mumbai's Pydhonie area earlier in the day. The police immediately detained the man with the suitcase, identified as Jay Chawda, but were confronted with a new challenge: Chawda could not communicate with them, as he had hearing and speech impairment.

The railway police prompted their teams to search for someone who could communicate in sign language. Word of the need for a sign language specialist began to spread in the night and a Mumbai police constable, who was on bandobast duty, volunteered to help. His son also had a hearing and speech impairment, making him fluent in sign language. The constable's son communicated with Chawda at the Government Railway Police (GRP) office in Dadar, where the mystery began to unravel. Mumbai Yadav approached the man to offer assistance but found the bag too difficult to move. Sensing something was amiss, he looked closely and spotted blood seeping from the suitcase.

"Chawda used sign language to explain the situation to the constable's son. The son then communicated the information to his father, who passed it on to us. We learned that the murder took place in Chawda's apartment at Chatriwala Mansion on Kika Street in Pydhonie and that another person had fled the scene," said a GRP officer. The police later found that the victim, identified as Arshad Ali Sadiq Ali Shaikh, also had hearing and speech impairment. The Dadar GRP registered a murder case against Chawda and handed over the investigation to the Pydhonie police station, where Inspector Nitin Pagar was assigned to crack the case. During the course of the inquiry, a second accused, Shivjeet Singh, was identified and arrested the next day from his house in Ulhasnagar.

Murder streamed to fellow conspirator in Belgium Soon after the two accused were arrested, several people from a community of hearing- and speech-impaired people visited the police station and showed a few videos that had become viral within their chat groups. "At the time of the murder, Chawda had allegedly video-called a man based in Belgium, Jagpal Preet Kamal Singh, and showed him the killing. In the video, it was clearly seen that Shivjeet was brutally assaulting Shaikh inside a room, while Chawda indicated to Jagpal that they were murdering him," said a police officer.

The police later learned that Jagpal had screen-recorded the video call and forwarded it to others in the community. As Chawda kept misleading his interrogators, the Pydhonie police reviewed his call history. It came to light that he had made a video call to Shaikh's wife Ruksana on the night of August 4. It was later revealed that she allegedly was in an extramarital relationship with Chawda. As her role was identified, she was arrested later that week. Our teams subsequently learned that Jagpal was the mastermind of the crime, as all the people involved in the case have hearing and speech impairment and belong to a close-knit community in which Jagpal has a huge following. Shaikh suddenly gained popularity within the community, and it sparked jealousy in Jagpal, who then devised a plan to eliminate him," said an officer. The police said Jagpal then communicated with Chawda, who further colluded with Shivjeet and called Shaikh to Chawda's room in Pydhonie on the day of the murder. Chawda got a red trolley bag during the day and also brought liquor. "He then served alcohol to both Shaikh and Shivjeet. Later, Chawda and Shivjeet brutally assaulted Shaikh, who died from multiple injuries. The duo wrapped his body in the bag, and Shivjeet left for his house in Ulhasnagar," said an officer. The police said Chawda had planned to dispose of the body by throwing it onto the tracks of a long-distance train. He initially went to the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) railway station in a taxi, but fearing that he would be caught due to the additional security there, he then went to Dadar railway station. The police said Chawda was about to board the Tutar Express when the constable intervened to help and was caught.

Parents filing fake child sexual abuse cases to settle scores, flags Maharashtra child rights body



GNS News Agency, Dec 14

Earlier this week, the MSCPCR heard 35 cases related to the POCSO Act and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act concerning complaints received under the POCSO Act. Earlier this week, the MSCPCR heard 35 cases related to the POCSO Act and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act concerning complaints received under the POCSO Act. Pointing out that nearly 30 per cent of the complaints they receive alleging lack of police action in child abuse cases were false, Maharashtra State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (MSCPCR) chief Susieben Shah said on Wednesday that she would write to the law and judiciary department and seek action against those who use children as pawns to settle scores. "For example, in

one case, one of the parents going through a divorce gave a complaint that their child was being inappropriately touched by the other and hence custody should not be given to that person. The allegation was found to be false. I will be writing to the law and judiciary department recommending action against those giving false complaints," Shah told The Indian Express.

In child sexual abuse cases, the police register offences under the Protection Of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. The complainant has to approach the local police where an FIR is registered. In cases where the complaint is not taken or the complainant is unhappy, he or she can approach the MSCPCR. Earlier this week, the MSCPCR heard 35 cases related to the POCSO Act and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act concerning complaints received under the POCSO Act. Shah said that during the hearing it was revealed that many of the complainants have filed false complaints with mala fide intention. "One has to be careful in such cases as generally, it takes a lot for families to come forward and give complaints in cases of sexual harassment. This should not prevent genuine cases from coming out," an activist who did not want to be named cautioned. In 2022, former Mumbai police commissioner Sanjay Pandey had raised a similar concern about the PoCSO Act being misused and had issued a circular saying prior approval of the zonal deputy commissioner of police was needed before registering an offence under the Act. However, the circular was withdrawn after criticism from various quarters.

Bombay HC grants bail to accused, says 'has already suffered incarceration' for over 12 years



GNS News Agency, Dec 14

arun tikku murder Vijay Palande, one of the accused in the case along with Dhananjay Shinde, Manoj Gajkosh were produced in the Andheri court killing of Delhi-based businessman Arunkumar Tikku. The Bombay High Court Wednesday granted bail to an accused booked for the murder of Delhi-based businessman Arunkumar Tikku, the father of a Bollywood actor, in the Oshiwara suburb of Mumbai in 2012, saying he has been in jail for nearly 13 years with

the trial still underway. Dhananjay Shinde, who was arrested along with three others, was granted bail. Shinde sought bail through his lawyers Prashant Pandey and Pranay Saraf on grounds of long incarceration and pending trial. He also sought bail on grounds of parity, citing the bail granted to another accused, Manoj Gajkosh, by the Bombay High Court in 2022. "The record shows that the applicant was arrested as far back as April 10, 2012, thereby demonstrating that the applicant has already suffered incarceration for more than 12 years and 8 months. The trial being completed at the earliest does not appear to be possible, considering the fact that the prosecution intends to examine 9 further witnesses," Justice Manish Pitale said. The murder of Arunkumar Tikku came to light on April 8, 2012, after a resident of a 25-storey high-rise in Oshiwara saw him banging on the window before being pulled in by another man. The police later found Tikku's body in the flat's bathroom. The police arrested Shinde and co-accused Gajkosh on charges of murder. They later arrested the main accused Vijay Palande, claiming he wanted to usurp the property belonging to Tikku after murdering him. They also said the accused conspired to kill his son Anuj Tikku, who appeared in films like Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi and No One Killed Jessica.

Didn't get support from Bengal police for Jan Sunwai event: NCW

GNS News Agency, Dec 14

Vijaya Kishore Rahatkar, new NCW chief, NCW chief appointment, Rekha Sharma, BJP Mahila Morcha, Indian express news According to Archana Majumdar, a member of the NCW, the Jan Sunwai aims to address women's grievances at grassroots levels. (

The National Commission for Women alleged that the Kolkata Police and West Bengal police did not "cooperate" with the NCW for "Jan Sunwai" meetings for women from December 11 to December 13. According to Archana Majumdar, a member of the NCW, the Jan Sunwai aims to address women's grievances at grassroots levels. The hearing aims to "resolve" pending cases related to women's issues and provide immediate solutions wherever possible, she said. "At the 11th hour, we got an intimation from a senior Kolkata Police officer, but by then we had made all the necessary arrangements and informed the police that changing the venue would no longer be possible," Majumdar told. Majumdar had earlier taken to social media to claim that the police administration initially didn't support them. "This lack of support is deeply disappointing. This initiative is a vital step toward justice and protecting women's rights. We urge @MamataOfficial to support this important initiative," she had posted on X on Tuesday. She told The Indian



Express, "Initially, the Jan Sunwai was to be held in Lalbazar. We had issued letters for permission to all departments... After waiting we decided to make the necessary arrangements on our own and thus selected the National Library." Officials of West Bengal police and the Kolkata police commissionerate declined to comment. Former Chairman of NCW Rekha Sharma also told, "They (the police) in West Bengal never cooperated in our time as well. I could never hold a Jan Sunwai in West Bengal in my time. You can't do any welfare even if you want to as the Chief Minister of West Bengal is against the welfare of women."

Marginalised women farmers of Maharashtra to meet in Pune to discuss experiences on climate resilient farming

Amid stir, subsidy to Punjab farmers, MSP bill in focus The women who are part of the farming initiative, which was started during Covid, belong to areas that are rainfed and affected by climate variability in multiple ways. Around 80 women, including widows of Maharashtra farmers who died by suicide, sugarcane field migrants, marginalised farmers and those from the Adivasi community, will meet at a convention in Pune this month to share their experiences on agroecology farming method that does not use chemical fertilisers, weedicides or pesticides. Soppecom and Makaam, who have been working on climate resilient farming, are hosting the meet

at Navi Peth in Pune on December 15 and 16 to address agrarian distress and to ensure food and nutrition security for the women. According to Seema Kulkarni, senior fellow of Soppecom and national facilitation team member of Makaam, agroecology is a model that is fast gaining recognition as it has the potential to transform the social and economic dimensions in agriculture. The women who are part of the farming initiative, which was started during Covid, belong to areas that are rainfed and affected by climate variability in multiple ways. This is the region of cotton, soybean and toor fields. "The activity of empowering the women to make a transition from chemical-intensive agriculture to mixed farming, which uses no chemicals or external inputs, has been attempted since Covid, a time when the public distribution system was not very well streamlined and there was a crisis in the movement of food and other essentials," says Kulkarni. Agroecology focuses on

food and nutrition security that is appropriate to the local cultures and ecologies and the health of the ecosystem rather than productivity and profits.

Agroecology is not just a set of alternate practices and agricultural inputs that increases the sustainability of the environment but rather a movement that questions the power dynamics in the present food regime or the corporate and industrialised form of agriculture, she says. As part of the initiative, agriculture experts interacted with the women by asking them to grow food for themselves in their small plots of land, which measure between half-acre and three acres. They started with almost 35 different crops, such as cereals, pulses, vegetables and various root crops, but balanced with cotton, soybean, toor and other cash crops. Significantly, they did not use hybrid or GM varieties but local, improved varieties of seeds that were sourced from farmer networks. The women follow a scientific sowing of interdependent crop mix, organically increasing the productivity and quality of the soil and using techniques of building populations of insects, among others. "If we are looking to address the climate events and agrarian crisis in these areas, which are hitting small and marginal farmers, particularly women, in a disproportionate way, this kind of model shows potential. We are now in the fourth year," says Kulkarni. The convention, being held for the second year, is meant to review the work and give a platform to farmers to share their challenges of crop growing, animal attacks and climate events. "In that larger context, how do we improve and adapt our models and what are the plans for next year?"

Murder convict escapes from Pune's Yerawada open jail, second incident this year



GNS News Agency, Dec 14

A convict in a murder case escaped from the open jail in Yerawada Central Prison in Pune on Wednesday, the police said. The police said Anil Meghdas Patoniya, 35, a native of Titwala in Thane district, was reported missing during the attendance conducted by the prison staff on Wednesday afternoon. Patoniya was convicted in a 2016 murder case and was awarded life sentence in December last year. Initially lodged in Nashik jail, he was shifted to the Yerawada Central Prison in June this year. Due to good behaviour, he was later shifted to the open jail, said an officer. Senior prison officer Rajendra Marale lodged a separate first information report (FIR) against Patoniya at Yerawada police station, as per Section 262 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), for jailbreak. A police team under Assistant Police Inspector Vishal Takale has launched a search for the accused. In August this year, another murder case convict Raju Dusane, 43, had escaped from the open jail in Yerawada. He was nabbed within three days, the police said.

Scientist's minor son confesses to killing his mother after initially misleading the probe



GNS News Agency, Dec 14

A scientist's minor son has allegedly confessed to killing his mother at their home here, days after he misled his father and police, claiming she died of an accidental fall, officials said. Aarti Verma died after her son, a class 11 student, pushed her and her head crashed against a wall on December 3, police said. The revelation came to light during a detailed investigation. Superintendent of Police (North) Jitendra Kumar Srivastava said. "After two hours of questioning, the teenager admitted that he pushed his mother during an argument, leading to a fatal head injury," he said.

When Aarti's husband Ram Milan, an assistant scientist at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre in Chennai, found her phone switched off for two days, he sent his sister-in-law to check the house on December 7. The house was locked from outside. On returning to Gorakhpur the following evening, Milan found his wife's body on the floor, police said. Their son, found near a Shiva temple, initially told police and his father that his mother died after a fall. He claimed he locked the house from the outside in panic and wandered aimlessly for four days, police said. However, the post-mortem report contradicted his account, they said.

Further investigation raised suspicions as bloodstains were found at two different spots, indicating the body was dragged. CCTV footage confirmed that no outsider had entered the house, as per police. Police allegedly recovered large amounts of cash in denominations of Rs 500, Rs 200, and Rs 100 from the boy's room, they said. "During interrogation, the boy confessed on Tuesday evening that on the morning of December 3, his mother asked him to go to school. When he refused, a dispute over money ensued, and his mother threw cash at him in frustration," Srivastava said. "In a fit of rage, he pushed her, causing the fatal injury," he added. The teenager has been taken apprehended, police added.

Chandigarh shivers at 4.7°C, IMD issues yellow alert for cold wave until December 15



GNS News Agency, Dec 14

Chandigarh recorded this season's coldest night with temperature plummeting to 4.7 degrees Celsius on the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday. The minimum temperature saw a departure of 4.7 degrees below the normal. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a yellow alert for cold wave in Chandigarh until December 15. A cold wave condition occurs when the minimum temperature falls below 10 degrees and is between 4.5 degrees and 6.4 degrees below the normal. According to the IMD, the persisting cold wave that has hit the region will cause a further dip in temperature in the next two to three days. Daytime temperatures in Chandigarh have also decreased. On Wednesday, the maximum temperature was 23.1 degrees Celsius, 1.8 degrees below normal. In Punjab, the lowest temperature recorded was 3 degrees Celsius in Faridkot, while Hisar in Haryana recorded a temperature of 1.6 degrees Celsius, the lowest in the state.

'Don't invite children on stage or sing Patiala Peg, Theke, Case': Advisory to Diljit Dosanjh for Chandigarh concert



GNS News Agency, Dec 14

CCPCR has directed the organisers of the Diljit Dosanjh event to ensure that alcohol is not served to attendees below 25 years of age. (Express File Photo)CCPCR has directed the organisers of the Diljit Dosanjh event to ensure that alcohol is not served to attendees below 25 years of age. The Chandigarh Commission for Protection of Child Rights (CCPCR) has urged singer Diljit Dosanjh not to invite children on stage during his upcoming concert. The stage is set for the event of the year — Diljit Dosanjh's much-anticipated and already sold-out show

in Chandigarh on December 14. Fans of all ages are eagerly awaiting the music sensation's performance at the Sector 34 Parade Ground as part of his 'Dil-Luminati India Tour 2024.' As excitement builds, Shipra Bansal, chairperson of CCPCR, has issued an advisory to the organisers and Dosanjh in response to a representation filed by Panditrao Dharenar, a sociology professor at the Post Graduate Government College, Sector 46.

The advisory requests that Dosanjh refrain from performing songs like Patiala Peg, 5 Taara, Theke, and Case at the concert. CCPCR states that such songs could negatively influence children of impressionable age. The advisory also highlights that children should not be invited on stage during the performance, as the peak sound pressure levels — reportedly above 120 decibels — are harmful to young listeners. Additionally, CCPCR has directed the organisers to ensure that alcohol is not served to attendees below 25 years of age, as this would violate provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act and other laws. In November, Panditrao had filed a similar representation in Telangana, following which the District Child Welfare Officer issued a notice advising against inviting children on stage and singing songs promoting alcohol, drugs, or violence.

10 children rushed to hospital after govt-administered iron pills lead to side effects in Gujarat

GNS News Agency, Dec 14

Officials of the district Education department said iron pills are distributed to students every Wednesday as part of a government campaign to eradicate anaemia. (Representational Image)Officials of the district Education department said iron pills are distributed to students every Wednesday as part of a government campaign to eradicate anaemia. Ten children of a government primary school in the Padedi Ador village of Santrampur taluka of Mahisagar district were hospitalised on Wednesday due to suspected side effects of iron pills administered to them by the district health department, officials said. Officials of the district Education department told The Indian Express that iron pills are distributed to students every Wednesday as part of a government campaign to eradicate anaemia. Chief District Health Officer (CDHO) Dr CR Patel said, "The side-effect of iron pills is common and out of 40 children, ten had shown symptoms. They were treated and discharged."

"(The children) were rushed to the Santrampur state hospital after they complained of heartburn, stomach pain, and vomiting following the consumption of iron pills. It was a routine health programme and the medical officers have told us that it is a common side effect. There is nothing to worry about. There have been reports that the tongues of



the children had turned blue but that is a common occurrence after consuming iron pills. No one was in danger," an official of the Education department said. Meanwhile, Dr Jignesh Bhagora of the Santrampur state hospital said that the children who were brought to the hospital had shown "usual symptoms" of side effects of iron pills. "We placed the children under observation even though none of them were in danger. Since iron pills are kept in the mouth for some time before swallowing, they leave behind a black tinge. It is not a sign of danger. Stomach ache and nausea or vomiting are also common side effects. The children were discharged on Wednesday evening," Bhagora said.

What is CSAT? Why is there a demand to make it a qualifying paper for the Punjab Civil Services exam?



GNS News Agency, Dec 14

The Punjab Congress has asked Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann to make the Civil Services Aptitude Test (CSAT) a qualifying paper for the Punjab Civil Services (PCS) examination to ensure a fair and transparent recruitment process. A look at what the CSAT is and why PCS aspirants do not want the test scores to be counted for final merit. The CSAT is part of the PCS examination conducted by the Punjab Public Service Commission (PPSC). The examination is divided into two phases: the preliminary examination and the main examination. The preliminary exam includes two sections: General Studies and CSAT. The CSAT in Punjab is designed as an aptitude test to assess candidates' analytical skills, logical reasoning, and comprehension abilities. It is a screening test meant to shortlist candidates for the main examination.

What has the Congress demanded?

Punjab Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa has written to Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann saying that the CSAT should be a qualifying paper for the PCS examination rather than one which is counted for final merit. The Congress has alleged that any delay in announcing this decision will only strengthen the perception that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government is siding with "unethical lobbies" over the aspirations of Punjab's youth. Saying that he was writing on behalf of thousands of hardworking aspirants preparing for the PCS exam, Bajwa said the CSAT should be a qualifying paper along the lines of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). "It is disheartening to note that despite strong recommendations from the government-constituted committee and even PPSC itself, this legitimate demand continues to be ignored. During your party's time in Opposition, it vocally supported this very demand, acknowledging its fairness and the undue hardship caused to students under the current system. Now that you are in a position to act decisively, we urge you to remain consistent in your principles and fulfil the promises made to these aspirants," wrote Bajwa.

What is the background of the CSAT controversy?

The CSAT was made mandatory in the PCS's preliminary stage with general studies after the Union Public Service Commission introduced it in the civic services examination in 2011. The UPSC made it a qualifying paper in 2015 on the demand of students, especially those from a humanities background. But Punjab is yet to follow suit. In 2016, the PPSC wrote to the Punjab government to make CSAT only a qualifying paper for the PCS examination. Making it a qualifying exam would mean that CSAT marks will not be added to the marks scored by candidates in the preliminary stage and they will just have to score a minimum of 33 per cent marks in it.

What are students in Punjab demanding?

Students in Punjab and various organisations like The Campaign for Language Equality and Rights have demanded that the marks in the CSAT paper should not be

counted to calculate merit. Neighbouring states like Himachal Pradesh and Haryana and others like Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Bihar have already made the CSAT a qualifying paper. Student bodies say that the CSAT being counted for final merit leads to discrimination against the poor and rural students more proficient in Punjabi or Hindi. Students have also alleged that vested interests, particularly the coaching-centre mafia, are lobbying aggressively to sabotage this reform, fearing a decline in their profit if merit prevails.

What have previous governments held?

The demand to make CSAT a qualifying paper was first raised during the Shiromani Akali Dal-BJP regime but the government did not decide on it. The Congress government in 2017 also disregarded the recommendations of the PPSC and the demands of the student bodies and the main Opposition party, AAP. With AAP in power, there are expectations that when the PCS exams are held next, the party will be more conducive to the demand as it had supported the same when in Opposition. Ironically, the Congress, which did not implement it during its regime from 2017 to 2022, is now demanding that it be implemented.

Arvind Kejriwal denies alliance with Congress; Says AAP will fight alone

GNS News Agency, Dec 14

New Delhi: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) convenor and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Wednesday that his party will go solo in the upcoming Assembly elections in the national capital and there was no possibility of any alliance with the Congress. Setting aside the murmurs of an alliance between Congress and the AAP, Kejriwal posted on X that his party will be fighting the elections on its own. "Aam Aadmi party will be fighting this election on its own strength in Delhi. There is no possibility of any alliance with congress."

For the past some time there were speculations that the two would be joining together to take on the BJP in Delhi. It was said that the Congress and AAP were in the final stages of an agreement for an alliance. But, putting a lid on all the rumours, Kejriwal has made it clear that he does not need the Congress' hand. This is not the first time that Kejriwal has refused to go with the Congress. He had earlier also stated that there would be no alliance with Congress in the Delhi Assembly elections. Congress, too, had announced its decision to contest alone. Devender Yadav, the chief of the Delhi Pradesh Congress has said the party will contest all 70 seats in the national capital. Despite this, speculations had been doing rounds that the two parties would come together. But, in the morning post, Kejriwal has made it clear that there will not be any alliance between the Congress and the AAP. Ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha election, Kejriwal had ruled out a tie-up with the Congress in Punjab and announced that his party would contest all 13 LS seats on its own. The two parties had also failed to reach a seat-sharing arrangement for the Haryana Assembly polls. Kejriwal's AAP has been undertaking an aggressive campaign for the polls which the party is treating as a kind of people's referendum on it. On Tuesday, he announced five guarantees for the city's autorickshaw drivers. These guarantees include a Rs 10 lakh life insurance scheme, Rs 1 lakh assistance for the wedding of a daughter, Rs 2,500 uniform allowance twice a year on Holi and Diwali.

'A human problem': Punjab & Haryana HC appoints 19 local commissioners to report on Gurugram waste management



GNS News Agency, Dec 14

While hearing a petition regarding the garbage problem in Gurugram, the Punjab and Haryana High Court has pulled up the municipal corporation for filing "unnecessary documents and statistics aimed at creating confusion" and appointed 19 local commissioners to submit a report on garbage collection and disposal. The directions were issued by a bench of Justice Vinod S Bhardwaj on November 7 while hearing a petition filed by Pankaj Yadav in 2023 stating that the non-removal of garbage exposed residents to an aggravated risk of multiple diseases.

Although the petition was filed during a strike by sanitation workers, which has since ended, the court had sought a response from the Haryana Government regarding the status of garbage collection and segregation in Gurugram. A reply was submitted by the joint commissioner of the municipal corporation including photographs of garbage clearance from various parts of the city. However, the petitioner countered this by presenting additional photographs alleging that only selective images were provided by the state to mislead the court. When questioned by the court, the corporation filed further affidavits, about which the bench said, "There had been a juggling of statistics given by the respondents only to pat their own back about the purported works undertaken by them towards timely removal of the garbage and solid waste generated in the city through different agencies." The bench "deprecated" the corporation's attempt "to file unnecessary documents and statistics aimed at creating confusion rather than addressing the issue espoused". It also imposed a cost of Rs 50,000 on the municipal corporation, to be deposited with the District Legal Services Authority in Gurugram within six weeks. "In case the said amount is not deposited, the above said amount

shall be deducted from the salary of the Additional Commissioner, Municipal Corporation, Gurugram, and be made good. Compliance of the same shall be filed before this Court on the next date of hearing," the bench said and adjourned the matter to February 17, 2025.

'Verification of claims necessary' The municipal corporation argued that its contractors are doing their work satisfactorily and that garbage was being regularly collected, adding that a penalty had been imposed on an erring contractor and a showcause notice issued regarding the potential cancellation of the contract. The bench, however, found the arguments to be "inherently contradictory," noting that while it was emphasised that garbage was being collected regularly, the corporation admitted that a contractor's work was unsatisfactory and that action had been initiated against him. The bench thus held that verification of the claims made by both the municipal corporation and the petitioner is necessary.

Justice Bhardwaj said the law requires civil bodies to ensure garbage does not remain piled up on streets and that sanitation and hygiene are duly maintained. He said that people have been harmed by stray animals gathering around the scattered garbage. "This Court does not see this petition as adversarial litigation and considers it a human problem. While Gurugram is marketed as a millennium city showcasing the strides in development and growth made by the State of Haryana, it is necessary for State and civil agencies to prepare for the challenges of urbanisation and ensure that the city remains clean," said the bench. As the state counsel submitted details of the areas under municipal limits for which nodal officers had been appointed, the court said the responsibility of overseeing the contractors' work would fall on these officers. The court appointed 19 local commissioners to visit the specified areas and submit a report on garbage collection. "Municipal Corporation shall share the details of its Nodal Officers along with their mobile numbers with the respective Local Commissioner appointed for the area under their control... Local Commissioner shall visit the assigned area on January 2, 2025, and may continue the inspection on January 3, 2025, if it remains unfinished," the court ordered. The local commissioners have to submit their reports to a committee chaired by retired district and sessions judge Inderjit Singh, which will submit a concise report on sanitation conditions in different areas of the city. Advocate Jigyasa Tanwar is a member of the committee.

Elderly man in Mumbai falls prey to digital arrest scam, loses Rs 10 lakh to 'CBI officers'

GNS News Agency, Dec 14

Digital arrest scammers, posing as CBI officers, allegedly duped an 81-year-old man from Santacruz, Mumbai, of Rs 10 lakh, the police said. According to the police, the 'investigation officer' on December 9 made a video call to the elderly person, who had returned to India from Hong Kong only a few weeks ago, and threatened him to transfer money to a given account to evade arrest in a human trafficking case. The police said that the complainant is a retired person and lives with his son in Hong Kong. He returned to Mumbai owing to the extreme cold weather in the foreign country and has since been living alone at his Santacruz house.

The 'CBI officer' told the victim that he has been put under 'house arrest' due to his involvement in human trafficking and money laundering cases, according to the First Information Report (FIR). The fraudster also ensured that the man did not leave his house nor called anyone for help. Under the pretext of investigation, they successfully persuaded him to transfer Rs 10 lakh in a bank account using RTGS, the police said. The elderly man had called back on



the number of the 'CBI officer' after transferring the amount, but the phone was switched off, the man told the police. It was only then he realised that he was swindled. The Santacruz police on Wednesday registered a cyber fraud case under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and Information Technology Act and are trying to trace the accused, said a police officer.

Will increase Mahila Samman Rashi Scheme monthly allowance from Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,100 if AAP returns to power: Arvind Kejriwal



GNS News Agency, Dec 14

With an eye on the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections, Aam Aadmi Party national convenor and former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal Thursday announced that the monthly allowance given to women under the Mahila Samman Rashi scheme would be increased to Rs 2,100 from Rs 1,000 if the AAP returned to power. The Mahila Samman Rashi Scheme, under which the AAP-led Delhi Government announced Rs 1,000 per month in this year's Budget in March, was approved by the Cabinet headed by Chief Minister Atishi on Thursday. Making his poll pitch, Kejriwal said, "Today, I am going to make two big announcements. Both the schemes are for my sisters and mothers. Friends, I promised that I would send Rs 1,000 to every woman in Delhi. I am happy to announce that the Atishi-led cabinet has approved the Mahila Samman Rashi scheme today (Thursday)." "Today, I am implementing the Rs 1,000 scheme but after the elections, I will give Rs 2,100 to all my sisters and mothers in Delhi. If you want to receive this money every month in your account, vote for Kejriwal, Vote for the AAP, and help us win more than 60 seats," announced Kejriwal. Kejriwal said he made this announcement in March and had hoped to implement it by April. "But they put me in jail in a false case. But after my release from jail, I was working on this with Atishi to fulfil my promise," he said. "Election dates will be announced soon in a week or two, so, women may not receive the amount for now but once the polls are over, you will receive the amount every month... my second biggest announcement is that I will increase the amount and make it Rs 2,100," he further said. He added that the registration process for the scheme will begin on Thursday. The AAP chief said the Delhi gov-

ernment will not face any deficit, rather its revenue will flourish by empowering a woman-centred scheme. Attacking the BJP, he said, "People said Kejriwal won't be able to implement this scheme but when Kejriwal makes a promise, he fulfils it... The BJP says, 'Paise kahan se aayenge, sarkar ke pas paise nahi hai (Where's the money? The government does not have the money.)' They said the same thing back in 2014 also, when I announced the electricity subsidy scheme. But I want to tell the BJP, 'Mai jaadugar hoon accounts ka (I can manage accounts well). I know how to bring the money.'"

Further appealing to the women to vote for the AAP, Kejriwal said, "If anyone asks you 'from where will he (Kejriwal) bring the money?' Tell them, 'Kejriwal jadoogar hai, wo denge (Kejriwal is a magician, he will provide the money).' People are saying that the AAP will win only 60 seats or 50 seats. I want to appeal to my sisters and mothers... Each of your votes matters. Vote for us and give us more than 60 seats."

Revolutionary solar-powered light traps saving Siddipet farmers from pesticide use

Siddipet: Solar-powered light traps are proving effective in combating the stem borer menace at the moth stage without using a pesticide. Farmers in the district, who cultivated Yasangi paddy, were struggling to control the stem borer. Farmer Koka Sudhakar Reddy then installed the solar-powered light traps in his six-acre paddy field at Bandarupally village in Thoguta mandal under the guidance of agriculture extension officer T Nagarjuna. During the first night, these lights trapped a good number of stem borer moths. The traps would also help to assess the intensity of the stem borer presence in the field. Speaking to Telangana Today, Nagarjuna said the farmers could also use solar-powered traps to combat pal army worms in maize and other pests in all agriculture and horticulture fields. Since each moth of stem borer can lay 200 to 300 eggs in its lifetime, the AEO said the light traps would be useful in restricting the impact

Rs 109 crore swindled in 'digital arrest' frauds this year in Karnataka: Minister Parameshwara reveals how much of it is recovered



GNS News Agency, Dec 14

Responding to a question by BJP MLC K Prathap Simha Nayak in Karnataka Legislative Council, Parameshwara said 641 "digital arrest" cases were reported in the state this year. (Representational Image) Responding to a question by BJP MLC K Prathap Simha Nayak in Karnataka Legislative Council, Parameshwara said 641 "digital arrest" cases were reported in the state this year. Karnataka residents have lost Rs 109.01 crore in 2024 to "digital arrest" scams, in which fraudsters impersonate law enforcement officials to deceive people into transferring large sums of money, Home Minister G Parameshwara said on Thursday. Of that amount, law enforcement agencies recovered less than one-tenth, totalling Rs 9.45 crore, he said.

Responding to a question by BJP MLC K Prathap Simha Nayak in Karnataka Legislative Council, Parameshwara said 641 "digital arrest" cases were reported in the state this year and of these, 480—approximately three-fourths—were in Bengaluru city. He said 24 cases were reported in Mysuru and 21 in Mangaluru. He said the Karnataka Police had arrested 27 accused in connection with these cases. However, data shows that none of the accused in "digital arrest" cases registered in Bengaluru has been arrested yet. The minister's written reply said the police had tracked more than 700 social media accounts and groups that trapped the victims and deactivated them. These included 268 Facebook groups, 465 Telegram groups, 15 Instagram accounts, and 61 WhatsApp groups. "In order to prevent such incidents, awareness programmes are being held in schools and colleges to prevent people from falling prey. Moreover, campaigns are being held on social media platforms about the issue," Parameshwara said. What is "digital arrest"? "Digital arrest" scammers typically follow a similar playbook. They make phone or video calls to their targets while impersonating officials from law enforcement agencies like the police or regulatory bodies, such as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). In some cases, they have even posed as judges and staged fake court hearings. These fraudsters then extort money from their targets by creating an atmosphere of fear, using threats of surveillance, arrest, and imprisonment.

Punjab and Haryana HC slams harassment through FIR for matrimonial dispute in Australia

GNS News Agency, Dec 14

Observing a "disturbing trend" of criminal prosecution in matrimonial disputes being initiated in India by foreign nationals, the Punjab and Haryana High Court has ruled that "when matrimonial disputes have been settled by a competent forum abroad, proxy litigation in India cannot be allowed to satisfy personal spite." Justice Harpreet Singh Brar made the remarks while quashing an FIR against two Australian citizens—a man and his mother—registered in 2019 under Sections 498-A (cruelty by husband or his relatives) and 406 (criminal breach of trust) of the IPC at Rupnagar.



Justice Brar noted, "Of late, this Court has observed a disturbing trend where criminal prosecution is initiated in matrimonial disputes in India by foreign nationals who have voluntarily availed citizenship of another country and reside there permanently. In doing so, they submit themselves to the jurisdiction of foreign courts of competent authority." He added, "More often than not, such couples have already obtained a divorce and resolved issues like spousal support and child custody in the courts of their country of residence. Yet, criminal complaints are filed in India merely for harassment. When matrimonial disputes have been settled abroad, proxy litigation in India cannot be permitted to satisfy personal spite." The court condemned such practices, stating, "This unscrupulous and unethical behaviour clogs the already overburdened judicial system with vexatious proceedings. Initiating criminal prosecution to harass relatives in India is an atrocious abuse of the legal process, which cannot go unchecked. Judicial processes must not be misused as instruments of oppression."

Background of the Case The petitioners—a man and his mother—had sought quashing of the FIR filed on a complaint by the man's father-in-law. According to the complaint, the petitioner married the complainant's daughter in Punjab in 2011. The complainant alleged that the petitioner and his family demanded Rs 10 lakh as dowry and harassed the woman, even after she moved to Australia seven months into the marriage. The complainant claimed to have given Rs 9 lakh via cheque and Rs 1 lakh in cash to an uncle of the petitioner. Despite this, he alleged that the woman was expelled from her matrimonial home in 2017 in Australia. Petitioner's Arguments The petitioner's counsel argued that after obtaining Australian citizenship, the petitioner called his wife to Australia, where she was also granted citizenship in February 2016. However, she willingly left the matrimonial home in November 2017, leaving their two daughters behind. The petitioner later discovered that his wife had entered the marriage primarily to obtain Australian citizenship. She subsequently filed for divorce, which was granted in May 2019. The counsel further contended that the couple had mutually settled all their rights and liabilities and released each other from any claims in India or Australia. The wife had also remarried. However, the complainant (woman's father) lodged a police complaint in India in 2018, leading to the FIR in question. Court's Observations The High Court found it "baffling" that the FIR was filed in India while divorce proceedings were underway in Australia, especially when the woman had not pursued any criminal complaints against the petitioners in either country during their eight years of marriage. "All allegations of dowry harassment against the petitioners appear to be omnibus and coloured by malicious intent," the court said while quashing the FIR.

into the marriage. The complainant claimed to have given Rs 9 lakh via cheque and Rs 1 lakh in cash to an uncle of the petitioner. Despite this, he alleged that the woman was expelled from her matrimonial home in 2017 in Australia. Petitioner's Arguments The petitioner's counsel argued that after obtaining Australian citizenship, the petitioner called his wife to Australia, where she was also granted citizenship in February 2016. However, she willingly left the matrimonial home in November 2017, leaving their two daughters behind. The petitioner later discovered that his wife had entered the marriage primarily to obtain Australian citizenship. She subsequently filed for divorce, which was granted in May 2019. The counsel further contended that the couple had mutually settled all their rights and liabilities and released each other from any claims in India or Australia. The wife had also remarried. However, the complainant (woman's father) lodged a police complaint in India in 2018, leading to the FIR in question. Court's Observations The High Court found it "baffling" that the FIR was filed in India while divorce proceedings were underway in Australia, especially when the woman had not pursued any criminal complaints against the petitioners in either country during their eight years of marriage. "All allegations of dowry harassment against the petitioners appear to be omnibus and coloured by malicious intent," the court said while quashing the FIR.

PCMC to reopen unresolved complaints on Smart Sarathi, civic chief warns of strict action for negligence



GNS News Agency, Dec 14

The Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC) has strengthened its Smart Sarathi grievance resolution system by introducing a facility for citizens to reopen complaints if they feel their grievances were closed without resolution, the civic body announced on Thursday. It said it has also brought in a comprehensive feedback mechanism. "Any complaint found closed without resolution will be forcefully reopened through the system by the administration until the grievance is addressed properly. Furthermore, the complainants will receive a feedback call to ensure they are satisfied with the redressal," Municipal Commissioner Shekhar Singh said, expressing concerns over the practice of closing complaints without resolution.

Smart Sarathi, launched as part of PCMC's e-governance initiatives, serves as a centralised platform for lodging grievances, tracking resolutions, and improving citizen engagement. Between November 1 and December 9, PCMC resolved 8,076 complaints through Smart Sarathi. Feedback was collected for 5,349 of these complaints. The results showed that 63 per cent of the complainants were satisfied with the resolution, while 8 per cent expressed dissatisfaction. Among those dissatisfied, 2 per cent reported that their complaints were closed without any action taken. According to officials, 29 per cent of the complainants did not respond to the feedback request. Singh also emphasised the importance of departmental accountability, stating, "The feedback mechanism under Smart Sarathi is a crucial step towards making governance more transparent and responsive. Heads of departments must ensure timely and effective resolution of complaints. Strict action, including suspension and initiation of departmental inquiries, will be taken against those responsible for such lapses. Accountability is non-negotiable, and citizens' concerns must be prioritised."

The PCMC has also initiated broader pattern analysis of complaints to identify root causes and systemic issues in specific areas. By analysing why certain areas receive more complaints, the corporation aims to implement proactive, large-scale solutions rather than addressing issues on a case-by-case basis. Officials said this data-driven approach will help address recurring problems and improve overall service delivery. The administration said non-performance will attract strict action, including suspension and departmental inquiries against erring officials.

People fear taking unknown calls as online scams increase

Hyderabad: Anjali, on a busy afternoon received a call which claimed to be from a bank agent who had been trying to contact her to get her address details for delivering 'bank documents'. The purported agent then shared a number with Anjali, asking her to contact and coordinate with a certain 'delivery agent' for getting the documents delivered. Upon dialling the said delivery person, however, Anjali lost access to her SMS inbox, phone book, and emails. It was a case of identity theft and phone hacking! Unfortunately Anjali's wasn't a one-off case. It is one among thousands where people have fallen prey to online scams.

In recent months, there has been an alarming surge in the number of scam calls targeting citizens. Those who are gullible become victims of online frauds and end up losing everything from money to identity. These online scams involve a variety of methods to deceive people into revealing sensitive information. These fraudsters pretend to call from banks, government agencies or from popular companies and lure people into disclosing personal details. The fear of online scams have forced public to ignore any phone calls coming from unknown numbers, especially from a foreign numbers. Interestingly, most of the scam calls start from the 6 or 8 phone number series. The seriousness behind such online scams rose, when one such disturbing trend known as the 'digital arrest' became very prevalent in India. The scam where fraudsters impersonate law enforcement officials and place individuals under 'digital house arrest' to extort money rose alarmingly, compelling the government to create awareness among the public.

Love in uniform: trials and triumphs of armed forces' first couple with 3-star rank



GNS News Agency, Dec 14

Spending time together in a long-distance relationship often feels special, but sustaining a 36-year marriage while being apart for 24 years due to separate postings in the armed forces is truly extraordinary. As the first couple in the armed forces to achieve the three-star rank, Lt Gen (ret) Madhuri Kanitkar and Lt Gen (ret) Rajeev Kanitkar will be part of a unique session, "Balancing Bonds: A Journey of Growing Together," at the 12th Pune International Literary Festival (PILF) this weekend. In an age where maintaining marriages can be challenging, their journey of togetherness serves as an inspiring example. The session on December 15 will also feature highlights from their upcoming book, Growing Together Without Growing Apart. The couple will be in conversation with Air Commodore (ret) Nitin Sathe, a veteran of the Indian Air Force.

Kanitkar retired as deputy chief integrated defence staff before taking up her new job as vice-chancellor of Maharashtra University of Health Sciences, Nashik. She was the third woman in the country and the first paediatrician from the armed forces to wear the rank of lieutenant general. Lt Gen Rajeev Kanitkar, an armoured corps officer, retired as the Army's quartermaster general in 2017. Kanitkar recalls a visit by Kiran Bedi, the first woman IPS officer in the country, to MUHS for its silver jubilee. "She encouraged us to write a book. But it was Rajeev who decided to write my biography. Since our lives are so intertwined, we agreed on a collaborative approach. He would write the chapters, and I would provide a short summary at the end of each one, sharing my perspective," says Kanitkar. She adds with a smile, "After all, as a wife, I'm expected to have the last word." As a top student at BJ Medical College, it wasn't hard for Kanitkar to convince her father to let her join the Armed Forces Medical College, especially after she met a "charming Second Lieutenant Rajeev" at a cousin's wedding, sparking her enthusiasm for a new chapter in life.

However, some dreams went unfulfilled when the AFMC topper couldn't return to her alma mater for postgraduate studies.

"Rajeev initially wrote about some of the tough situations I faced in the organisation alone, with a feeling of angst and unfairness," Kanitkar explains. "But we discussed that these were organisational decisions by authorities and not to be unhappy, as it was these that made us tougher. Those were just the policies back then; for example, as a short service commission officer, I lost my seniority." Kanitkar also remembers the negative vibes she felt from some on her return to the AFMC as head of the paediatric department, as well as the challenges she faced when nominated to the Prime Minister's Science, Technology and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC) and the Board of Governors for the erstwhile Medical Council of India. "However, now the book presents the events in a neutral and factual manner," Kanitkar says. Written from the husband's perspective, the book is divided into six parts. "The aim is also to inspire the younger generation of ambitious, courageous women who face unique challenges today. It's important to understand that life can't always be 'my way or the highway'. We need to adjust and support each other, becoming each other's strengths. Rajeev never once asked me to give up my work and join him at his postings. He did not think twice before sacrificing his career path to support me," she recalls. Kanitkar also delayed her super-specialisation for their children. Parenting in uniform wasn't easy, and leadership in the armed forces is not just about a position. "It is a mindset. Rajeev and I climbed the ladder of higher leadership, focusing on growing together without growing apart," Kanitkar says. She also narrates a humorous incident when the armed forces ensured that she received her own card on her wedding anniversary. "I was in Pathankot, and Rajeev was in Hisar. We had numbered addresses—Rajeev's being 17 H c/o 56 APO, and mine 167 MH c/o 56 APO. I remember buying a fancy card for our 16th anniversary but didn't realise the envelope's back and front looked identical. The sender's name, Lt Col M Kanitkar, and address were on the back, while the recipient's name, Lt Col R Kanitkar, was on the front. Imagine my surprise when I received what I thought was a card from Rajeev, only to discover it was my own!" she laughs. The couple cherishes this amusing memory, with Kanitkar often joking that the Army ensured she received the card on time because Rajeev would never have remembered to send it otherwise. "Moments like these add so much depth to our relationship," she reflects. "While ambition is important, it's equally vital to recognise when to pause, adjust, and lean on your support network."

Reinstate HoDs, expunge show-cause notices to 85 faculty members: IIT teachers' body to approach institution admin, chairman

GNS News Agency, Dec 14

The issue started in September this year with a letter by IITTA to Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, alleging nepotism and irregularities at IIT Kharagpur. (File Photo) The issue started in September this year with a letter by IITTA to Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, alleging nepotism and irregularities at IIT Kharagpur. (File Photo) With a plea to "expunge" the show-cause notices issued to 85 faculty members from their personal files and reinstate the recently removed Head of Departments, the IITTA (IIT Kharagpur Teachers Association) has decided to approach the administration and chairman of the Board of Directors of IIT Kharagpur. The decision was taken after an Extraordinary General Body meeting of the IITTA on Wednesday evening. "Each faculty member will approach the registrar to confirm whether the show-cause letters have been officially recorded in the personal files of the faculty members. If the letters are recorded, a formal request will be made to expunge them from the records. A formal letter will be drafted by the IITTA to the Registrar, expressing the request for expunging the show cause notices to 85 faculty members and answers thereof, as well as stressing the importance of maintaining the integrity of faculty records," said a source.

"The IITTA will also write a letter to the BOG chairman (T V Narendran) elaborating on the situation and asking him to take an active role in normalising it. He will be requested to expunge the show-cause notices to prevent any long-term damage to their professional standing (and) to restore the administrative positions of all affected faculty members, including the Heads of Departments," added the source. The issue started in September this year with a letter by IITTA



to Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, alleging nepotism and irregularities at IIT Kharagpur.

This prompted show-cause letters from authorities to the four office bearers of IITTA who signed the letter. The issue snowballed after 85 faculty members (including IITTA office bearers) held an Extraordinary General Body Meeting on November 28 and threatened to go on hunger strike if the decision was not rolled back. Soon after, all 85 faculty were show-caused by the institute. Three HoDs (mathematics department, artificial intelligence, and chairperson of the Central Research facility, Life Science division) were removed from their positions. Later, 18 professors sent apology letters to the authorities and 62 faculties responded to the show cause after which authorities said on December 7 that "no further action" would be taken against them. "Further, they are advised to refrain from any activity which is violative of the statute and/or service rules of the institute or such other similar acts as may be construed as violative of the above in the future," authorities had said.

On last day for filing nominations, BJP says candidates detained, heckled

GNS News Agency, Dec 14

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which is hoping to put on a good show in the upcoming municipal corporation elections in Punjab, said on Thursday that four of its candidates were detained by the police and many others were heckled and stopped while they were on their way to file their nominations. "The nomination papers of 15 out of 60 candidates were torn and four candidates were detained by the police. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supporters are beating up our candidates while the police are mute spectators. Our candidate Rishabh Sharma has been admitted to a hospital," said Pritpal Singh Baliawal, chief spokesperson of the Punjab BJP.

The nomination papers of BJP candidates Varun Jindal (Ward No 46) and Sushil Nayyar (Ward No 34) were torn outside the deputy commissioner's office in Patiala, Baliawal added. "In Patiala, the police were trying to prevent BJP candidates from entering the district administrative complex to file their nomination papers," alleged Vineet Joshi, the media in-charge of BJP Punjab. BJP candidates were allegedly targeted at Baghapurana, Dharamkot in Moga, and a few other locations, the leaders said. "Candidates' files are being checked twice, outside the campus and before entering the RO's (returning officer's) office. The queue is long... this is an inordinate delay. When scrutiny of documents has to happen, why check twice outside?... Perhaps to prevent Opposition candidates from filing nomination papers," said Rajnish Dhiman, president, Ludhiana BJP unit. AAP feeling insecure, says BJP

Anil Sarin, general secretary of the state BJP, said that AAP was targeting BJP candidates as they knew "they got lesser votes in the municipal wards in the Lok Sabha



elections." "They are feeling insecure," he added. In the Lok Sabha elections held in June this year, the BJP did well in wards under five municipal corporations in Punjab and the Sangrur Municipal Council. The BJP is hoping to replicate these results in the municipal elections. "During the Lok Sabha polls, in Ludhiana — the biggest municipal corporation in Punjab with 95 municipal wards — the BJP was at the number one slot in 66 wards. In Patiala, out of 60 wards, the BJP got the maximum votes in 49 wards. In Amritsar municipal corporation, 52 out of 85 wards were in the BJP's favour, while in Jalandhar municipal corporation, it was 50 out of 85. In Phagwara, the BJP fared well in 32 out of 50 wards. These are the five municipal corporations that will be going for polls this time and the rest are 44 municipal councils that have semi-urban voters," Sarin added. Among the 44 municipal councils going to polls, Sangrur has 29 wards while Rampura Phul in Bathinda district has 21.

Israel responsible for a third of 54 journalists killed in 2024: Reporters Without Borders



GNS News Agency, Dec 14

Fifty-four journalists were killed worldwide while carrying out their work or because of their profession in 2024, a third of them by the Israeli army, according to an annual report by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) published Tuesday. According to the press freedom NGO, Israeli armed forces were responsible for the deaths of 18 journalists this year — 16 in Gaza and two in Lebanon. "Palestine is the most dangerous country for journalists, recording a higher death toll than any other country over the past five years," RSF said in its annual report, which covers data up to December 1. The organisation has filed four complaints with the International Criminal Court (ICC) for "war crimes committed against journalists by the Israeli army." It said that in total "more than 145" journalists had been killed by the Israeli army in Gaza since the start of the war there in October

2023, with 35 of them working at the time of their deaths, RSF said. It described the number of killings as "an unprecedented bloodbath." IFJ reports 104 deaths in a separate report published Tuesday, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) reported that 104 journalists were killed worldwide in 2024, with more than half of them in Gaza. The figures differ between the IFJ and RSF due to two different methodologies used in calculating the toll. RSF only includes journalists whose deaths have been "proven to be directly related to their professional activity." Israel denies reports Israel denies that it intentionally harms journalists but admits that some have been killed in air strikes on military targets. "We don't accept these figures. We don't believe they are correct," Israeli government spokesman David Mercer told a press conference on Wednesday. After Gaza, the deadliest places for journalists in 2024 were Pakistan with seven deaths, followed by Bangladesh and Mexico with five each. In 2023, the number of journalists killed worldwide stood at 45 in the same January-December period. Journalists arrested as of December 1, there were 550 journalists imprisoned worldwide, compared to 513 last year, according to RSF figures. The three countries with the highest numbers of detained journalists are China (124, including 11 in Hong Kong), Myanmar (61), and Israel (41). Furthermore, 55 journalists are currently being held hostage, including two abducted in 2024. Nearly half — 25 in total — are in the hands of the Islamic State group. In addition, 95 journalists are reported missing, including four new cases reported in 2024.

Pakistan ex-PM Imran Khan and wife indicted in another graft case: reports

GNS News Agency, Dec 14

A Pakistani court indicted imprisoned former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his wife on fresh charges of illegally selling State gifts on Thursday, (December 12, 2024) local broadcaster Geo reported. The indictment was the latest in dozens of cases against the 72-year-old former cricket star, who has been in jail since late last year. Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi have already been granted bail in the case, which is one of a series of state treasury charges known as "Toshakhana". These charges revolve around allegations that Khan and his wife illegally procured and then sold gifts worth more than 140 million rupees (\$501,000) in State possession, which he received during his 2018-22 premiership. They have denied committing an offence. Khan and Bibi were both handed a 14-year sentence on those charges days before a national election earlier this year, following a three-year sentence handed to him in late 2023 in another version of the same case. However, their sentences have been suspended in appeals at the High Court. The gifts included diamond jewellery and seven watches, six of them Rolexes - the most expensive being valued at 85 million rupees (\$305,000). Earlier this month, Khan was also indicted on charges of inciting attacks against the military, a



case stemming from deadly anti-government rallies led by his party last year. Bibi also led a deadly protest march by thousands of supporters in the capital Islamabad on Nov. 25, escalating a face-off with the government and its military backers. Khan has been fighting court cases since he was ousted from power in 2022. He and his party say the cases were made up to keep him out of politics at the behest of the military after he had fallen out with the army's generals. The army denies the accusation.

Don Jr, new rumoured GF strategically waited to push Kimberly Guilfoyle out: Greece move all part of the plan

GNS News Agency, Dec 14

On December 10, President-elect Donald Trump nominated Kimberly Guilfoyle, his son's longtime fiancée, as the US ambassador to Greece. The news hit the headlines right on time as speculations of Donald Trump Jr's new romance with "model, influencer and philanthropist" Bettina Anderson blew up the rumour mill after bubbling up for months. Political sources now believe that the incoming US president's latest move aided his son in pushing the former Fox News personality, who's been a "close friend and ally" to the Trump family "for many years," out of the picture. An insider recently told PEOPLE, "Bettina wants Kim out of the area." This is potentially why "they are trying to send Kim abroad." If the claims hold ground, then the new romantic pair tactically "waited for the election to pass" because they "didn't want the split to get in the way of anything to hurt Donald in the election." The Republican leader was successfully announced the victor after his long re-election campaign, which was wholly focussed on the political debate with his Democratic rivals. Melania and Barron Trump were constant subjects of media focus throughout the campaign. Even though the first instance of Don Jr cheating on Guilfoyle with Anderson reportedly took place at the Republican National Convention in July, the commotion didn't hit jolting mainstream status. However, with the president-elect's brand-new diplomatic announcement, one can't help but tie Kimberly being picked as the one to foster "strong bilateral relations with Greece" at a dire time like this for her relationship. She and Don Jr were initially rumoured to tie the knot at a "White House wedding," but the new developments on their personal front seem to have shaken up the fairytale-like vision. "Her extensive experience and leadership in law, media, and politics along with her sharp intellect make her supremely qualified to represent the United States, and safeguard its interests abroad," the older Trump said in his December 10 Truth Social update. Donald Trump Jr's relationship status, a hot gossip topic Don Jr, Guilfoyle and



Anderson have yet to officially comment on these rumoured shake-ups related to the reported relationship triangle.

The younger Trump and Kimberly Guilfoyle have been engaged since 2020. The latter's ambassador nomination was officially announced a day after Daily Mail leaked pictures of her fiancée and Anderson holding hands during a night walk around Palm Beach in Florida. The pair is believed to have been spending time together to celebrate Anderson's birthday. Before his engagement to the Fox News host, Don Jr was married to Vanessa Trump for 13 years. Despite their divorce, they continue to co-parent their five children. While it seems like his romance with Kimberly is also dead, a source previously told RadarOnline that their joint appearances around Election Day were "all a show... for the cameras." It was also reported that initial pictures of Don Jr getting cosy with Anderson at the Honor Bar inside Palm Beach's Royal Poinciana Plaza shopping centre in August "blindsided" Guilfoyle. Nevertheless, she and Trump's son continued to maintain their united front, presumably not to steer the focus away from the man of the hour: Donald Trump. "Let's just say that Don Jr and the rest of them got the distant impression that Kimberly liked the idea of being a Trump more than she liked him," the insider said of Guilfoyle.

Indian-American Kash Patel to head FBI under Donald Trump's administration

Washington: Indian-American Pentagon official Kashyap 'Kash' Patel will head the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) under the administration of US President-elect Donald Trump. Patel, a loyal supporter of Trump, has actively advocated for dismantling what he describes as the "deep state" within the US government. Born in 1980 in Queens, New York, to Gujarati immigrant parents from East Africa, Patel earned a law degree and began his career as a public defender in Florida, representing clients in state and federal courts. He later joined the Department of Justice as a prosecutor, specialising in international terrorism cases in East Africa and the United States. His tenure at the Department of Defense as a civilian lawyer saw him focus on global counterterrorism operations, ultimately catching the attention of Congressman Devin Nunes. Nunes recruited Patel as senior counsel on counterterrorism during his time as Chair of the House Intelligence Committee. Kash Patel gained prominence during Donald Trump's first term and was involved in the House Republi-

cans' investigation into the FBI's handling of the Russia probe. He played a crucial role in drafting a controversial GOP memo that alleged bias in the FBI's investigation of Trump's 2016 presidential campaign. This document, referred to as the "Kash Memo" by the American media, became a significant point of contention in the partisan conflict surrounding the Russia investigation. Patel, 44, continued to influence Trump's national security policies as the Chief of Staff to the Acting Secretary of Defense. During this time, he was also accused of acting as an unauthorised backchannel for Ukraine. He has openly expressed his desire to reform the FBI. In an interview on the conservative Shawn Ryan Show, Patel suggested significant changes, including dismantling the FBI's intelligence-gathering operations and repurposing its headquarters. "The biggest problem the FBI has had has come out of its intel shops. I'd break that component out of it. I'd shut down the FBI Hoover building on day one and reopen it the next day as a museum of the deep state," Patel had said.

75 Indians evacuated from Syria after rebel takeover



GNS News Agency, Dec 14

New Delhi: Two days after rebel forces overthrew President Bashar Assad's authoritarian government in a shock offensive, India evacuated 75 of its nationals from Syria. The evacuation, coordinated by the embassies of India in Damascus and Beirut, was put into effect following an assessment of the security situation, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. "The Government of India evacuated 75 Indian nationals from Syria, following recent

developments in that country," it said in a late-night statement on Tuesday.

"The evacuees included 44 'zairin' from Jammu and Kashmir who were stranded at Saida Zainab. All Indian nationals have safely crossed over to Lebanon and will return by available commercial flights to India," it said. The MEA said the government accords the highest priority to the safety and security of Indian nationals abroad. "Indian nationals remaining in Syria are advised to stay in touch with the Indian Embassy in Damascus," it said. "The government will continue to monitor the situation closely," the MEA added. The Syrian government collapsed on Sunday as the rebels seized control of the capital Damascus after capturing several other prominent cities and towns. Assad fled the country after the rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) took control of Damascus, marking the end of his family's 50-year rule. Russian state media reported that Assad is in Moscow and will be given asylum. His nearly 14-year tenure was marked by civil war, bloodshed and brutal crackdown on his political opponents. The MEA on Monday said it is monitoring the unfolding developments in Syria and advocating a peaceful and inclusive Syrian-led political process going forward in that country.

UN experts urge US to end 'double standards' on Israel-Palestine conflict

GNS News Agency, Dec 14

Geneva: United Nations (UN) human rights experts condemned the US for its "double standards" in addressing violations of international law in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, urging an end to impunity for both Israel and its supporters. At a press conference in Geneva, four experts, who serve as Special Rapporteurs to the UN Human Rights Council, urged the international community to hold Israel accountable for alleged violations of international law, including disproportionate violence, humanitarian blockades, and settlement expansion in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Xinhua news agency reported. Margaret Satterthwaite, Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, criticised the US government for undermining the International Criminal Court with "outrageous" threats and stressed the need for international justice to be equitably applied to all. "It's time to end the double standards," Satterthwaite said.

Francesca Albanese, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, cited high civilian casualties and attacks on UN personnel as evidence of systemic violations by Israel, facilitated by a lack of international accountability. "There are never sanctions on Israel," Albanese said. "Judicial processes are either ignored or circumvented, trade continues, and diplomatic ties remain intact. Member States seem paralysed or awestruck, many of them still normalising the occupation." Ben Saul, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, criticised Israel's use of



counterterrorism rhetoric to justify extreme violence against Palestinians and the chronic dehumanisation of the Palestinian people over the past 14 months. He called for credible investigations and an end to impunity, noting that violations have largely "gone unchallenged by the states that matter and that can have a real influence to change Israel's behaviour." Saul specifically criticised the US as a major supplier of military hardware to Israel, accusing its lack of action to use its leverage to address human rights violations effectively. George Katrougalos, Special Rapporteur on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order, echoed the concern for the broader consequences of impunity for the international order, warning that Israel's actions risk creating a two-tiered system where some states are immune to consequences.

FIFA names Saudi Arabia as 2034 World Cup host; Spain, Portugal and Morocco to co-host 2030 edition

GNS News Agency, Dec 14

Zurich: Saudi Arabia was officially confirmed Wednesday by FIFA as host of the 2034 World Cup in men's soccer, giving the oil-rich kingdom its biggest prize yet for massive spending on global sports driven by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The Saudi bid was the only candidate and was acclaimed by the applause of more than 200 FIFA member federations. They took part remotely in an online meeting hosted in Zurich by the soccer body's president Gianni Infantino. "The vote of the congress is loud and clear," said Infantino, who had asked officials on a bank of screens to clap their hands at head level to show their support. The decision was combined with approving the only candidate to host the 2030 World Cup. Spain, Portugal and Morocco will co-host in a six-nation project, with Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay each getting one of the 104 games. The South American connection will mark the centenary of Uruguay hosting the first World Cup in 1930. The decisions complete a mostly opaque 15-month bid process which Infantino helped steer toward Saudi Arabia without a rival candidate, without taking questions, and which human rights groups warn will put the lives of migrant workers at risk.

"We look forward to hosting an exceptional and unprecedented edition of the FIFA World Cup by harnessing our strengths and capabilities to bring joy to football fans around the world," Prince Mohammed said in a statement. FIFA and Saudi officials have said hosting the 2034 tournament can accelerate change, including more freedoms and rights for women, with Infantino on Wednesday calling the World Cup a "unique catalyst for positive social change and unity." "I fully trust our hosts to address all open points in this process, and deliver a World Cup that meets the world's expectations," the FIFA president said. An international collective of rights groups said FIFA made a "reckless decision" to approve Saudi Arabia without getting public assurances, and the Football Supporters Europe group said it was "the day football truly lost its mind." A fast-track path to victory was cleared last year by FIFA accepting the three-continent hosting plan for the 2030 World Cup. It meant only soccer federations in Asia and Oceania were eligible for the 2034 contest, and FIFA gave countries less than four weeks to declare a bid. Only Saudi Arabia did. The win will kick off a decade of scrutiny on Saudi labor laws and treatment of workers mostly from South Asia needed to help build and upgrade 15 stadiums, plus hotels and transport networks ahead of the 104-game tournament. Amnesty International said awarding the tournament to Saudi Arabia represents "a moment of great danger" for human rights.

"FIFA's reckless decision to award the 2034 World Cup to Saudi Arabia without ensuring adequate human rights protections are in place will put many lives at risk," said Steve Cockburn, Amnesty International's Head of Labor Rights and Sport. "One of the stadiums is planned to be 350 meters (yards) above the ground in Neom — a futuristic city that does not yet exist — and another named for the crown prince is designed to be atop a 200-meter cliff near Riyadh. During the bid campaign, FIFA has accepted limited scrutiny of Saudi Arabia's human rights record that was widely criticized this year at the United Nations. Saudi and international rights groups and activists warned FIFA it has



not learned the lessons of Qatar's much-criticized preparations to host the 2022 World Cup. "At every stage of this bidding process, FIFA has shown its commitment to human rights to be a sham," Cockburn said. The kingdom plans to spend tens of billion of dollars on projects related to the World Cup as part of the crown prince's sweeping Vision 2030 project that aims to modernize Saudi society and economy. At its core is spending on sports by the \$900 billion sovereign wealth operation, the Public Investment Fund, which he oversees. Critics have called it "sportswashing" of the kingdom's reputation. The prince, known as MBS, has built close working ties to Infantino since 2017 — aligning with the organizer of sport's most-watched event rather than directly confronting the established system as it did with the disruptive LIV Golf project. The result for Saudi Arabia and FIFA has been smooth progress toward the win Wednesday with limited pushback from soccer officials, though some from women international players. The steady flow of Saudi cash into international soccer is set to increase. FIFA created a new and higher World Cup sponsor category for state oil firm Aramco, and Saudi funding is set to underwrite the 2025 Club World Cup in the United States that is a pet project for Infantino. North American soccer body CONCACAF signed a multi-year deal with PIF, Saudi stadiums host Super Cup games for Italy and Spain, and nearly 50 FIFA member federations have signed working agreements with Saudi counterparts. Lavish spending by PIF-owned Saudi clubs in the past two years buying and paying players — including Cristiano Ronaldo, Neymar, Karim Benzema and Sadio Mané — put hundreds of millions of dollars into European soccer. That influence could be key in talks to agree which months to play the 2034 World Cup. The November-December slot taken by Qatar in 2022 to avoid extreme mid-summer heat is complicated in 2034 by the holy month of Ramadan through mid-December and Riyadh hosting the multi-sport Asian Games. Still, January 2034 could be an option — and likely better for European clubs and leagues — after the International Olympic Committee said it saw few issues in clashing with the Salt Lake Winter Games opening Feb. 10, 2034.

Rosneft, Reliance agree biggest ever India-Russia oil supply deal, sources say



Russia's state oil firm Rosneft has agreed to supply nearly 500,000 barrels per day (bpd) of crude to Indian private refiner Reliance in the biggest ever energy deal between the two countries, three sources familiar with the deal said. The 10-year agreement amounts to 0.5% of global supply and is worth roughly \$13 billion a year at today's prices. It would further cement energy relations between India and Russia, which is under heavy Western sanctions over its invasion of Ukraine. Rosneft did not reply to requests for comments. Reliance said it works with international suppliers, including from Russia, and deals are based on market conditions. The company declined further comment on commercial matters, citing the confidentiality of supply agreements. The deal comes ahead of the planned visit by Russian President Vladimir Putin to India and after U.S. President-elect Donald Trump said he wants to push Moscow and Kyiv to stop the war as soon as he takes office in January.

Russian oil accounts for more than a third of India's energy imports. India became the largest importer of Russian crude after the European Union, previously the top buyer, imposed sanctions on Russian oil imports in response to the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. India has no sanctions on Russian oil, so refiners there have cashed in on the cheaper crude supply. Sanctions have made Russian oil cheaper than rival grades by at least \$3 to \$4 per barrel. India's rising Russian imports have come at the expense of rival Middle Eastern producers. The Reliance-Rosneft deal would represent another challenge for competitors, including Saudi Arabia. Competition among oil producers for a share of the Indian market is hot because it is one of the fastest-growing energy markets, and is becoming more important as a driver of global demand as growth in top importer China slows. Under the deal, Rosneft would deliver 20-21 Aframax-sized cargoes (80,000 to 100,000 metric tons) of various Russian crude grades and three cargoes of about 100,000 tons each of fuel oil each month, the three sources said.

The shipments will be supplied for Reliance's refining complex, the world's biggest, at Jamnagar in the western state of Gujarat. Two sources said Reliance and Rosneft will review pricing and volumes every year under the deal to factor in oil markets dynamics. In 2024, Reliance had a deal with Rosneft to purchase 3 million barrels of crude a month. Rosneft has been also selling crude to Reliance via intermediaries on a regular basis. The new deal accounts for roughly a half of Rosneft's seaborne oil exports from Russian ports, which leaves not much supply available for other traders and middlemen, one source said. From January to October, Reliance imported an average 405,000 barrels per day of Russian oil, up from 388,500 bpd in the same period last year, according to tanker data obtained from sources.

The new deal between Rosneft and Reliance was discussed and approved during Rosneft's board meeting in November, two of the sources said. Supplies will start from January and are set to continue for 10 years with an option to extend the deal for another 10 years, the three sources said. The pricing of the grades to be supplied on delivered basis is set at differentials to the average Dubai price of the loading month, according to the sources. Premiums for the light sweet grades were set at around \$1.50 a barrel for ESPO, Sokol at about \$2 per barrel and Siberian Light at about \$1 per barrel against Dubai quotes for 2025, one source said. The majority of the supply will be medium-sulphur and diesel-rich Russian Urals that are most popular with Indian refiners and will be priced at a discount of \$3 per barrel to Dubai quotes for the following year, two sources said.

India-UK FTA talks by January end; EU deal requires political direction

GNS News Agency, Dec 14

India UK FTAThe India-UK FTA deal follows several trade agreements like the pact with the UAE that took effect in February 2022 and the one with ASEAN signed in 2010. The India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) talks with the new UK government are set to commence by the end of January, a senior government official said. Separately, the Commerce and Industry Ministry, in a statement, said the proposed FTA negotiations between India and the European Union (EU) require political direction to achieve a commercially meaningful deal. The renewed push for trade deals with the UK and EU comes as India is focusing on countries where significant export gains are expected, rather than pursuing agreements with smaller countries that may offer more market access to the partner nation. To achieve the same, the commerce ministry is developing a new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) aimed at optimising the processes for negotiating future trade agreements. This follows several trade agreements, including the pact with the UAE that took effect in February 2022 and the one with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) signed in 2010, which have resulted in significantly higher imports compared to exports, raising concerns over potential breaches of rules of origin.

"The FTA negotiations, after nine rounds of intense engagement, require political direction to arrive at a commercially meaningful deal while understanding each other's sensitivities," the ministry said in its statement. This follows Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal's meeting with the ambassadors of the European Commission delegation on Thursday.

With the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism



(CBAM) continuing to be a sticking point in India-EU negotiations, the minister, as per the statement, asserted that any discussions on sustainability must respect the principle of 'Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR)', and the implementation of such measures should consider differing development paths. Goyal highlighted that the Indian economy is expected to grow at an annual rate of 7-8 per cent, positioning it to become the third-largest economy in the world within the next few years. Thereafter, rapid and exponential growth is projected to enable India's GDP to reach \$35 trillion by 2047. "Acknowledging the significant untapped economic potential, the European side emphasised that both sides stand to gain immensely by integrating their economies and strengthening resilience in supply chains. The interaction also provided an opportunity to review progress in the India-EU Trade and Technology Council. India is the only country, apart from the United States, with which the EU has such a mechanism," the ministry added.

Noida International Airport teams up with Mahindra to launch electric taxi service



GNS News Agency, Dec 14

NIA, mahindra collaborationThis partnership also underscores NIA's commitment to sustainability with an all-electric fleet that aligns with NIA's vision for a green and environmentally responsible airport. The upcoming Noida International Airport (NIA) has collaborated with Mahindra Logistics Mobility on Thursday to introduce electric taxi services for passengers. The 24/7 service will feature electric vehicles, ensuring that passengers experience a comfortable and environmentally friendly ride, a statement by the authorities read.

What are the features? Passengers can expect premium pick-up and drop-off facilities at the arrival and departure kerbs, thereby saving walking distances and providing an added convenience. Bookings would be via a dedicated mobile app, website, call centre, airline alliances, and airport kiosks, the statement informed. It uses an operational model that relies on real-time dynamic changes based on passenger demand and flight schedules to minimize waiting times and extend service periods. Drivers will also receive comprehensive training on airport protocols and customer service standards, allowing for quality interactions.

The alliance is in line with the airport's net-zero emissions target. Christoph Schnellmann, Noida International Airport's CEO, said, "At NIA, your journey will not end with baggage claim. We are excited to partner with Mahindra Logistics Mobility to offer a premium, all-electric taxi service, to provide a seamless and environment-friendly ride directly from the airport to your destination. This first-of-its-

kind airport-branded cab service will set a new benchmark for passenger convenience and environmental responsibility. This partnership is also a testament to our commitment to providing a best-in-class passenger experience, from the moment they arrive at the airport to the moment they depart for their destination." In the first phase, the airport will have one runway and one terminal which will be able to handle 12 million passengers annually. When all four phases of development are completed, it will be able to handle up to 70 million passengers per year. Developed by Yamuna International Airport Private Limited, a subsidiary of Zurich Airport International AG, the airport is based on sustainable design and operational principles with a global perspective on environment standards.

Adani Portfolio of companies 'most attractive' among India corporates

Mumbai: The Adani Portfolio of companies appear "most attractive" among Indian corporates, according to Japanese brokerage Nomura, as other Indian corporates stay at 'expensive levels' compared to the Group companies. In a new report, the global brokerage said that the ports-to-power conglomerate will also be able to withstand recent turmoil brought on by allegations in an indictment by the US Department of Justice (DoJ). "Adani complex looks most attractive among other IG (investment grade) corporates from India. Other Indian IG corporates stay at expensive levels vis a vis Adani complex," the note read. Nomura further commented that compared with the Adani-Hindenburg episode in early 2023, "Adani Group's liquidity management awareness has improved meaningfully and should be able to weather the rainstorm with adequate short-term liquidity position." Nomura added that overall, no signs of stress are seen across the Adani Group and its fundamentals/asset quality remain intact. "We believe the group should be able to weather this round of rainstorm," said the financial research firm.

Concern in Govt: Private sector profit at 15-year high but salaries stagnant



The sharp slump in economic growth rate to 5.4 per cent in July-September this year has sparked concerns among policymakers that low single-digit income growth in the corporate sector despite 4x (four times) growth in profits over the last four years, is one of the reasons behind the slowing of demand.

What has triggered conversations within corporate boardrooms, key economic ministries, and between the two, is a report prepared for the government by industry chamber FICCI and Quess Corp Ltd, a tech-enabled staffing firm with 3,000-plus clients, which showed that the compounded annual wage growth rate across six sectors between 2019 and 2023 ranged between 0.8 per cent for the engineering, manufacturing, process and infrastructure (EMPI) companies and 5.4 per cent for fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) firms. What has made matters worse for workers even in formal sectors is a meagre or negative growth in real incomes i.e., wage growth when adjusted for price rise or inflation. Over the five years from 2019-20 till 2023-24, retail inflation rose 4.8 per cent, 6.2 per cent, 5.5 per cent, 6.7 per cent and 5.4 per cent, respectively.

Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran referred to the FICCI-Quess report in at least a couple of his addresses in corporate gatherings, and suggested India Inc needs to look within, and probably do something about it. Sources in the government said weak income levels were one of the reasons for subdued consumption, especially in urban areas. "Post-Covid, consumption rose with pent-up demand, but the slower wage growth has brought to the fore concerns about a full economic recovery to the pre-Covid phase," a source in the government told The Indian Express. Concern in Govt: Pvt sector profit at 15-year high but salaries stagnantThe FICCI-Quess survey results, which are not in public domain but accessed by the newspaper, show that the compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) for wages during 2019-23 has been the lowest for the EMPI sector at 0.8 per cent. It was the highest for the FMCG sector at 5.4 per cent. For BFSI (banking, financial services, insurance), wages grew at 2.8 per cent during 2019-23; for retail at 3.7 per cent; for IT at 4 per cent; and logistics 4.2 per cent. In absolute terms, the average wage was the lowest for the FMCG sector at Rs 19,023 in 2023, and highest for the IT sector at Rs 49,076 in 2023.

What has made matters worse for workers is meagre or negative growth in real incomes i.e., wage growth when adjusted for price rise or inflation. Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran has flagged this as "self-destructive" and urged India Inc to look within. At ASSOCHAM's Bharat @ 100 Summit on December 5, Nageswaran said there has to be a better balance between the share of income going to capital in terms of profits and the share of income going to workers as wages. "Without that, there will not be adequate demand in the economy for corporates' own products to be purchased. In other words, not paying workers, or not hiring workers enough, will end up being actually self-destructive or harmful for the corporate sector itself," he had said. In fact, profitability of corporates was at a 15-year high in March 2024, Nageswaran pointed out. "The previous high was 5.2 per cent of GDP, profit after tax, in March 2008. That was a boom era. But to be able to get to 4.8 per cent in 2024 after Covid and in a very difficult global environment... whereas 2008 was an extremely friendlier glo-

bal growth environment. This means that profitability growth has been absolutely impressive. The growth was 4x in the last four years, four times growth in profits of the Indian corporate sector," he said.

The staff cost of Indian listed companies, whether it is IT firms or general, has been coming down, Nageswaran said. "In other words, the growth in compensation to employees has become weaker and weaker. And if you take out managerial compensation, the decline will look even more acute," he said. In the survey, the average gross wage has been calculated based on the cumulative salary of all employees across different job roles in a particular sector divided by the total number of employees. The survey noted that the wage growth is indicative and not definitive because the salary varies based on job roles, with some job roles getting higher wages than the rest. The concern over depressed wages is learnt to have come up in several internal discussions in the government. Putting things in perspective, an analyst in India Inc, who is aware of the discussions in the government, said at this macroeconomic stage of development, India is bound to see an increase in inequality. "The pandemic has accentuated the problem; we are 7 per cent behind the pre-pandemic growth path. And you cannot overlook the fact that workforce addition in India is very strong. So our economy is one year behind where it should be, and we have one extra year of labour," said the analyst, who did not wish to be named. "Given that there is a surplus of labour vis-a-vis capital, the bargaining power of labour is less. Slow wages growth is frankly inevitable," said the analyst. But should Corporate India do something about it? "In this macro environment, this is the outcome..." the analyst said.

Some other economists The Indian Express spoke with said that the slow wage growth is also translating into slower growth in labour productivity and low-quality jobs in India. "The slow wage growth is a recurring phenomenon worldwide with wage growth as a share of GDP persistently declining in the last decade in countries globally including India. Thus, the long-standing assumptions about downward nominal rigidity of nominal wages prior to 1990s when organised labour were much stronger is clearly not in vogue now. Employees now cannot resist cuts in wages and are willing to work even at a lower rate explaining much of the slower growth in labour productivity. This is also part of India's problem of producing low quality jobs. India actually has an underemployment problem and we must produce good quality jobs to ensure consumption is more broad-based," said Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Member of the 16th Finance Commission and Group Chief Economic Advisor, State Bank of India.

Some experts pointed out that the solution lies in raising labour productivity, which in turn, would help growth. "There is no one answer to this. As an investor, I need growth and if there is no return then people will not invest or take risk. I think the solution is not paying more but increasing productivity. If the productivity is high, even if you pay more it will cost less. Today, the productivity of Indians is poor and we lag behind global peers. The way to make people rich is to increase productivity and that will help growth too," said Nilesh Shah, MD, Kotak Mahindra AMC. Some in the industry said the slow wage growth issue is a problem more for the informal sector and not in the formal sector. Naushad Forbes, Co-chairman, Forbes Marshall said, "The data being presented depends upon what period has been selected. If it starts from Covid period, then it will present a different picture as salaries went down and then came up. So it depends upon where you start." "I think it is not an issue in the formal sector as companies have been going for 5-10 per cent salary growth each year for many years now. The challenge is in the informal sector and that is where the concern lies. Also, the more important aspect is the number for job creation and employment generation. I think there should be a policy focus on greater formalisation of the workforce broadly and how we can make more employment generation sectors such as textile, tourism flourish," he said.

EPFO cracks the whip on corruption, compulsorily retires 12 officers

EPFO, Employees Provident Fund Organisation, Provident Fund Organisation, EPFO whip on corruption, Indian express news, current affairs EPFO has introduced auto claim settlement, that is, automatic processing of claims without any human intervention for advance claims upto Rs 1 lakh for education, marriage and housing to eliminate corruption. Officials said around 25-30 per cent of the claims are being processed without human intervention. In a bid to check instances of corruption and illegal gratification within the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), the retirement fund body has compulsorily retired as many as 12 officers on corruption charges in the last two months, sources said. This is the first such major action in the last few years within the EPFO, sources said, adding that this action is being taken to improve delivery of services by the organisation that oversees funds of over 7.37 crore contributing subscribers and a total of 32.56 crore members.

A total of 18 officials (10 Group B officers and eight belonging to Group A) are learnt to have been suspended, a source told The Indian Express. Out of these 18 officials, 16 are facing criminal charges pertaining to corruption and alleged illegal gratification and two are facing other criminal charges of personal nature, the source said. Illegal gratification refers to any monetary or non-monetary benefit received by a public servant in exchange for performing or refraining from performing an official act. "Corrupt officers are being removed from service under stringent provisions of 56J. In the last two months alone 12 officers have been retired mainly on account of corruption charges. Compulsory retirement of senior officials has been done for the first time in EPFO in recent times and is likely to have a huge deterrent impact. Efforts are being made to promote ethical leadership," the source said.

Out of these 12 officers, eight are group B officers and accounts officers/enforcement officers while four are group A officers and assistant PF commissioners. The provisions of Fundamental Rules (FR) 56(j)(i), Rule 48 of Central Civil Services (CCS) Pension Rules, 1972 provide for the government to retire officials prematurely on the ground of lack of integrity and ineffectiveness, in public interest. The government's decision to act against errant officials of the EPFO comes amid reports of several officers of the retirement fund body being probed by vigilance authorities and investigative agencies such as the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Sources said that eight officials have been placed under suspension for criminal cases since July. Also, disciplinary action has been initiated against 7 officials on non-performance/administrative grounds. "They were facing criminal charges pertaining to corruption and alleged acceptance of illegal gratification. Further, departmental ac-



tion is also under process against all of them. These officers were mainly involved in enforcement and compliance of remittances of dues under EPF Act," another source said.

The vigilance directorate of the EPFO is learnt to be closely coordinating with other anti-graft departments like CBI, Anti-Corruption Bureau among other agencies to identify corrupt officials. Immovable property returns are being scrutinised in greater detail, sources said. The EPFO has set up four additional zonal vigilance directorates bringing the total to eight in a bid to improve oversight.

Officials maintained that the government is working towards improving the internal audit process. The EPFO is also learnt to be holding regular videoconferences to sensitise its officers. "Systemic improvements will lead to transparency," the source said. The high rate of rejection of EPF claims has been a concern for the retirement fund body and the Ministry has been taking measures to improve the claims settlement rate. In many such corruption cases, the EPFO officers have been arrested on charges of taking bribery from members to clear their payment dues.

EPFO has introduced auto claim settlement, that is, automatic processing of claims without any human intervention for advance claims upto Rs 1 lakh for education, marriage and housing to eliminate corruption. Officials said around 25-30 per cent of the claims are being processed without human intervention.

In February this year, The Indian Express had reported that the rejection rates of PF final settlement had surged, up from around 13 per cent in 2017-18 to nearly 34 per cent in 2022-23. The rejection rate, calculated as a percentage of rejected claims out of total applications for claims, had increased from around 13 per cent in 2017-18 to 18.2 per cent in 2018-19 to 24.1 per cent in 2019-20, 30.8 per cent in 2020-21 and 35.2 per cent in 2021-22 for final PF settlement claims.

Madhavan responds to speculations about joining Lokesh Cinematic Universe's Benz: 'I have no clue'



There were reports doing the rounds that Benz would not just mark Raghava Lawrence's entry into the LCU, but also actor Madhavan's. It was suggested that the Minnale actor would play the antagonist in the film thereby becoming an integral part of the ambitious LCU. With fans expressing intrigue over Madhavan's decision to play the villain in a LCU movie, a clarification has come from the actor himself. Sharing a news article about his inclusion in Benz, Madhavan wrote, "Hey this is news to me. As much as it sounds exciting and I would love to be part of a universe like this. I'm surprised with this news because I have no clue about this." This has put an end to all the rumours. Also, the interest shown by netizens for this news can be seen as a pointer for team LCU to actually approach Madhavan to be part of the universe.

Recently, the makers of Benz announced that indie sensation Sai Abhyankar would make his feature film debut as a music director with this project, which will hit screens in 2025. Apart from Benz, other LCU films in the works are Kaithi 2, and a standalone movie for Rolex. On the other hand, Lokesh is currently helming Rajinikanth's next, Coolie. Meanwhile, Madhavan, who was last seen in Tamil in his own directorial venture, Rocketry: The Nambi Effect, has an interesting lineup of films, including Mithran Jawahar's Adhirshatasaali, filmmaker Sashikanth's The Test, and Anshul Sharma's De De Pyar De 2.

Akshay Kumar hurts his eyes while performing a stunt on sets of Housefull 5

Akshay Kumar has reportedly hurt himself in the eye while performing stunt on the sets of Housefull 5. The film, which is nearing its wrap is left with a few more scenes. According to HT City, the actor was performing a stunt when an object came flying in Akshay's eye. The source told the publication, "An ophthalmologist was called on the set immediately, who bandaged the eye and asked him to take some rest, while the shoot resumed with the other actors. However, even with the injury, Akshay is determined to join the shoot back soon because the film is in final stages of shoot, and he doesn't want it to get delayed."

Housefull 5 will mark the reunion of actors Akshay Kumar, and Riteish Deshmukh. The film will also mark the return of actors Abhishek Bachchan, Shreyas Talpade, Chunky Panday, Jacqueline Fernandez, and Nargis Fakhri. The new additions in the film will be Fardeen Khan, Dino Morea, Johnny Level, Sanjay Dutt, Nana Patekar, Sonam Bajwa, Chitrangda Singh and Soundary Sharma, among others. Veteran star Jackie Shroff will also be a part of the film. The cast began the shoot of the film earlier this year in Europe. They reportedly had a forty day schedule on a cruise ship, which sailed from Newcastle to Spain, Normandy,



Honfleur, and back to Plymouth. The film, directed by Tarun Mansukhani, is scheduled to hit the theatres on June 6, 2025. Apart from Housefull 5, Akshay Kumar will also be seen in Hera Pheri 3, Welcome To The Jungle, and Jolly LLB 3, among others.

Kusha Kapila, her mom open up about family facing 'difficult time' after her divorce: 'An aunty asked me at the temple...'



Kusha Kapila has been handling negative rumours since the time she announced her divorce with ex-husband Zorawar Ahluwalia in 2023. The digital creator received a lot of criticism for Kusha and her family, with people terming her 'gold-digger' and 'cheater'. In a conversation on Be A Parent Yaar for We Are Yuva's YouTube channel, Kusha and her mother Rita opened up about how the divorce affected their family. During the candid conversation, a teary-eyed Kusha said, "The things that have happened to me in the last two years have made me very strong." Noticing her daughter's emotional state, her mother moves on to the next question.

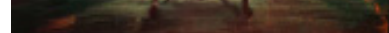
"It was tough, but it's okay. Vohi baat hai, 'Kuch toh log kahenge, unka kaam hai kehna' (People will say what they want, we shouldn't care). After a while, everyone forgot about it. Now, no one says anything, everyone appreciates the work. There are no negative rumours now, it's only about how much you are growing and doing good work," expressed Rita.

The influencer-actor was afraid how it would impact her mother. She said, "At that time, I was worried that my mom's social life would take a backseat, please don't do this." Following which her mom continued, "When this incident happened and when I used to visit the temple, I started going a bit earlier than usual, so that no one spots me or asks anything. Then, your father once said, 'Tu kyu darri hai? Koi kuch nahi poochega terse' (Why are you scared? No one will ask anything). However, one aunty asked something related to this at the temple one day. I was a little shaky during my way home and started crying." She further added, "Your dad sat and explained to me that it is not a big deal, it is life. 'Ups and downs will keep coming, you don't need to feel so much'. He called all my relatives and told them that no one should bother me about this. Then, no one asked me anything ever again. Unn aunty ko bhi kisi ne jaake boldiya, 'Aap mandir mai yeh sab baatein karne jaate ho?' (Someone even mocked that aunty for creating gossip at the temple) She even apologised to me after that." Kusha started laughing instantly after listening to the incident. Kusha Kapila and Zorawar Ahluwalia got divorced last year, after dating for a few years and marrying in 2017.

The duo announced their separation after a news publication threatened them to leak the story unless they confirmed or denied it in two days. On the work front, she was last seen in the web series Dehati Ladke.

Canteen owner bites ear of Pushpa 2 viewer over food bill dispute; booked

Gwalior: A viewer of the blockbuster movie 'Pushpa 2' had the bitter experience of being bitten on his ear by a film theatre canteen owner over the dispute of settling the bills for snacks. Police registered a case in this regard, police said. The incident occurred on Sunday when the victim, Shabbir, went to the canteen of Kailash Talkies in Inderganj area during the movie interval to buy food, police said. An argument broke out between Shabbir and the canteen owner Raju, who accused the former of not paying money, an official said.



The heated exchange escalated into a fight with Raju and his three associates thrashing Shabbir. Raju bit one of ears of Shabbir, as per the FIR. Additional SP Niranjan Sharma said the argument over the payment of food items caused a fight. "The canteen owner and his three associates allegedly beat Shabbir and also bit his ear while threatening to kill him," he said. Shabbir lodged a complaint with police on Monday. A case was registered against three persons on Tuesday based on Shabbir's medical report, he said, adding that further investigation is underway.

Actor-singer Selena Gomez, Benny Blanco are now engaged



Los Angeles: Actress-singer Selena Gomez is now engaged to her partner, music producer Benny Blanco. She shared the news via an Instagram carousel including an up-close snap of her engagement ring and a pic of her and Blanco celebrating their engagement with laughs and a hug. She wrote in the caption, "Forever begins now". Blanco is ready to make their union official as he commented, "hey wait! that's my wife! The bride-to-be also proudly posted a mirror selfie, showing off her new ring even more in her Instagram Stories, reports 'People' magazine. During a May appearance on 'The Howard Stern Show,' Blanco told Stern that he could see marriage in his future with the 'Only Murders In The Building' actress.

He said, "When I look at her, I'm always just like, I don't know a world where it could be better than this." Selena

and Blanco had known each other for years having collaborated on the 2019 single 'I Can't Get Enough' with Tainy and J Balvin before they started dating in June 2023. As per 'People,' in August 2023, Selena released the Blanco-produced single 'Single Soon.' In December 2023, she confirmed their relationship when she liked fan account posts on Instagram of the pair, even commenting, "He is my absolute everything in my heart," on one. They made their red carpet debut at the 2024 Emmys in January. The following month Gomez spoke to Apple Music's Zane Lowe about their relationship. "Without getting into too much detail, I think it's just really important to meet someone that respects you," she said. "And I think it's really nice to also lean on someone who understands the world that I live in. But I'd have to say overall it's the safest that I feel and it's been really lovely and I've only grown through it, so it's awesome."

Miss Universe Harnaaz Sandhu to make Bollywood debut with Tiger Shroff-starrer 'Baaghi 4'

Mumbai: Harnaaz Sandhu, who is the winner of the Miss Universe 2021 beauty pageant, is all set to make her debut in Hindi cinema with the Tiger Shroff-starrer 'Baaghi 4.' An announcement was made on X by the official handle of Nadiadwala Grandson, which read: Harnaaz is the third entrant from India to win Miss Universe. She was previously feted with the crown for Femina Miss India Punjab in 2019, and was a semifinalist at Femina Miss India 2019 pageant. Born in Gurdaspur district, Punjab, Harnaaz in 2006, she moved to England, before returning to India two years later and settling in Chandigarh. Prior to becoming Miss Universe, Sandhu was pursuing a master's degree in public administration.

On December 10, it was announced that actress Sonam Bajwa is set to star alongside Tiger Shroff in 'Baaghi 4.' Filming for the film has begun. It was on November 18, Tiger announced the fourth installment of his 'Baaghi' franchise, which will be directed by A. Harsha, and that the actioner will hit the screens on September 5, 2025.

Talking about the franchise, 'Baaghi,' an action thriller, first released in 2016 and was directed by Sabbir Khan. A partial remake of the 2004 Telugu film 'Varsham' with a climax inspired by the 2011 Indonesian film 'The Raid: Redemption.' The film had Tiger, Shraddha Kapoor and Sudheer Babu. 'Baaghi 2,' which was directed by Ahmed Khan, released in 2018. It was a remake of the Telugu film 'Kshanam.' The second installment had Tiger alongside Disha Patani, Manoj Bajpayee, Darshan Kumar, Prateik Babbar, Randeep Hooda, Deepak Dobriyal and Aravya Sharma. The third installment of the movie, which was again directed by Ahmed Khan, was partially inspired from Tamil



film Vettai, stars Tiger Shroff, Riteish Deshmukh and Shraddha Kapoor in lead roles.

Vishnu Manchu on dad Mohan Babu's fight with brother Manchu Manoj: 'All he wants is for my brother to not stay at his home'

Following a public altercation between veteran Telugu actor Mohan Babu and his younger son Manchu Manoj on Tuesday, Mohan's elder son Vishnu Manchu, who recently returned from Los Angeles, addressed the matter during a press meet. The incident escalated after Mohan accused Manoj and his wife Bhuma Mounika of plotting to take over his property. Subsequently, Manoj was seen attempting to forcibly enter Mohan's house in Jalpally, Hyderabad. During the scuffle, Mohan Babu allegedly got into a physical altercation with a video journalist. Speaking about the incident, Vishnu confirmed that his father is currently in the hospital and defended him, saying, "The only mistake my father has made is to love us all a lot. No family is perfect, so I still hope there's light at the end of the tunnel. My father did not intentionally hurt the reporter; he just reacted to his space being invaded, which happened in the heat of the moment. I'm in touch with the reporter's family because what happened was unfortunate. But I have no



right to correct my father." Vishnu also revealed that he and his father have been called by the Rachakonda police for investigation. "I wasn't even in the country, but out of respect for them, I'll meet them," he said. Addressing speculation about familial disapproval of Manoj's marriage to Mounika, Vishnu dismissed the claims. He stated, "He (Manoj) got married, he has a child now, and I hope he lives a hundred years with health and wealth. It's definitely not the marriage (that's an issue).

My father has worked hard for every rupee he owns today; all he wants is for my brother not to stay at his home." Meanwhile, Lakshmi Manchu, Mohan Babu's daughter and Manoj's sister, posted cryptic messages amid the ongoing feud. On Thursday morning, she shared a quote from former Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius on X (formerly Twitter) that read, "What are you afraid of losing, when nothing in the world actually belongs to you." Another note on her Instagram stories read as, "I just don't want

that for myself anymore, is a valid reason to stop anything." The conflict began on Monday when Mohan Babu filed a police complaint accusing Manoj and Bhuma Mounika of assault and conspiring to seize his property. Manoj, on the other hand, filed a counter-complaint with the police, alleging physical assault but refrained from naming any family members. Tensions came to a head on Tuesday when chaos broke out at Mohan Babu's Jalpally residence. Manoj reportedly tried to force his way into the house.

Why international players are withdrawing en masse from the HIL



GNS News Agency, Dec 14

tions after being picked for approximately Rs 63 lakh by Ranchi Rays, was bought for Rs 18 lakh this time by Delhi SG Pipers. He cited injury as a reason to withdraw from this season. Similarly, Netherlands' Paris Olympics gold medallist Seve van Ass fetched nearly Rs 33 lakh the last time when he was picked by the Uttar Pradesh Wizards. This time, he was snapped up by the new team from UP, Rudras which is coached by his father Paul van Ass — the former India coach — for Rs 10 lakh.

Seve Van Ass told The Indian Express that the league 'will definitely help' Indian hockey 'as the last edition really helped young talents to get used to the international level'. However, he added the wages were not as lucrative as before. "I think the money is mostly going to Indian players, which is a difference compared to the previous editions. For some top players still a lot of money has been handed out," he told this paper. "However, it does not make it as lucrative as before and I wonder if top players are willing to risk their international career, or at least miss international matches, for the current salary purse. Times have changed." Hockey India secretary general Bhola Nath Singh said the trend reflects the changing times in India — and world — hockey. "It is important to understand that when the HIL took place in 2013, the situation has changed a lot. Back then, the franchises spent a lot of money because the foreign players were good and Indian hockey was a bit down. So the franchises put their money on foreign players so that their team would be strong. But now the times have changed," he said. Singh added: "After back-to-back Olympic medals, the franchises have chosen to spend more money on Indian players compared to the foreigners. The foreign players may feel they have not got as much money compared to before, but this is a big change. But this change will benefit Indian players." Apart from Ruhr and Van Ass, other big names to pull out include Paris Olympics gold medallists Pirmin Blaak and Jonas de Geus of the Netherlands, Ruhr's Germany teammate Jean Paul Danneberg, Australia's Flynn Ogilvie and Belgium's Tom Boon. Timing matters. The salary, another player said requesting anonymity, did not make it worthwhile to 'leave behind family during the holiday season' and then 'spend more than a month in Rourkela.' A team official added: "We gather that Hockey India did not communicate the tournament dates clearly. The international players say they were told that the HIL would take place in January. Later, they were told to arrive around Christmas as the first match is on December 28. They were not willing to sacrifice the end of the year holidays." Van Ass said the decision to shift the dates was a 'big reason' for him to pull out. "I was surprised they shifted dates so that we had to be present on 20th of December, instead of the beginning of January. For me, this was a big reason to pull out as I already had things planned until the end of the year," he said. Singh, however, said the dates were decided based on consultations with the international federation, which sanctioned the window since there were no other competitions during these months.

Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy: How Ajinkya Rahane has led the show for Mumbai in SMAT after IPL 2025 Auction pick



GNS News Agency, Dec 14

Ajinkya Rahane has been the toast of Mumbai's batting at the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy this season, after scoring back-to-back half-centuries in record-breaking run chases. Rahane has scored four half-centuries in his six innings of the tournament, and has led a stacked Mumbai batting line-up which also poses the likes of captain Shreyas Iyer, Prithvi Shaw, Shivam Dube and India's T20I skipper Suryakumar Yadav. Rahane was unsold in the first round of the IPL 2025 Mega Auction that took place last month, but he was eventually picked up by Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR). His T20 form prior to the auction was not something that particularly stood out, but after KKR won the bid for

him, Rahane went on a scoring blitz as all of his top performances of the ongoing SMAT season came after the auction. With Suryakumar Yadav's return, Rahane moved up to opening with Prithvi Shaw after initially batting at No. 4 in the tournament.

In their last group-stage match against Andhra, a loss would have meant Mumbai would have been knocked out of the tournament. Andhra posed a target of 230, a score never chased down before in the tournament. But this was about to change as Rahane's 95 (54) set up the game for Mumbai who romped home six wickets and three balls to spare. The Rahane show didn't stop there as come the quarterfinals, Mumbai saw the senior star set up in a high run-chase yet again. Vidarbha put up a mammoth total of 221 in their quota of 20 overs. But a confident Mumbai, who had just broken the record for the highest run chase, put up another stellar show with Rahane being the man of the match yet again for his 45-ball 84. Just a few weeks ago, it seemed as though the veteran's run in T20s was done, and him not being picked in the first round of the IPL 2025 Auction would only make those assumptions stronger, until KKR bid for him in the accelerated auction. Now, after his performances in SMAT, he is also in contention to lead the KKR side with his only competition for the role being Venkatesh Iyer, who was bought by the franchise for a whopping 23.75 crore.

Is Akash Deep set to play instead of Harshit Rana at the Gabba?



GNS News Agency, Dec 14

"Mate, the Indian team bus is going to pull up anytime, soon, all ready?" A man with a walkie-talkie asks a security guard near an entrance to the Gabba. It's around 8:45 am on Thursday. "Not many fans here as yet," wonders the guard, and the walkie-talkie man smiles, "good for us, isn't it!". Across the road from them, a controversial train station is being constructed. An underground rail tunnel has already been built. There is no scaffolding to block it. None is needed either as no dust swirls up from the site, unlike in India. "Dust? Oh we sprinkle some chemical stuff into the water, and spray it on the site every morning. The dust doesn't lift," says a construction worker, out for a smoke. The station was intended for the 2032 Olympics in Brisbane, and the Gabba was supposed to be pulled down and rebuilt according to the needs for that global event. But that \$ 2.7 billion dollar rebuilding plan is now on hold as Gabba has proved an architectural nightmare. It's almost sandwiched amidst a cluster of buildings that surround it and there is a school nearby. The entire arena's footprint doesn't apparently match Olympic requirements. A review is on.

Inside the stadium, the dust on the India-Australia series has just kicked up after it went even-seven at Adelaide and the caravan moves to the Gabba. It's an unimpressive character-less stadium that won't look out of place somewhere in the interiors of India. All concrete with no air blowing across as there aren't any gaps in the structure. It does have a feel of a cauldron, as a result. The coloured bucket seats and the amenities might make it look modern, but it's not going to be in contention amongst the pretty cricket stadiums in the world. It's here that the two teams are trying to break the deadlock and get ahead in the series. It's burning hot on Thursday. The weather app says it's just 28 degrees but it feels like 34-35, if not more. There is a fair sprinkling of grass on the pitch, but the curator has said that there might be some grass-cutting sessions left. That they have been careful with the grass because of the heat. There was some rain on Tuesday, but nothing since then. Much would depend on the liveness of the grass that's finally retained on Saturday when the Test begins, but it's hard to tell now. The large Indian contingent spread around the centre ground near the boundary on one side. About 45 people, that includes the players and the support staff, have been here on this tour. The players stretch, warm-up, and begin to take catches. Soon, the action shifts to the outdoor nets for an intense two-hour batting session. Tremendously focussed, each batsman was trying to work out a method that would work for them in the game, and the bowlers doing their thing. Gautam Gambhir stood as an 'umpire' in one of the nets, motionless for a long time, just staring ahead. Behind him, at a short distance, the chief selector Ajit Agarkar kept stretching.

The nets don't always offer a definite clue, but based on the proceedings it did seem Akash Deep might play ahead of Harshit Rana. Deep bowled far more than Rana, and also batted a bit, with the assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate crouching at a silly-point position whenever Deep played a spinner. For a while it seemed R Ashwin, who did bowl a bit at the start, wasn't really involved in the scheme of things but after a chat with Gambhir, he went to bat. Admittedly it was the spare bowlers that he faced, which also included Morne Morkel. The bowling coach bowled without worrying about no-balls, but he did manage to extract disconcerting bounce — just like his playing days, and beaming a smile as the balls would fly past Ashwin's face or chest. It also seemed as if Ravindra Jadeja wouldn't be playing the game as he didn't bowl or bat for any meaningful length of time. For a long while, Sarfaraz Khan sat behind the nets, outside, picking up any balls that managed to squeeze outside the net. Until, finally he got a chance to bat a bit against the throw-down specialists. Bumrah and Siraj were unsurprisingly the pick of the bowlers, with Deep too

managing to nick off a few batsmen with his skiddy pace. Perhaps, they weren't aware of the timings, not many fans had turned up. In theory, they can access the nets from behind the batting fence which is almost near the edge of the arena, and not far from the road. They would come in more numbers for the afternoon session and be disappointed that the Indian players had already finished. "Are they warming up inside?" Nope. "Oh no, will they be at the hotel?" It's just not IPL and such that's erasing the 'otherness' about the Indians amongst the Australians. In their daily life, they are bound to be working, moving around with the Indians. According to a 2021 official census, 51,650 people born in India live in Brisbane. Nearly 55% of them had become Australian citizens by then. At the end of June 2022, 753,520 Indian-born people were living in Australia, more than twice the number (355,380) at 30 June 2012. A number that's likely to have grown far more since. All that has been reflected so far in the promotions for this series in the media.

'India a very good team'

No Indian player fronted up to the media on Thursday; Mitch Marsh would do for the Australians and would talk how just as Australia did in Adelaide, Indians will look to bounce back strongly here. "They are a very good team". In the afternoon, Steve Smith, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne and the rest sweated it out at the nets in the sun. Josh Hazlewood didn't bowl, Scott Boland did. Near the end, after his stint, Khawaja, the home boy of sorts, stood near the tents, joking and smiling a lot with a few of his team-mates. He too needs a knock of substance and nothing like home arena to do it. The batsman who perhaps needs some runs is the Indian captain Rohit Sharma. Virat Kohli batted the most at the nets but Rohit too had multiple stints, trying to get himself ready. It was a high-intensity session for all the players. They have done their prep; now it's time to hope it pays off on Saturday.

FIFA 2034 WC goes to Saudi, but questions remain over tournament

Zurich: Saudi Arabia scored a major win in its campaign to attract major sports events to the kingdom when it was formally appointed as the 2034 World Cup host on Wednesday. Still, many questions remain about the tournament as well as the 2030 World Cup, which will be co-hosted by Spain, Portugal and Morocco, with three games in South America. Where will games be played?

Saudi Arabia proposes 15 stadiums — eight still on paper — in five cities: Eight in the capital Riyadh, four in the Red Sea port city Jeddah, and one each in Abha, Al Khobar and Neom, the planned futuristic mega-project. Each would have at least 40,000 seats for World Cup games. The opening game and final are set for a 92,000-seat venue planned in Riyadh. Some designs are vivid. In Neom, the stadium is planned 350 meters (yards) above street level and one near Riyadh is designed to be atop a 200-meter cliff with a retractable wall of LED screens. Saudi Arabia aims to host all 104 games, though there has been speculation that some games could be played in neighboring or nearby countries. When will the World Cup be played? Surely not in the traditional World Cup period of June-July, when temperatures in Saudi Arabia routinely exceed 40 Celsius (104 degrees). FIFA moved the Qatar-hosted World Cup to November-December 2022, though those dates were not loved by most European clubs and leagues whose seasons were interrupted. Also, that slot is complicated in 2034 by the holy month of Ramadan through mid-December and Riyadh hosting the multi-sport Asian Games. January 2034 could be a possibility even though that would be just before the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City.

Virat Kohli sweats hard at Brisbane nets: Will his batting approach work in the third Test?

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Often, the balls were at him even when he was on the move forward. It seemed to annoy him, and he would shake his head or mutter something when the ball caught the edge.

for more of the same. It did give rise to a thought: would a younger Kohli have been able to press forward that micro-second quicker? It's difficult to say as he still seems to be as fit as any other Indian youngster out there. Perhaps, the younger Kohli wouldn't attempt this approach in first place. He has stood well outside the crease, he has moved towards the off stump, he has pressed forward, he has opened up his stance, he has placed that front foot down the pitch towards the bowler — Kohli has dabbled successfully with all that in the past. His game has never been a static one, instead a dynamically evolving one that makes tweaks as per demands of the situation he has found himself in.

Now, he seems to have decided that this back-first-then-move-forward is the way to go for him. A drone's view of it would be akin to watching him on a treadmill. All that furious energy that brings him back to the same place, but batsmen obsess about that initial movement and their place in the crease when the ball arrives the most. Beside him, Shubman Gill would move back and then stay there. KL Rahul would perhaps try to lean forward a touch, if anything. Yashasvi Jaiswal was trying to be as balanced as he can be with a tiny stride. Nitish Reddy would be inside the crease, punching on the up. Rishabh Pant stood with his wide stance, trying not to move too much as he drove or punched. Rohit Sharma continued with his Adelaide method of standing on the crease, and trying to get forward. Sunil Gavaskar had commented that Rohit should perhaps do some exercise and even run in while getting to the crease — just to get that energy and momentum going. Unsure if he read that comment, but Rohit would every time run into bat when it was his turn. No one can criticise this batting unit for not trying, for not sweating hard with their individual plans ahead of the third Test. They were all focussed, each in their own batting bubble, trying earnestly, intensely. Whether it works or not, remains to be seen. Kohli's efforts in particular were rather fascinating to watch. A Test great trying to nail down his game before a vital encounter, trying to iron out the flaws, try something new. He has one more day to get this technique smoothed out. It's an optional day, and usually some batsmen go easy. Will he or will he sweat as hard as he did on Thursday? Potentially, one more net stint is available before the judgement day at the Gabba.

On a hot Brisbane afternoon, after batting longer than any other Indian, Virat Kohli trudged off the nets with his two bats, and as he neared the shade of the tents he would bang a bat with the other. It was that kind of a rather interesting net session, two days before the third Test. It's not as if he had a scrappy session, but for a batsman who has previously said "batting is 70% technical", his approach was fascinating. The nets at Gabba are on the outside, not far from the public road, not far from a statue of Allan Border, frozen into a fierce cover drive. Incidentally, a shot that wasn't seen much in the nets from Kohli. For a while in the past when the runs weren't coming, his back leg would be semi-frozen. Now in Australia, definitely at Brisbane nets, they were dancing away, moving frenetically, but it came with its own set of issues.

His first movement was back and a touch across, a furious blur as it were, but he would then try to get forward, dropping his front shoulder forward. The time available to him to complete that movement was obviously pretty short. Just before the release of a bowler or a throw-down specialist, as the case may be at the nets, he would push back and as the ball was in the air, he would try to push forward. The shortish balls weren't a problem. Really full deliveries weren't an issue. The in-between good-length did keep throwing up hard questions at him. Be it from Jasprit Bumrah or Mohammad Siraj or the nippy skiddy Akash Deep or the throw-down specialists led by Raghu. Often, the balls were at him even when he was on the move forward. It seemed to annoy him, and he would shake his head or mutter something when the ball caught the edge.

Kohli India's Virat Kohli plays a shot during the day one of the second cricket test match between Australia and India at the Adelaide Oval in Adelaide, Australia, Friday, Dec. 6, 2024. (AP Photo/James Elsbey) It was a pretty intense Kohli out there, utterly focussed on the job at hand, utterly purposeful to nail down his technique for the Test. He took repeated stints, jumping from one net to the other, even as the others would take a break or move away to the shade of the tents. In the end, only he would know whether he was happy with the way it all panned out.

It's difficult to see Pat Cummins and co. waste too many balls bowling too short. Equally difficult to see them offer too full deliveries. If the balls are back of length, Kohli is bound to push, punch, tap them away — as he would do at the nets. What would he do to a classic Josh Hazlewood delivery that just about straightens from a length? That's going to be his main test, and going by his reactions at the nets, he knows it. Often, after pushing back, when trying to get forward, he would land on his heel — not an ideal position for him. He likes to be balanced on the toes, which gives him greater balance and gets his head over the ball. In the past he has spoken about how the ideal state for a batsman is to get forward, and be in a position from there to push back if needed. He seems to be trying something different for Brisbane now, at least on evidence of the nets.

The push back came first, then the forward press. But the time window is so short that when the ball landed on the in-between length and straightened, he was playing it on the move. There were couple of times when Bumrah nicked him off, but that was early in the stint. It was against the throwdown specialist Raghu, in his last stint nearly a couple of hours later, that the internal battle would pop out. He would punch and tap, but there would be occasions when he would be caught on the move, and edge. He would look at the thrower and suggest the ball skidded quicker or shaped away. Raghu would sagely nod, say something and get back