

INDIAN CHRONICLE

18 December, 2024 | Wednesday | Volume No:12 | Issue No:265 | Pages: 8+8

www.indianchronicle.com

Published from : Ranga Reddy (Telangana State)

₹ 3

Candidates skip Group-II exam; Complain allotted centres are far away from their residences

Hyderabad: Over 3 lakh candidates skipped the Telangana Group – II recruitment examination that concluded in the State on Sunday. A significant reason for such substantial absenteeism by candidates was allotment of centres, many of which were located at far-flung places. Some students were also turned away for arriving just minutes late.

For reasons best known to them, the Telangana Public Service Commission allotted examination centres 30 to 50 kilometers away from where the aspirants resided. Many candidates from Hyderabad were assigned centres in Ibrahimpatnam and Ghatkesar, requiring a long commute.

KTR challenges Revanth Reddy to conduct Assembly session for 15 days

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao on Tuesday launched a broadside against Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and the Congress government, daring to conduct the ongoing Assembly session for 15 days to discuss farmers' loan waivers, employment and other public concerns. He said the Congress government had failed on all fronts in its first year and was creating anarchy in the State. "If Revanth Reddy has the courage, let us start with issues of farmers, weavers, auto drivers, and students of Gurukul schools. After debating the people's issues, we can also discuss about allegations against the BRS including the Formula E controversy," he asserted.

Addressing a meeting of BRS leaders from Kodangal constituency at Telangana Bhavan on Tuesday, Rama Rao slammed the Congress for deceiving voters with false promises during elections. "The Congress government has waived crop loans for less than 30 per cent farmers, but is shamelessly claiming to have implemented cent percent. In Revanth Reddy's own Kondareddy village, no farmer can claim that all their crop loans have been fully waived," he said, also criticising Revanth Reddy's handling of the Lagacherla issue. "The so-called Industrial Corridor is just a play to grab farmers' lands for personal interests to benefit his son-in-law and industrialist Gautam Adani. If industries were the goal, why not develop the 500 acres available in Veldanda?" he asked, charging the Congress government with oppressing farmers and



BRS leaders in Kodangal constituency. Demanding that the arrested farmers from Lagacherla be released immediately and all cases against them be withdrawn, he said the BRS would fight for justice on behalf of the farmers. Expressing confidence in the court's verdict, he vowed to raise the issue throughout the Assembly session and even after it concludes. Rama Rao said the Congress was using Cabinet meetings to plan arrests instead of focusing on governance. "Revanth Reddy's downfall will begin in Kodangal. Our former MLA Patnam Narendra Reddy will lead the fight to protect farmers' interests," he declared, adding that farmers would teach the Congress a fitting lesson in the upcoming local bodies elections. Former Ministers and senior leaders P Sabita Indra Reddy, Satyavathi Rathod, G Jagadish Reddy, Vemula Prashanth Reddy, Ponnala Lakshmaiah and others were also present.

Delhi govt mandates power-saving ACs in all its buildings, BJP says cosmetic effort



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

New Delhi: The Delhi government has forwarded a proposal to Lieutenant Governor V.K. Saxena mandating the use of energy-efficient air-conditioners, fans and other appliances compulsory in all its offices, officials said on Tuesday. The Opposition BJP called it a cosmetic step that was "too little, too late". The proposal was moved under the initiative of Chief Minister Atishi, who also holds the power portfolio, said an official.

The Chief Minister said the move will cut electricity bills of government buildings and also save crores of rupees, considering that the Delhi government annually pays Rs 1,900 crore in power bills for consuming over 2,000 million units of energy. Earlier, the Chief Minister inaugurated a new academic block at Government Girls Senior Secondary School in Mukundpur Village, Burari Assembly. On the occasion, Chief Minister Atishi remarked, "This magnificent block, built amidst the dense population and narrow lanes of Mukundpur Village, is even more impressive than private schools." She added, "Thanks to Arvind Kejriwal's education revolution, today a poor child no longer remains

poor. With quality education, they fulfil their dreams." Chief Minister Atishi further said, "From 1947 to 2015, Delhi's government schools saw the construction of 24,000 rooms. But in just 10 years, the AAP government has completed 65 years' worth of work, building over 22,000 rooms." After seeing the school's geography lab, Chief Minister Atishi said, "I studied in a big private school, but even there, they didn't have such facilities." "This building, with 36 rooms, is far better than any private school in this entire locality. You won't find classrooms or labs like these in private schools around here," she said.

Chief Minister Atishi said, "With this new building, especially the girls from Mukundpur Village, who previously had to go to distant schools after Class 10, will benefit the most. Now, they won't have to travel far for their education." During the inauguration event, children welcomed Chief Minister Atishi with a tilak. Later, the school plaque was unveiled, and Chief Minister Atishi interacted with students presenting exhibitions before inspecting the school. Local MLA Sanjeev Jha was also present.

In response to the AAP government's initiative for the use of green appliances in its offices, Delhi BJP Spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said it was a step taken too late. He said that the AAP government's proposal to replace electrical equipment in its offices after 10 years in power is a proposal far behind its time. "Today, Chief Minister Atishi introduced a plan to save electricity in government offices, a step delayed by a decade. However, similar initiatives have already been implemented in most major private sector institutions in Delhi," he said. The Delhi BJP Spokesperson pointed out that between 2007 and 2022, the BJP administration in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) took further steps by installing solar power plants in numerous offices and schools.

Formula-E case: Will face legally, bring it on, says KTR on Congress threats to arrest him



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Hyderabad: Amid speculations of his arrest in connection with the Formula-E case, BRS working president KT Rama Rao wished the best for Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy. "Good luck Chitti Naidu and Co. Will face you legally. Bring it on," he posted on X. Referring to the reported nod from Governor Jishnu Dev Varna to arrest him, Rama Rao observed that Revanth Reddy appeared to have got the desired result after falling at the feet of the BJP leadership in Delhi and holding secret meetings with industrialist Gautam Adani in Jaipur. "Despite conducting 30 trips to Delhi, you could not get three paise for the State. If you want to draw psychotic pleasure by filing three cases and put me in jail, that is your headache," he said. In another post, he took a dig at the Congress, sharing the post of Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah boasting about

showcasing Bengaluru through motorsports and promoting the Formula 4 car race. "Wow Nice! So is this also a scam? I wonder!" he said, amid the Telangana Congress leaders projecting the Formula E racing event held under BRS regime as a major scam.

Foxconn to set up its facility in Hyderabad soon, says Sridhar Babu

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Hyderabad: Amid speculation that Taiwanese electronics manufacturer Foxconn was planning to set up its facility in other States instead of Hyderabad, IT and Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu on Tuesday announced that Foxconn's facility would commence production soon in the State. Replying to a query during the Question Hour in Legislative Council on Tuesday, Sridhar Babu said Foxconn would set up its facility in Hyderabad and that the reports about the company planning to shift to other States were false. "Foxconn has a base in Bengaluru, Chennai and Gujarat. It is establishing different verticals in different places. In Hyderabad too a facility will come," he claimed. Stating that Foxconn would make an announcement in this regard shortly, the IT Minister said the State government was making arrangements for the company to set up its facility in the State.

Show cause notice issued to Sandhya theatre management over stampede case

Hyderabad: The Hyderabad police issued 'show cause' notice to the management of Sandhya theatre asking why 'cinematography license' issued to the theatre should not be cancelled. The police cited the lapses that led to the stampede on December 4 night, during the premiere show of Pushpa – 2, movie. The notice was issued to Renuka Devi, of Sandhya 70 mm theatre. A copy of the notice was pasted at the premises of the theatre as well. In the two page notice, issued by the Hyderabad Commissioner of Police, C V Anand, the police pointed out to several alleged lapses including absence of women security personnel, no frisking and improper security arrangements by the management.

BJP likely to send notices to MPs absent during introduction of simultaneous elections

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

The BJP on Tuesday (December 17, 2024) indicated that it will be asking several of its MPs in the Lok Sabha on why they were absent from the House when voting for the introduction of the crucial "One Nation One Election" Bill was underway. Sources in the BJP confirmed however that a few Union Ministers and some MPs who were not present in the House on Tuesday (December 17, 2024), had pre-decided official engagements and had informed the party floor managers as a three lined whip had been issued by the party ahead of the introduction of the Bill. While the introduction of the Bill itself does not take more than a simple majority, when the Bill is retabled after a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) goes into details of it, it will require two thirds majority of members to ensure passage.

The Opposition had already made it clear that they would oppose the introduction of both 'The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill and its consequential 'The Union Territories (Amendment) Bill, which are required to effect the radical changes to the country's electoral calendar. As expected when the Opposition demanded division on introduction of these bills and after voting, 269 voted in its favour



and 198 opposed it. Senior BJP leaders are now looking into the absence of its MPs from the Lok Sabha on Tuesday at the time of voting on these two draft legislations, sources said. The Bills were later referred to the joint parliamentary committee. This is not the first time that MPs have gone missing before voting on bills, in the past absenteeism has been an issue with Prime Minister Narendra Modi pulling up MPs during the customary meeting of the parliamentary party during sessions.

President Draupadi Murmu emphasises Excellence and Health at Mangalagiri AIIMS First Convocation



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

President Draupadi Murmu served as the chief guest at the first convocation of Mangalagiri All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), where she expressed her hopes for Indian women and young professionals to achieve excellence in various fields. The event, held recently, was marked by the presentation of gold medals to four distinguished students. In her address, President Murmu offered prayers to Lord Panakala Swamy and extended her wishes for the blessings of Lord Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy upon

the gathering. She commended the emerging young doctors, noting that a significant portion of the medical field now comprises women. "You will all be remembered as the first batch of AIIMS," she stated, emphasizing the importance of their future contributions.

The President conveyed the importance of health for all citizens, encouraging a collective focus on holistic well-being. "I wish for everyone in the country to prioritize their health. A daily commitment to a healthy lifestyle is essential," she remarked. She also advocated for the practice of yoga and pranayama as vital components of maintaining health. Murmu stressed the need for medical education to translate into accessible health services, reiterating the goal of the Ayushman Bharat initiative to provide effective healthcare to the populace. She highlighted the crucial role of doctors in ensuring that everyone receives the necessary medical attention and encouraged young medical professionals to prioritize service above all. In her closing remarks, President Murmu expressed her vision of a healthy and developed India, reinforcing the message that the dedication of young doctors will play a pivotal role in achieving this goal. The event was attended by dignitaries including Governor Nazir, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, Union AYUSH Minister Prakash Rao, and State Ministers Nara Lokesh and Satya Kumar Yadav.

Mounting debts keep Telangana Assembly on the boil



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Hyderabad: The Telangana Legislative Assembly witnessed heated exchanges between the treasury and the opposition benches over the mounting debts of the State. Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka and former Finance Minister T Harish Rao sparred over the fiscal management of the Congress government's first year in power.

While Bhatti Vikramarka claimed that the State government raised loans of around Rs.51,277 crore, Harish Rao countered that the State debts as on Tuesday had escalated to a whopping Rs.1.27 lakh crore, including both guaranteed and non-guaranteed loans. The row began during Question Hour when Bhatti Vikramarka informed the House that in the first year after coming to power till November 30 this year, the Congress government obtained Rs.52,118 crore under Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM), Rs 61,991.14 crore under non-FRBM loans obtained by various corporations, public sector undertakings and special purpose vehicles with government guarantees and another Rs.10,099.7 crore loans without guarantees. Harish Rao countered with a detailed breakdown, charging the Congress with incurring Rs.1.27 lakh crore in loans, including Rs 61,991 crore under corporate guarantees and Rs.10,099 crore without guarantees as well as a Rs.3,000 crore fresh loan obtained as on Tuesday.

"If this trend continues, Telangana's debt will surge to Rs.6.36 lakh crore in Congress government's five-year term," he warned. He also dismissed Congress's claim that Rs 6.71 lakh crore was borrowed during the BRS regime, asserting the total was Rs 4.17 lakh crore. "The Congress presented a white paper to mislead the public. Despite ob-

taining record loans and enjoying robust revenue, pending bills remain unpaid, and no new schemes have been launched," he said, condemning the attempts to inflate the debts obtained under the previous BRS regime to blame it for the Congress government's shortcomings.

He demanded for a short discussion on the fiscal condition of Telangana and its debts. However, the Deputy Chief Minister fired back, denying to have availed Rs.1.27 lakh crore and blamed the BRS over fiscal mismanagement. He claimed that Harish Rao was misleading the House and making an issue out of nothing. He suggested that the BRS legislators not waste time and allow the House to proceed with the Question Hour to proceed. Countering him, Harish Rao urged the Speaker to allow the Privilege Motion moved by the opposition for discussion on the State debts.

Rain alert issued for Andhra Pradesh amid depression in Bay of Bengal

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

The low-pressure area currently forming in the south-east Bay of Bengal is expected to intensify and turn into a depression within the next two days, according to the Meteorological Department. This low pressure is moving west-northwestwards and is heading toward the Tamil Nadu coast. As a result, moderate to heavy rainfall is anticipated in Tamil Nadu and coastal Rayalaseema in Andhra Pradesh over the next three days. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a rain alert for several districts, including Tirupati, Annamaya, Chittoor, Nellore, Bapatla, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, and Srikakulam.

In North Coast Andhra Pradesh & Yanam, light to moderate rains are likely in one or two locations today, with the forecast for tomorrow indicating light to moderate rains or thundershowers at a few places, alongside the potential for thunderstorms in isolated areas.

The following day is expected to see light to moderate rains or thundershowers at many places, with the likelihood of heavy rains in one or two locations and thunderstorms developing at isolated spots.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Fix health insurance

THE shocking murder of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson in the US, reportedly motivated by grievances over denied claims, has ignited a global debate about health insurance systems. While the US struggles with its own healthcare challenges, India faces a similarly disheartening reality. As per a recent survey, 43 per cent of policyholders in India reported difficulties in claim processing, ranging from rejections due to "pre-existing conditions" to opaque exclusions hidden in fine print. India's health insurance sector, touted as a safety net, often traps patients in a web of delays and financial burdens. Claims are sometimes processed so sluggishly that hospital discharges are delayed, forcing families to bear additional costs. Ambiguous contracts filled with technical jargon only worsen the plight of policyholders, many of whom are left financially and emotionally drained.

Adding to the problem, insurance premiums have seen staggering hikes — over 50 per cent for one in five policyholders last year — making coverage unaffordable for many middle-class families. This trend undermines public trust and risks turning health insurance into an unsustainable financial burden rather than a source of relief. The lessons from the US are clear: distrust between stakeholders-insurers, healthcare providers and patients leads to systemic failures. India must urgently address this mistrust by strengthening transparency and accountability within the insurance sector. Models like managed care, which integrate healthcare delivery with insurance, can reduce costs and improve patient outcomes.

The Insurance Regulatory Development Authority of India must enforce stricter transparency norms, ensure grievance redress mechanisms and penalise unscrupulous practices. Strengthening public systems like Ayushman Bharat can complement these measures by reducing dependence on private insurers.

Growing cybercrime and the need for an Indian cybersecurity force

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, the importance of cybersecurity cannot be stressed enough. In India alone, a company falls victim to cyberattacks every 11 seconds. By August 2024, nearly 60% of businesses globally had experienced a ransomware attack. On a global scale, we contend with 5.5 billion malware attacks annually and an astounding 6.3 trillion attempted breaches — an average of 6.5 attacks every second.

According to some leading research sites such as CRN India, ransomware poses a significant threat in India, with eight out of 10 enterprises confirming that they have experienced such attacks. Further, almost 40% of large enterprises in India have fallen victim to phishing email-led attacks. A striking 92% of all surveyed enterprises believe that operational disruption would be a significant consequence of a ransomware attack. This data presents a compelling portrait of the digital landscape we navigate. While digitalisation brings substantial economic and social benefits, it also introduces unique challenges — much like any powerful tool — that we must be prepared to address effectively. As cybercrime continues to evolve into a sophisticated enterprise, the need for robust cybersecurity measures becomes imperative. Effective cybersecurity demands not only the integration of cutting-edge technology and innovation but also the ability to navigate the complexities that accompany these advancements. The impact of cyberattacks on enterprises extends far beyond organisational boundaries, affecting individuals and communities. A recent ransomware attack on a company disrupted payment systems for 300 small, especially rural and cooperative banks across the country. As such incidents multiply, their repercussions on the nation's economy and the financial well-being of its citizens are increasingly evident. Shortage of skilled professionals: The rising prevalence of these threats also underscores the urgency to address the shortage of skilled professionals in the cybersecurity sector. India's G-20 Sherpa and former NITI Aayog CEO, Amitabh Kant, recently unveiled a report that highlighted that over 1,16,000 cybersecurity incidents were reported in 2023, a significant increase from previous years. This alarming rise emphasises the pressing need for a larger, trained and skilled professionals to combat the challenges in an ever-evolving cybersecurity landscape. According to a white paper from the World Economic Forum, India is home to nearly one-third of the world's graduates in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Yet, 30% of the 40,000 job vacancies for cybersecurity professionals in 2024 remain unfilled due to talent shortages. The current market for skilled talent offers a valuable opportunity for bolstering national security and enhancing economic growth. As cybercrime becomes more sophisticated, the Indian cybersecurity market is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 18.33% from 2024 to 2029, as PwC India says, reflecting increased investment in cybersecurity measures by financial institutions. The demand for cybersecurity professionals has surged in the South Asian region and the 'Five Eyes' countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States), driven primarily by rapid digital transformation. A report from the Data Security Council of India indicates that the country will need 1.5 million cybersecurity professionals by 2025. Therefore, it is crucial to train future generations in cybersecurity fundamentals to capitalise on India's demographic dividend. While India produces a wealth of technically skilled professionals known for their strong work ethic, ensuring that they are adequately equipped to tackle future challenges particularly in cybersecurity is essential. As a burgeoning hub for technology and innovation, India holds immense potential for developing its cybersecurity infrastructure. As educational institutions collaborate with policymakers to expand opportunities in cyberspace, key areas remain where targeted growth can drive more impactful outcomes. The findings of the 2023 Ministry of Education report indicate that fewer than 30% of institutions offer comprehensive cybersecurity courses. And, even though these institutions offer cybersecurity courses in India, many need updated curricula that align with industry needs. Despite facing cyberattack challenges and accounting for 13.7% of all such incidents, India is emerging as a critical player in the global cybersecurity landscape. The PwC India report says that approximately 28% of global organisations have more than half of their cybersecurity teams based in India, with 17% housing over 75% of their teams there.

MP businessman not allowed to board Ro Ro Ferry Service second time



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

A businessman from Madhya Pradesh was not allowed to board the Ro Ro Ferry Service between from Ghogha in Bhavnagar for the second time on Friday, after the incident on December 8 when he fell off the ferry into the sea, some 12 nautical miles from Surat. Sources in the police told The Indian Express that man identified as Atulkumar Maneklal Choksi, "had tonsured his head and shaved his beard in an attempt to disguise himself and tried to board the ferry from

Hazira in Surat on December 9 and 10, but the authorities did not allow him"

On December 8, Choksi had travelled on the Ro Ro ferry services from Ghogha to Hazira, when he claimed he felt dizziness and nausea and accidentally fell into the sea from the deck. The crew members rescued him and handed him to the Surat police for questioning, and he was let go after recording his statement.

Choksi later travelled from Surat to Bhavnagar in a train from there he reached at Bhavnagar in state transport bus and reached Ghogha ferry terminal on Friday afternoon. However, in spite of his changed appearance, when he submitted his Aadhar card, officials at the ticket counter identified him and refused to let him board "as a precautionary measure". The ferry officials later handed him to Bhavnagar district police, when he insisted to travel, said Ghogha police station officials. Talking to the Indian Express Ghogha police sub inspector B K Goswami said, "We have taken his statements and later allowed him to go. From his statements Choksi appears to be mentally ill. We talked to his parents at Madhya Pradesh and found that he is under treatment. We found him regularly changing his statements. The accused is a farmer and stays with his parents in Madhya Pradesh. He is unmarried and wanted to start a business in denims for which he came to Bhavnagar. He also told us that as the journey between Bhavnagar to Surat takes lesser time by the ferry service, he opted for the sea route".

Remark about Jagir Kaur lands SGPC chief in trouble; women's panel summons him



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Punjab State Women's Commission chairperson Raj Lalli Gill has summoned Shriomani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) president Harjinder Singh Dhami over his alleged derogatory remarks about rebel SAD leader Bibi Jagir Kaur. Gill said she had taken suo motu cognisance of

the remarks under Section 12 of the Punjab State Women's Commission Act, 2001. She issued a notice to Dhami, asking him to appear before the commission on December 17 with a written explanation for his comments. Calling for Dhami's removal as SGPC president, Gill said the commission was committed to protecting the rights, dignity, and honour of women in Punjab. She described the matter as serious and concerning. Gill played an audio clip of Dhami's alleged remarks, which has been circulating on social media, during a press briefing. She claimed that Dhami had made "highly offensive and demeaning" comments about Bibi Jagir Kaur during a telephonic conversation with a journalist. "These remarks were not only defamatory but also disrespectful to women in general," she said. The commission emphasised that Dhami, as head of the SGPC, a respected institution, is expected to maintain the highest standards of dignity and respect. Gill said, "Such language is unbecoming of his office and sends a damaging message to society." Citing the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev, she urged the SGPC to take immediate action and remove Dhami from his position. Gill also warned that if Dhami fails to appear before the commission within the stipulated timeframe, appropriate legal action under the Punjab State Women's Commission Act, 2001, would be recommended.

Precedent with Channi The commission had previously issued a similar notice to former Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi for his derogatory remarks about women. Channi had not appeared before the commission but later apologised publicly. No action was taken against him.

Stranger siphons off Rs 1.43 lakh from Mumbai bank by changing NEFT money transfer details



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

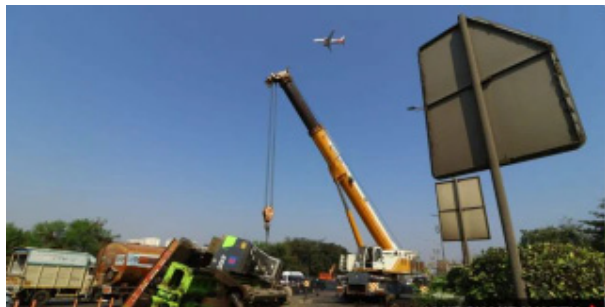
An unidentified person duped a private bank in north-east Mumbai and fraudulently got Rs 1.43 lakh from a Mulund-based private college transferred to his bank account, the police said. According to the police, the fraudster allegedly changed the details entered in an NEFT money transfer application form on October 28 when the assistant manager of the bank's Mulund West branch went to the washroom. The bank, in its internal inquiry, found that more such fraudulent transactions amounting to Rs 4.79 lakh have been done from the branch, and transferred to the same

beneficiary bank account, the police said.

The fraudulent transaction, however, came to light only two weeks later when a staff member from the college approached the bank to enquire about a NEFT transfer on November 11. When the bank staff retrieved the NEFT transfer application form, the school staffer told them it didn't belong to his school. The bank conducted an internal inquiry and on analysing the CCTV analysis spotted the unknown person sneaking into the vacant room of the bank officer. The footage showed the stranger taking the NEFT form from the table, going out and placing it back on the table after some time with modified details, states the FIR, the police said.

Unaware of this, the assistant manager cleared the form and processed the NEFT request, the Mulund police said. The officer then filed a cheating complaint with the police on Friday. "On October 28, when there was a shortage of staff, the complainant was also assisting clerical staff by supervising the processing of RTGS and NEFT money transfer applications and finally sending the money," the police said in the First Information Report (FIR). "We have registered the case and are further investigating the matter. No arrest has been made yet," said inspector in-charge of Mulund police station.

Crane topples on two-wheeler, Mumbai-based interior designer loses limb



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

A large crane over turned on Saturday morning on Eastern Express Highway near Vikhroli causing huge traffic jams in and around the area. A large crane over turned on Eastern Express Highway near Vikhroli causing huge traffic jams in and around the area. A Mumbai-based interior designer lost his left arm after a 64-ton crane toppled on him on a bridge between Ghatkopar and Vikhroli in the wee hours of Saturday. The victim has been identified as Vipul Panchal, 44, a resident of Adarsh Nagar, Kandivali. He was returning home from work when the accident occurred.

The crane toppled from a trailer while it was being transported to a construction site. The crane fell onto Panchal's motorcycle, crushing the vehicle and severely injuring him. The trailer driver has been identified as Laltaprasad Yadav. Mumbai Fire Brigade (MFB) officials

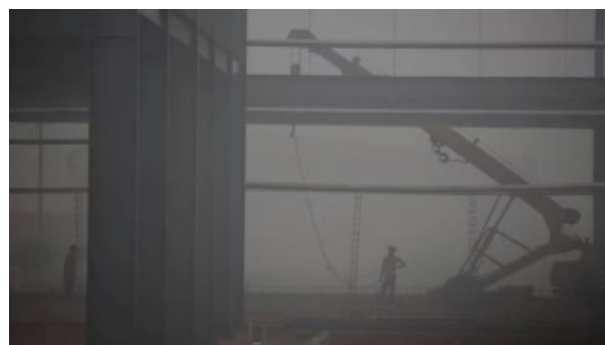
stated that the crane's weight made its removal challenging, and the process would take time to be completed. "The crane is extremely heavy, and lifting it requires careful coordination. Traffic on the bridge has been stopped until the crane is removed," said an MFB official.

The victim was initially taken to Sion Hospital for treatment but was later shifted to a private hospital upon his family's request. An FIR has been registered against the driver and the owner of the trailer at Vikhroli Police Station. Suryakant Naikwadi, Senior Police Inspector, said, "We received information about the incident around 4:30 am and dispatched our team immediately. The victim was rushed to the hospital, and efforts to clear the crane from the road are ongoing." "The accident has caused significant traffic disruptions on the route, with vehicles being diverted to the alternative route through a service road."

South Korea President Yoon Suk Yeol impeached over his martial law order

South Korea's parliament has voted to impeach President Yoon Suk Yeol over his short-lived martial law declaration this month. Mr. Yoon's Presidential powers and duties will be suspended after the copies of a document on the impeachment are delivered to him and to the Constitutional Court.

PMC stops work at Pune construction sites for not taking dust mitigation steps



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Work at construction sites across the city has been stopped by the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) in a crackdown against dust pollution. The corporation has issued notices to 158 construction sites, of which 91 were served stop-work orders for failing to implement dust mitigation measures like erection of boundary walls around construction sites, covering of the site in green cloth, and water sprinkling. The notices have been issued across six construction department zones in the city. According to the 24-hour average data uploaded by the Central Pollution Control Board at 4 pm, Pune's Air Quality Index (AQI) deteriorated and fell under the moderate category 106-69 during December 9-13, triggering the PMC for stern measures. Pune had an AQI of 88 and 83 on December 7 and 8 respectively. These levels fall under the satisfactory category.

Dust produced during construction contributes a significant percentage to airborne particulate matter. A 2021 report by the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board said that construction dust accounts for around 11.5 per cent of all PM10 and PM25 pollution in Pune. Sridhar Yeolekar, superintendent engineer at PMC Building Department, told The Indian Express that surveys were undertaken by engineers after which the stop-work notices were issued. "The other sites that have not been issued stop-work notices have been asked to provide information about the sites to the department," he added.

2 brokers dupe Mumbai-based diamond firm of Rs 1.20 crore, booked



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

The two brokers who work in diamond markets in Mumbai and Surat told Kothari that they know a company that is interested in buying good quality diamonds. The Mumbai police on Friday booked two diamond brokers who allegedly duped a BKC-based diamond company of Rs 1.20 crore by borrowing the precious stones from it under the pretext of selling them to another company at a higher price.

But the accused — Kishor Abhangi, 51, and Maulik Abhangi, 30 — neither sold the diamonds nor returned the diamonds to the company and went uncommunicado, said Gaurav Kothari, the sales manager with the firm that filed a complaint with the police. The two brokers who work in diamond markets in Mumbai and Surat told Kothari that they know a company that is interested in buying good quality diamonds. "Under the pretext of getting a good profitable deal, the two took 293.70 carats of cut and polished diamonds worth Rs 1.20 crore by signing a mutual Jhanged receipt," Kothari said in his statement to the police. Kothari told the police the accused were introduced to his company which has an office in Bharat Diamond Bourse, BKC, by another diamond broker in May. The police are trying to collect details of the two wanted brokers by making enquiries with other brokers and people the two used to work with, said a police officer. Kothari's firm waited for the two brokers to sell the diamond, and after the allotted time expired, they gave vague responses and bought more time when the company asked them to return the precious stones. The BKC police have registered a case under sections 409 (criminal breach of trust by a public servant or by a banker, merchant, or agent), 420 (cheating), and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code.

BRS Gurukul Bata pushes Congress Govt into damage control mode

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Hyderabad: The deteriorating conditions in welfare hostels across the State have dented the government's image considerably. With disillusionment spreading among the student community and their parents left distressed, the BRS had launched a massive campaign, "Gurukul Bata," to expose the government's failures. With the campaign hitting it further, the government has now embarked on a damage control mission.

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, who also holds the education portfolio, has faced criticism for the worsening state of affairs in welfare hostels. In an effort to address these issues, he has initiated a series of visits to welfare hostels across the State, aiming to stir the official machinery into action. This exercise is viewed by many as a late awakening.

Since the Congress party took office, there have been numerous tragic incidents involving hostel students. According to sources, 51 students have died in welfare institutions, with causes ranging from food poisoning and ill-health and other suspicious circumstances. Of these, 42 deaths have been attributed to gross negligence in managing residential welfare schools.

Pushpa 2 posters, reels: AAP-BJP fight for Delhi goes online



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

As Delhi's election season heats up, political parties have turned to blockbuster hits to woo voters — and to score a few points against their opponents. A recent case in point? An exchange of Pushpa 2-themed campaign posters between the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). On December 7, AAP released a poster of the recently released Telugu film Pushpa 2: The Rise on X. Instead of actor Allu Arjun, however, the poster featured former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a dramatic makeover — sporting a funky necklace, oversized rings, and bracelets, Kejrival carried AAP's signature broom over his shoulder in place of Pushpa's gun. Arjun's red-tinted sunglasses featured in the poster were swapped for Kejrival's square metal-rimmed spectacles, and Pushpa's intense scowl gave way to Kejrival's smile.

The background of the movie poster, where a crowd gazes admiringly at Pushpa, was reimagined with women holding free bus tickets and smiling at Kejrival among other elements like trucks clearing garbage, water flowing from taps, school buildings, CCTV cameras, and AAP's celebrated mohalla clinics. The tagline boldly declared, "Kejrival Jhukega Nah" ("Kejrival Will Not Bow Down"), with "4th Term Coming Soon" emblazoned at the bottom. The BJP hit back two days later, with its own Pushpa-inspired poster. Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva's face was photoshopped onto Pushpa's body, sitting nonchalantly on a wooden chair. The caption riffed on the film's famous dialogue: "Brashtachariyon ko khatam karenge, rappa rappa (We will eliminate the corrupt, rappa rappa)". Behind these cinematic campaigns lies a well-oiled social media machinery. "We did the Pushpa poster when the movie was released," an AAP official said on condition of anonymity. "A pool of young volunteers came up with these fun ideas — many are scattered across India and abroad. Those who cannot physically campaign in Delhi contribute via social media. They do spoofs, voiceovers, and edit videos. They're extremely organised and connected through WhatsApp

groups." "Almost every other day, we release something — a spoof or a meme. Positive content reinforces our message, while attack content reacts to the Opposition. One of our volunteers is an AI graphic designer, creating AI-generated images daily. Another volunteer makes meme posters often referencing popular films. Most of these creators aren't professionals; some are film school students, but most of them use basic tools." "For the BJP, creating movie-inspired posters is nothing new. Previously, the Delhi BJP had crafted a poster featuring Arvind Kejriwal as Kachra Seth from the 2006 classic Phir Hera Pheri, dubbing him "Dilli ka Kachra Seth" in reference to the character played by actor Manoj Joshi in the film. Another poster, inspired by the Akshay Kumar starrer Toilet: Ek Prem Katha, was released after the BJP shared a video of the gym and washroom at the Civil Lines bungalow, which the party frequently refers to as "Sheesh Mahal", where Kejrival lived when he was CM. The poster depicted Kejrival standing next to a gold toilet seat with a price tag of Rs 12 lakh, accompanied by the tagline "Toilet: Ek Chor Katha." Written in a corner are the words "AAP Presents", styled to resemble a production house logo. "Using such creative tactics helps gather attention to issues that we are trying to raise. A lot of people from the Sangathan, volunteers and professionals who are connected with us make these posters; this is an ongoing process. In Delhi, we first made such interactive filmy posters during the MCD elections, then the Lok Sabha elections, and now the Delhi elections. But for us, this is not an election-specific duty, we keep making and releasing such posters throughout the year," a BJP member associated with the process said. "Many times, autorickshaw drivers are ready to put our posters on their own, but, on average, we have asked each MLA to take charge of putting at least 500 posters on autorickshaws... The target varies for different areas — in Northeast Delhi, the target is much more because the majority of auto drivers stay there as opposed to areas of South Delhi. In these posters, we are mostly featuring pictures from our rallies and padyatras where Kejrival ji is seen interacting with people," a party official said. "When it comes to traditional campaigning, what has been most successful for us so far is Revdi pe Charcha and micro-level activities targeting groups of 20-25 people at a time. It's like a focus group discussion. Invitations are sent out, tea and snacks are arranged, and we have hour-long interactive conversations. Afterward, we collect feedback. Some people even invite us into their homes. Our booth-level karyakartas are tasked with five meetings per booth, aiming to convert attendees into voters or even campaigners who would help us spread our message further through word of mouth or by sticking posters. So far, we've held about 2,500 meetings," the official added.

BJP cries foul, says protected bird served at Himachal CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu's dinner



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu's dinner with locals in Tikkar, a remote area in the state, on Friday night has landed him in a controversy with senior BJP leader Jairam Thakur alleging that junglefowl, a protected bird species, was served as part of the meal. Sukhu hit back saying "opposition leaders have no issues left to raise". Thakur, the Leader of the Opposition, shared a purported video of the dinner on X and accused the state government of organising picnics at the expense of the state exchequer. "People who consume protected species of wild chicken are penalized with fines and jail time. However, the Chief Minister gets menus printed to serve chicken and then enjoys watching his ministers relish it right in front of him. Is this what you call a system change? Sukhu said BJP lead-

ers were damaging the image of innocent villagers. "Due to health reasons, I avoid both oily dishes and non-vegetarian food. But since Jairam ji could not find any other issue, he chose to tarnish the reputation of our villagers. Opposition leaders have no issues left to raise and are merely working to damage the image of the villagers," he added.

Meanwhile, BJP leaders shared a copy of the purported menu of the dinner, pointing out that item number 12 on the menu was 'Jungli Murga' or junglefowl. BJP spokespersons Manu Nanda and Chetan Bragta demanded a clarification from Sukhu. "It is shocking to see that a protected species was served at a dinner attended by the chief minister. CM Sukhu should address the media and clarify his stance," the BJP said. A divisional forest officer, requesting anonymity, said, "There are at least three-four species of junglefowls in Himachal Pradesh. These species are Schedule II protected under The Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act, 2022, an updated version of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Hunting or killing junglefowl is strictly prohibited." According to reports, on Friday, Sukhu was in the Kupvi area, a remote region about 108 km from the state capital Shimla. During his visit, he distributed ₹97.69 lakh to 2,171 women under the Indra Gandhi Pyari Behna Sukh Samman Nidhi Yojna. Later, he visited Tikkar, where he dined with locals and spent the night. Sukhu has recently launched an initiative to visit remote, backward, and harsh areas of the state, spending at least one night among the locals to enhance the government's outreach.

'Delhi tops cities in murder, crime against women': Arvind Kejriwal seeks discussion with Union minister Amit Shah

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Over the last six months, Kejrival alleged, more than 300 city schools and colleges as well as 100 hospitals, malls, and the airport had received bomb threats. Alleging that there was a "complete collapse" of law and order in the city, AAP convener and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah seeking time to discuss the issue. Delhi, Kejrival alleged, had become the "crime and extortion capital of the world" as statistics put it atop a list of cities with the most murder cases and the worst among 19 metros as far as women's safety is concerned. He also flagged bomb threats in schools becoming a regular feature and a 350 per cent rise in drug cases. "I am writing to you since the responsibility of law and order in Delhi lies with you as the Home Minister of the country. But I am sad to state that Delhi is now known as the capital of crime both in the country and abroad," the AAP chief stated in the letter. "While crimes against women in Delhi are growing with speed, extortion gangs, and gangsters have become active in each bylane... Criminals have become so fearless these days that incidents of daylight shootings, murder, abduction... are being perpetrated in broad daylight," he added.

Over the last six months, Kejrival alleged, more than 300 city schools and colleges as well as 100 hospitals, malls, and the airport had received bomb threats. When schools were evacuated in reaction to bomb threats, what were children and their parents expected to feel, he asked. "Why are these people who issue false threats on a



daily basis not being arrested? Can you imagine how children and their parents feel after they are sent home because of bomb threats? Today, each parent and child in Delhi is living under the terror of bomb threats," he alleged. "... Delhi is at the top spot among 19 metro cities when it comes to crime against women and murder. Drug-related crimes have gone up by 350% since 2019," he also alleged. Flagging what he alleged was a sense of insecurity among women and the business community, Kejrival said the people of Delhi had begun asking why they did not deserve the opposite when it came to the city's law and order situation. Demanding his intervention in the matter since the Delhi Police was under his ambit, Kejrival said, "The situation is very bad Mr Home Minister. We need to rise above politics and fix Delhi's law and order situation immediately. I request you to give me some of your valuable time at the earliest so I can apprise you of the situation."

Bihar PSC exam paper leaks 'state-sponsored', alleges Tejashwi

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav has charged Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar with "maintaining silence" over alleged irregularities in a PSC examination, claiming that recent question paper "leaks" in such competitive tests were "state-sponsored". In a video statement late on Friday, the leader of the opposition in the assembly also accused Kumar of "failing" to communicate with job aspirants who staged protests over the alleged paper leak in the 70th Integrated Combined Competitive Examination (CCE) 2024, conducted by the Bihar Public Service Commission. Kumar's "reluctance to communicate with students who were baton-charged by the police and slapped by an official of the Patna district" showed that the JD(U) supremo is a "tired man and unable to govern Bihar", Tejashwi claimed. "This government has failed in conducting any examination in the state without paper leaks... whether it is for class 10th, 12th, police constable recruitment exams or BPSC tests, questions papers are leaked before the examinations start. This government is least bothered about the welfare of students and youths," the RJD leader alleged.

"I must say that these question paper leaks are state-sponsored. Why did the CM and two deputy CMs maintain silence over the issue? Those (aspirants) who protested against irregularities in the exam were baton-charged, slapped by an official of Patna and also sent to jail. It seems that bureaucrats are running the government in the state... This is not the government of the people," Yadav claimed. The youths of Bihar will "show a mirror to NDA leaders" in the 2025 assembly polls, he said. "If we come to power after the 2025 assembly polls in the state, we will take care of students and youths. We will make arrangements for their (job aspirants) travel and stay during competitive exams. People are fed up with the NDA government in the state," the RJD leader alleged.

Rumours of a leak of question paper of the Bihar Public Service Commission preliminary examination erupted at an examination centre on Friday, prompting the commission to warn of police action against those involved in the "conspiracy". Around 300-400 aspirants boycotted BPSC's 70th Integrated Combined Competitive Examination (CCE) 2024 held at the Bapu examination centre at Kumhrar in Patna, alleging that the question paper was leaked on social media even before the examination started. Chaos had prevailed at the centre where an additional examination superintendent, identified as Ram Iqbal Singh, died of cardiac arrest and a female candidate fell unconscious on Friday. Patna District Magistrate



Chandrashekhar Singh reached the examination centre upon hearing about the commotion.

A large crowd gathered outside the centre and news channels ran video footage of the DM slapping one of the unruly bystanders and ordering police personnel to round up all those who were indulging in mischief. The DM clarified, "It was never my intention to slap or hurt any aspirant. There was a slight delay in the distribution of question booklets in one or two examination halls at the centre." "An aspirant was slapped by an official in Patna on Friday when the former was protesting against the alleged delay in the distribution of the BPSC exam question paper. It was highly condemnable," Yadav claimed. He also asked, "Why question papers were distributed almost an hour after the scheduled time? This is sheer injustice with the students".

As far as the PSC preliminary examination, held on Friday, is concerned, BPSC chairman Parmar Ravi Manubhai claimed that the test was held in a free and fair manner in more than 900 centres, where close to five lakh candidates appeared. "However, in one centre in Patna, some of the candidates snatched question papers from the invigilators and stormed out of the examination hall screaming that the paper had been leaked.

"Snatching question papers from invigilators and showing those to outsiders is tantamount to looting public property. Police action will be initiated against those who seem to have acted as a part of a conspiracy... we are examining CCTV footage to identify them," he added. The RJD leader accused the CM of spending Rs 104 crore for his publicity on social media in the name of the 'Mahila-Samvad' yatra which is scheduled to start on Sunday. He also alleged, "Rs 114 crore will be spent on snacks and other things during the CM's yatra from the government treasury... this is organised just to improve the image of the state government and the CM."

ing for his upcoming exams. He was counselled and allowed to go, sources in the police said.

Emergency response teams, including local police, bomb detection units, and dog squads, arrived at the school to conduct a search operation, news agency PTI reported. Emergency response teams, including local police, bomb detection units, and dog squads, arrived at DPS R K Puram to conduct a search operation, news agency PTI reported. "We received a call about a bomb threat at DPS RK Puram at 6:09 am," a Delhi Fire Services official said.

According to the police, the email was sent from a masked Virtual private network (VPN), which was tracked to the US, Canada, Sweden and Netherlands. A police source said the emails were received in the wee hours of Friday, with the sender mentioning "parent-teachers meeting" and "sports day" activities in the schools. The sender also mentioned that the "schools will face bomb blasts" on Friday and Saturday, the source added. The latest threats come close on the heels of at least 44 schools receiving similar emails on Monday which the police had declared as hoaxes.

As garbage woes grow, HC seeks answers to mismanagement allegations

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

From a single garbage mountain in 2021 to three by 2023, the evolution of the Dadumajra dump exemplifies a saga of delays and obfuscation. What was once a picturesque lake in the village has been transformed into a sprawling dumping ground for the City Beautiful's waste, marked by missed deadlines and unfulfilled promises. In 2019, the Municipal Corporation declared that it would reclaim the land within months if not a year but the garbage continued to grow. In 2022, the civic body again submitted an affidavit to the Punjab and Haryana High Court, promising to clear the first mountain by March 2023 and the second soon afterwards. But this year, the MC admitted the presence of a third dump. In another affidavit before the HC earlier this month, it kicked the can further down the road saying that it would take it 3.5 years to reclaim that space.

The Municipal Corporation is currently carrying out bio-remediation of the second landfill containing 8 lakh metric tonnes (MT) of legacy waste under the Swachh Bharat Mission-2. According to the MC, 7.80 lakh MT of this waste has already been processed. In its affidavit, the MC stated that the remaining 20,000 MT of legacy waste, along with an additional temporary dump of approximately 1.25 lakh MT, would be fully processed within 43 months. Meanwhile, the locals continue to fight the all-pervasive smell of putrid waste and the unsightly waste which has not only seeped into the underwood water as per a report by the Punjab Engineering College but has also given rise to a whole range of disease amongst the people. Even though the stench not only permeates the area but also the neighbouring sectors depending on the direction of the wind, the MC has been claiming to use chemicals to snuff it out. In its 2022 affidavit before the HC, it said how to minimise odour and environmental impact, waste at both sites is treated with effective micro-organism solutions.

Leachate continues to flow at the site of the first dump. But MC in its affidavit filed earlier this month confidently claimed that new machinery operational since 4 December 2024, is ensuring that no mixed waste is now dumped at the site. Consequently, no leachate is generated from mixed waste, and any earlier issues of leachate have been promptly addressed through treatment at the Leachate Treatment Plant (LTP). Additionally, the Municipal Corporation claimed that there is no gap between waste generation and processing, and all its actions comply with the directives of the National Green Tribunal.

It is a claim repudiated by a recent Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) report submitted to the National Green Tribunal (NGT). The CPCB report, submitted on December 11, stated, "Examination/analysis of the reports received at the CPCB Head Office Laboratory reveals that none of the eight sewage treatment plants (STPs) monitored by the joint committee is complying with all the prescribed parameters. All the STPs were found non-compliant with the NGT's standards." High Court seeks detailed replies on allegations of mismanagement

The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Friday directed the Municipal Corporation, Chandigarh, to file pictures of the site and detailed replies to key applications alleging systemic mismanagement of the Dadu Majra garbage dump. The Division Bench, comprising Chief Justice Sheel Nagu and Justice Anil Kshetarpal, issued these directions while hearing a set of public interest litigations (PILs) filed by city residents against mounting health and environmental hazards caused by the site. The PILs, originally filed in 2016 and later combined with another petition in 2021, highlight grave concerns over toxic waste accumulation and repeated violations of waste management laws. Petitioners have argued that despite clear guidelines published in 2016 with a comprehensive manual by the Government, multiple directives from the courts and the National Green Tribunal (NGT), the Municipal Corporation (MC) has failed to implement meaningful solutions.

Municipal Corporation Seeks NGT Shield During the hearing, counsel Gaurav Mohunta for the MC sought to transfer the case to the NGT, citing an ongoing case (OA 606 of 2018) that allegedly addresses similar issues. However, Advocate Amit Sharma, the petitioner appearing in person, opposed the move, calling it a calculated attempt to evade accountability. "The Municipal Corporation has a history of using one or the other pretext to delay or deflect from the issue. Now, they're using the NGT proceedings as a pretext for inaction," Sharma argued. He reminded the court that in 2019, the MC had assured that no fresh waste would be dumped at Dadu Majra. "Yet, today, not only do we have three garbage mountains instead of one, but residents are also enduring painful, excruciating deaths caused by toxic exposure while the MC spends crores on study tours and treatment plants with no results," he alleged.

Applications Awaiting Responses Sharma drew attention to two critical applications that remain unanswered or insufficiently addressed by the MC. An application filed earlier this year seeks detailed explanations about the MC's waste management strategy, compliance with environmental laws, and discrepancies in earlier submissions. Sharma noted that the MC's reply to this application was contradictory. Joint Commissioner Gurinder Sodhi claimed the proposed project was intended for a waste-to-energy plant, thus contradicting an affidavit filed by the Municipal Corporation on February 5, 2024, which stated that such a plant was not feasible as it would violate the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016. The second application questions the MC's compliance with fundamental environmental laws and its decision to establish a landfill on a water body located less than 10 feet from a residential area. Sharma highlighted the lack of any reply to this application, leaving critical questions unanswered. Tampered DPR and Allegations of Mismanagement Sharma also raised serious concerns about the Detailed Project Report (DPR) submitted by the MC in November 2023. The DPR, which the MC attempted to conceal from the petitioner, was eventually obtained via a certified copy.

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Emergency response teams, including local police, bomb detection units, and dog squads, arrived at the school to conduct a search operation, news agency PTI reported. Emergency response teams, including local police, bomb detection units, and dog squads, arrived at DPS R K Puram to conduct a search operation, news agency PTI reported. A bomb threat received via e-mail was reported at Delhi Public School (DPS) R K Puram early Saturday. The e-mail was determined to be a hoax, according to the Delhi Fire Services. This is the second such incident in two days and comes after similar cases were reported in at least 30 schools in the national capital on Friday.

The police traced a minor boy, a school student, hours after he allegedly sent emails warning of these threats to the schools including his own. While nothing suspicious was found, the police said the boy took the step to avoid appear-

Covid purchases 'scam': FIR against former officials of Karnataka medical education dept



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

In continuation of a crackdown on large-scale corruption that allegedly occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic when the BJP government was in power in Karnataka, the Bengaluru police have registered an FIR against former officials of the state Department of Medical Education (DME) for criminal breach of trust and conspiracy. The FIR was registered against DME officials including former director Dr P G Girish, joint director (accounts) G C Raghu, and unnamed elected representatives on Friday on the basis of a complaint filed by chief accounts officer Dr M Vishnuprasad.

The complaint alleged corruption in the purchase of 15.51 lakh Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits worth Rs 203 crore and 42.15 lakh N-95 masks valued at Rs 9.75 crore during 2020-21 when current Chikballapur MP Dr K Sudhakar was the medical education minister. According to the police complaint, the state government gave clearance to the DME on August 18, 2020, to buy 2.59 lakh N-95 masks and 2.59 lakh PPE kits for its staff at 17 medical colleges and one super specialty hospital, and said the procurement must be under the Karnataka procurement laws and should not exceed the estimated Rs 41.35 crore. A firm called Laj Exports was awarded the bid to provide PPE kits at the rate of Rs 1,312.50 each on September 7, 2020. According to the police complaint, there are no records for the supply of these purchased materials to the aforementioned institutions despite the release of payments. The payment of Rs 41.34 crore was made to a firm called Prudent Management Solution Mumbai for the supply of 2.59 lakh PPE kits as stipulated in the tender. Besides, 55,784 excess PPE kits worth Rs 7.32 crore were also purchased from the firm

without a tender process. The DME also made five separate purchases of PPE kits without any procurement order and without records of usage, it is alleged. On December 20, 2020, the director of medical education procured Rs 23.31 crore worth of PPE kits and N-95 masks, another order was issued on March 20, 2021, for the purchase of 91,450 kits and masks for Rs 12 crore, and further on March 29, 2021, another order for kits worth Rs 49.01 crore was issued, said the complaint.

The police complaint has stated that a payment of Rs 13.16 crore was made to Prudent Management Solutions Mumbai before the particular payment was released by the government to the Directorate of Medical Education. The government transferred funds to the medical education department on December 22, 2020, but the amount was transferred to the private firm on November 5, 2020, the complaint has alleged. The FIR against DME officials comes in the wake of an interim report by a committee, headed by a retired Karnataka High Court judge, constituted by the Congress government to investigate corruption in medical purchases during the Covid crisis under the BJP's tenure. Panel report on Covid-19 corruption

The Justice John Michael D'Cunha Commission's interim report on corruption in purchases during the Covid-19 pandemic was submitted to Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on August 31 and the Cabinet decided in October to create an SIT to prosecute cases emerging from the report. The Commission found irregularities in procurements worth Rs 7,223 crore by agencies such as the state health department, the National Health Mission, Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), and others. One of the major findings in the report is alleged irregularities in the import of 3 lakh PPE kits in 2020 from China which the committee found was at the instance of the then chief minister B S Yediyurappa and health minister B Sriramulu. The imports resulted in excess payment of Rs 14 crore as transportation cost, apart from over Rs 1.22 crore of excess payment for the PPE kits themselves, the panel has found. The committee has recommended the prosecution of Yediyurappa and Sriramulu for corruption, besides disciplinary action against the then additional director of the state logistics and procurement agency involved in making purchases for the health department.

ACB cases on the rise in erstwhile Adilabad district in Telangana



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Adilabad: The erstwhile Adilabad district is seeing a rise in cases registered by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) against officials of various departments while accepting bribes this year. ACB officials said that the erstwhile Adilabad district, comprising Adilabad, Nirmal, Mancherla and Kumram Bheem Asifabad districts recorded 13 cases from January 1 to December 10 when compared to 9 cases in 2023. It had recorded just five cases each in 2022 and 2021, while four cases were registered in 2020.

"Cases are going up in the composite Adilabad district due to improved awareness among the public over approaching ACB. At least 90 percent of accused public servants are being convicted. Steps are being taken to return the bribe to the victims in two months," Adilabad ACB in-charge DSP VV Ramana Murthy said, adding the rise was

a welcoming sign. The officials further said victims could easily knock on the doors of ACB if a greedy official harasses them by demanding bribes for doing official favours. They stated that one could approach the agency by calling toll free number 1064 and contacting ACB DSP on 91543 88963, inspectors on 91543 88964 and 91543 88965. "Steps are being taken to raid the offices of corrupt officials within 24 hours after receiving a complaint," Murthy stated, adding that complainants need not to worry if officials were trapped by the ACB. He assured that the officials of the agency would ensure grievances of the complainants were addressed. According to the officials, four public servants belonging to erstwhile Adilabad district were convicted by a special court for ACB cases in Karimnagar. For instance, the court sentenced Wankidi Inspector Lachanna to eight years of imprisonment for accepting a bribe in 2013. Other officials convicted by the court included Regunta Swamy of NPDC, Sridhar, a deputy director of the Tribal Welfare department and Poachiah of the Commercial Tax department.

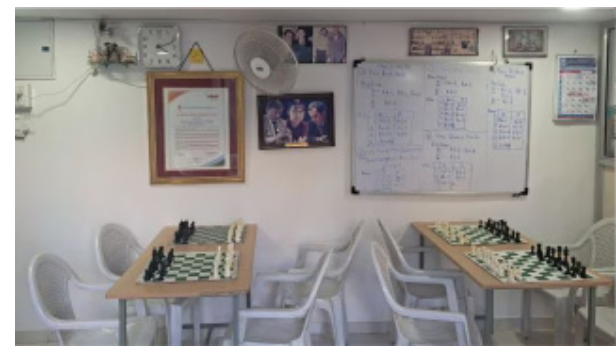
T Srinivas, an assistant director (AD) of the Marketing department was arrested by ACB while allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 7,000 from an applicant in Nirmal town. Gandhari Jadadish, a junior assistant and attender working with the survey and land records department was apprehended when he was accepting a bribe of Rs 10,000 from an applicant in Nirmal district centre. Shakeer, a junior assistant of Nirmal municipality was arrested by ACB while allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 15,000 from another employee of the civic body. J. Chethan, assistant engineer of irrigation department was arrested by ACB for allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs 5,000 from a contractor to discharge his duties in Chennur town. Vamshikrishna, a mandal agricultural officer (MAO) was trapped by the ACB while accepting Rs 38,000 from a trader of fertilizer outlet in Dahegaon mandal centre. Rajya Laxmi A Sub-Inspector working with Asifabad police station was arrested by ACB on the charges of accepting a bribe of Rs 25,000 from an accused person of a road accident.

Hidden Stories: How Joseph D'Souza transformed Pune's chess scene

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Gukesh Dommaraju, at just 18 years old, scripted history by becoming the youngest chess world champion after defeating Ding Liren in Singapore on Thursday. As the nation rejoices in this monumental achievement, it is also an opportune moment to shine a spotlight on Pune's chess legacy, particularly through the city's trailblazing institution, the Joseph D'Souza Chess Academy. The academy began in the 1980s, when Joseph D'souza, its founder, grew interested in the sport while attending college. "He never looked back after that and went on to win other open and district-level competitions during his career. He had a 2201 Elo rating and was a Candidate Master as well," said Santan D'souza, his wife.

D'Souza is acknowledged as one of the best chess administrators in Pune, holding the multifaceted positions of coach, arbiter, and organiser. "In the city, he used to run the Joseph D'souza Chess Academy near Perugate Police Chowky, Sadashiv Peth. For 31 years, D'souza coached players both in Pune and in other countries (virtually). D'Souza, who received Maharashtra's Shiv Chhatrapati Award, has coordinated 300 events since 1984," she added. "In 2004, he staged the first category 16 chess tournament in the nation at the Poona Club. As a member of the national team's support staff, he also went to the Chess Olympics in Calvia, Spain. He made an effort to improve chess and his students while upholding moral principles," she mentioned. In addition to providing a training ground for numerous new arbiters, officials, and volunteers, the academy annually serves hundreds of chess students. Following D'Souza's death in 2020, his wife Santan and son



Kevin took over the responsibility of running the academy with the same zeal and commitment. "Currently, the academy offers the best chess coaching in the city. With Kevin D'souza, my son, on board as the chief mentor of the institute, there is a professional touch in the teaching methods and the approach of the trainers," Santan stated. A passionate chess player since school, Kevin has shone in inter-district and all-India tournaments. Now balancing roles as player and coach, he strives to uphold his father's legacy and elevate the academy with the support of his coach and mother. For decades, Joseph D'Souza's Chess Academy has nurtured international talent, producing stars like Grandmaster Akshayraj Kore and World Youth Chess Champion Akanksha Hagawane. Known for grooming young achievers at state, national, and international levels, the academy is one of India's most celebrated chess centres. It has been honoured with prestigious awards such as the Rotary Award for Coaching Excellence (2004) and the Shiv Chhatrapati Krida Margdarshak Award (2017).

3 cases before RG Kar's incident when students in Bengal lost their lives under mysterious circumstances

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

At a time when the RG Kar rape and murder trial has hit the headlines once again with former principal of the institute, Sandip Ghosh, and former officer-in-charge of Tala police station, Abhijit Mondal, securing bail, The Indian Express lists three other recent cases from West Bengal wherein bright, young lives were snuffed out under mysterious circumstances. The murder of Anis Khan, 28, a Muslim student leader, allegedly by police personnel, put the Trinamool Congress government in West Bengal in a tight spot. According to Anis Khan's father Salem Khan, on the night of February 19, 2022, four people – one in police uniform and three dressed as civic volunteers – forcibly entered his house in Amta, Howrah district, searching for Anis Khan. While the man in uniform reportedly detained Salem Khan at gunpoint, the other three went upstairs in search of his son. Salem Khan accused the men dressed as civic volunteers of pushing his son to his death from the third floor of the house. He claimed that after Anis Khan fell to the ground, the three men came downstairs and told the man in uniform, "Sir, the job is done." A student of Aliah University, Anis Khan was a leader of the Students' Federation of India (SFI) before becoming an active member of the Indian Secular Front (ISF), which was formed just ahead of the 2021 West Bengal Assembly elections by influential Islamic cleric Abbas Siddiqui. Anis Khan was also a prominent figure during the protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Kolkata. At the time of his death, he was studying journalism and was a leader of the student wing of the ISF at Aliah University.

Anis Khan's family filed a petition in Calcutta High Court for a CBI investigation. However, the Court kept faith in the Special Investigation Team (SIT) formed by the state government. The SIT filed a chargesheet at ACJM of Uluberia Court, Howrah on July 10, 2022. In the chargesheet, the SIT said, "In the light of facts and circumstances elicited during the investigation as well as evidentiary analysis of all collected oral, documentary and physical evidence, the investigation has revealed that a police party led by ASI Nirmal Das and comprising... HO Kashinath Bera and Civic volunteer Pritam Bhattacharjee had been to the house of deceased Anis Khan on 19.02.2022 at about 01:00 hrs and made a forcible entry into the house. The raid by the police team was not in accordance with procedure provided by

law and extant police regulations." It further stated, "Investigation has further revealed that entire raid was conducted in pursuance of discussions between SI Debabrata Chakravorty, the then officer-in-charge of Amta police station and one civic volunteer named Sourav Kanrar and police team proceeded to the house of Anis Khan without taking necessary steps required in compliance to law on the directions of OC Amta PS. Such acts by aforesaid police personnel and auxiliary staff tantamount to offences of conspiracy to illegally confine a person and house trespass for which they are liable to be prosecuted in accordance with the law." Salem Khan's counsel Shamim Ahmed said, "In the chargesheet... 103 witnesses were named out of which only one witness... Salem Khan's account has been taken till date. We don't know how much time it will take to complete the trial."

Two years have passed (October 14, 2022) since the tragic death of Faizan Ahmed, 23, a mechanical engineering student from Tinsukia, Assam. Despite initial police claims of suicide, the deceased's family alleged foul play and stated that he was a victim of ragging at Lala Lajpat Rai Hostel in IIT Kharagpur. The case, currently sub judice, took a significant turn with the submission of a second forensic report a few months ago. This report, contradicting the initial police narrative, highlighted gunshot injuries on Ahmed's body. The court is now awaiting a final forensic report to corroborate these findings. Aniruddha Mitra, a lawyer representing the victim's family, questioned the motive behind "prematurely classifying the death as a suicide, even before initiating thorough investigations". In Ahmed's case, the initial claim of self-inflicted wrist injuries was not substantiated by any evidence, including a missing viscera report. Justice Rajshekhar Mantha's order for a second post-mortem was challenged by the state but ultimately upheld. The latest forensic report further strengthened the family's suspicions. Human blood was detected on Ahmed's nail cuttings, hair strands, spine, mandible, and back muscles. The doctor conducting the second autopsy also highlighted the absence of the right temporal bone of the deceased's skull, aligning with initial photographs of the crime scene. The report has excluded poisoning as a cause of death. A father whose minor son tragically died under mysterious circumstances at Jadavpur University has been tirelessly fighting for justice. For over a year, he has been attending numerous court hearings, facing 12 accused and their legal teams.

Lives of farmers on brink of suicide more important than mine, says Dallewal as his fast-unto-death enters Day 19

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

farmers, farmer protest Punjab farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, abed, on the seventeenth day of his fast-unto-death near the Khanauri Border, in Sangrur district, Punjab, Thursday, Dec. 12, 2024. Dallewal, whose fast-unto-death entered seventeenth day on Thursday, wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying that ensuring minimum support price to every farmer is like the fundamental right to live. As his fast-unto-death entered the 19th day, protesting farmer leader and coordinator of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political) Jagjit Singh Dallewal requested the Supreme Court to urge the Centre to initiate measures for farmers' welfare. He also sought to underline that it is more important to save the lives of lakhs of farmers rather than his own.

Lying on his bed, Dallewal – who was brought to the stage to address the gathering – said, "The Supreme Court has expressed concern about my health and I am thankful that they care about my life. However, I want to add that it is more important to save all those farmers who are dying by suicide in the country rather than Dallewal. Till now over 7 lakh farmers have died by suicide. It is a request to the Supreme Court to put pressure on the Union government to take steps so that suicides can stop in the country." "At the same time, I want to remind the Union government of their promise to make MSP (minimum support price for crops) a legal guarantee, to implement the Swaminathan Report, and waive the debts of farmers," he added. "The Supreme Court has said that Dallewal should be given medical help... But that doesn't authorise either the state or central government to forcibly take me to the hospital. If they do any such thing again and if anything happens at that morcha afterwards, the Modi government will be responsible," Dallewal cautioned. On Friday, Supreme Court Justice Surya Kant, presiding over a two-judge bench, asked the central and Punjab governments to ensure proper medical aid for Dallewal "without forcing him to break his fast," adding, "His life is more precious than agitations..."

farmers, farmer protest Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) leaders Rakesh Tikait and Harinder Singh Lakhwal and other farmer leaders during a visit to Punjab farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, whose fast-unto-death entered the eighteenth day, near Khanauri Border, in Patiala district, Punjab, US-based Dr Swain Singh's NGO 5 Rivers Heart Association is providing medical assistance to Dallewal. "Often people ask me how is Dallewalji's health. So, I want to tell them that after 7 days, anything is expected and Saturday was Day 19 of his hunger strike. A medical team of our association remains 24x7 at the Khanauri border. He has become so weak now that he is unable to stand on the weighing machine. So we have stopped weighing him now," Dr Singh said.

"He had lost 12 kg till Thursday. His liver function, renal function tests are abnormal. Calcium, magnesium, potassium levels are also not in normal range. At times, it is



difficult for him even to open his eyes. He is constantly losing his muscle mass. He regularly faces muscular spasms because of muscle mass loss. Under such conditions, the heart can go into an abnormal rhythm any time and it will be a matter of seconds if heart failure occurs. We feel sad when we have to take blood out of him to do his tests on a regular basis. It is high time that the government listen to him instead of allowing a person to suffer too much," he added. Gurnam Singh Charuni, president of Haryana-based farmers' union BKU (Charuni) on Saturday announced that he will arrive in Khanauri on Sunday afternoon, along with the outfit's office bearers from Punjab and Haryana, to meet Dallewal. "Members from Haryana will gather at Neem Sahib gurdwara in Kaithal to proceed ahead while those from Punjab will meet us directly at Khanauri. We will meet Dallewalji and afterwards will discuss how Samyukta Kisan Morcha can put up a united front to collectively fight for the demands raised by Dallewal," Charuni said.

On Friday, leaders of around 10 farmer unions who are part of SKM reached Khanauri to meet Dallewal. They, however, stated that they had gone on behalf of their own unions and not on behalf of SKM. So far SKM is not part of the protest morcha at Shambhu and Khanauri borders, though the unions under it are protesting against the common demands in different ways.

Youth Akali Dal extends support

On Saturday, Youth Akali Dal president Sarabjit Singh Jhiner too extended support to Dallewal at Khanauri border. "I urge the Central government to immediately agree to the demand for MSP to save the life of Jagjit Singh Dallewal and other protesters who are getting injured due to the brute force used by the Haryana Police. The Central government must intervene immediately to prevent any further harm to our farmers. They must provide MSP as promised and ensure that the farmers' demands are met," Jhiner said. "The use of force, tear gas, water cannons, and shells against peaceful protesters is unacceptable, and the Haryana government must be held accountable," he asserted. Former Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) president Kirpal Singh Badungar also expressed concern about Dallewal's health and sought the central government's urgent intervention.

Salt Lake area, covering a distance of one kilometre. Junior doctors' forum organised the march to protest the "delay in framing charges by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) against all the "conspirators" in the rape and murder of the woman doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital on August 9. The parents of the deceased medic also participated in the rally. "We will fight for justice and it is our right," said the mother of the deceased doctor. The protesters were holding placards which read "If the system has failed, we will make it function to deliver justice". In a separate rally, SUCI (Communist) activists marched from Karunamoyee to the CGO Complex in Salt Lake, while a rally was taken out by SFI, the students' wing of the CPI(M), in College Street area in the northern part of the city. The Sealadh court in Kolkata had on Friday granted bail to RG Kar Medical College and Hospital's ex-principal Sandip Ghosh and former officer-in-charge of the Tala Police Station Abhijit Mondal in the rape and murder case of the on-duty doctor.

Junior docs, political parties bring out protest rallies in Kolkata after suspects in RG Kar case get bail

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

A day after two key suspects in the rape and murder of a doctor at the RG Kar hospital got bail, the Left parties and the Congress on Saturday took out protest rallies at various locations in Kolkata, alleging that the CBI has "failed" to deliver justice in the case. They also alleged that the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) in West Bengal and the BJP-led Centre have a "tacit understanding". The Congress took out a procession from Rabindra Sadan area to the CBI office at Nizam Palace in southern Kolkata and criticised the central probe agency for its alleged inability to frame charges against the two accused in the case. During the procession, Congress activists were seen holding the party flags aloft and chanting slogans like "We demand justice" and "Bihar chahi Tilottoma (Tilottoma wants justice)". The police stopped the Congress activists from entering the Nizam Palace, which led to a scuffle between the protesters and the police personnel. Hundreds of people took part in a rally, organised by the West Bengal Junior Doctors Front (WBJDF), from Karunamoyee to another CBI office at CGO Complex in

Lawmakers in Georgia elect hardline critic of West Mikheil Kavelashvili as new President



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Georgian lawmakers elected Mikheil Kavelashvili, a hardline critic of the West, as the country's new President on Saturday (December 14, 2024), setting him up to replace a pro-Western incumbent amid major protests against the government over a halt to the country's European Union accession talks last month. The ruling Georgian Dream party's move to freeze the EU accession process until 2028, abruptly halting a long-standing national goal that is written into the country's constitution, has provoked widespread anger in Georgia, where opinion polls show that seeking EU membership is overwhelmingly popular.

Mr. Kavelashvili, a former professional soccer player, has strongly anti-Western, often conspiratorial views. In public speeches this year, he has repeatedly alleged that Western intelligence agencies are seeking to drive Georgia into war with Russia. Georgian Presidents are picked by a college of electors composed of MPs and representatives of local government. Of 225 electors present, 224 voted for Mr. Kavelashvili, who was the only candidate nominated. All opposition parties have boycotted parliament since an October election in which official results gave the ruling Georgian Dream party almost 54% of the vote, but which the opposition says was fraudulent. Hundreds of protesters gathered in light snowfall outside parliament ahead of the presidential vote. Some played soccer in the street outside and waved red cards at the parliament building, a mocking reference to Mr. Kavelashvili's athletic career. Mr. Kavelashvili was nominated for the mostly ceremonial presidency last month by Bidzina Ivanishvili, a billionaire ex-Prime Minister

who is widely seen as the country's paramount leader. Mr. Kavelashvili is a leader of People's Power, an anti-Western splinter group of the ruling party, and was a co-author of a law on "foreign agents" that requires organisations receiving more than 20% of their funding from overseas to register as agents of foreign influence, and imposes heavy fines for violations. Outgoing President Salome Zourabichvili, a pro-EU critic of the ruling Georgian Dream party, has positioned herself as a leader of the protest movement and has said she will remain President after her term ends. She considers parliament illegitimate as a result of alleged fraud in the October election. Opposition parties have said they will continue to regard Zourabichvili as the legitimate President, even after Mr. Kavelashvili is inaugurated on December 29. Souring relations with west

Georgia has been seen for decades as one of the most pro-Western and democratic of the Soviet Union's successor states, but relations with the West have soured this year, with Georgian Dream forcing through laws on foreign agents and LGBT rights that critics say are Russian-inspired and draconian. Western countries have raised the alarm at Georgia's apparent foreign policy pivot and authoritarian drift, with the EU threatening sanctions over a crackdown on protests. In a video address to Georgians published on Friday, French President Emmanuel Macron said: "Georgia's European dream must not be extinguished". Since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, Georgian Dream has moved to improve ties with Russia, which ruled Georgia for 200 years until 1991, continues to back two breakaway Georgian regions, and defeated Georgia in a five-day war in 2008. Tens of thousands of protesters have rallied outside parliament nightly for more than two weeks. Some have hurled fireworks at police, who have used water cannon, tear gas and ballot attacks to break up demonstrations. The government has repeatedly said the protests represent an attempt to stage a pro-EU revolution and a violent seizure of power. Police have detained hundreds of protesters. Georgia's Interior Ministry has said that more than 150 officers have been injured during the protests. On Friday (December 13, 2024), parliament approved sweeping new restrictions on protests, hiking fines for participants and organisers, and banning from gatherings face coverings, fireworks and lasers used to dazzle police officers.

Donald Trump wants to turn the clock on daylight saving time in U.S.

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

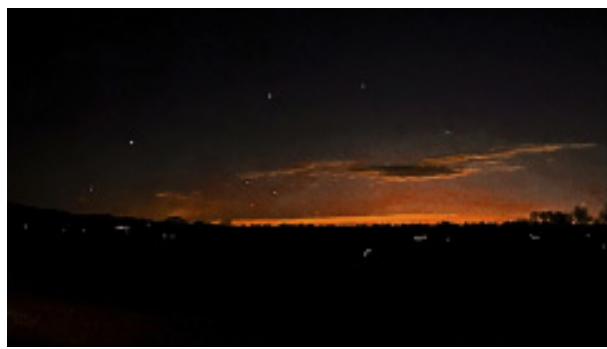
In a post on his social media site Friday (December 13, 2024), Mr. Trump said his party would try to end the practice when he returns to office. "The Republican Party will use its best efforts to eliminate Daylight Saving Time, which has a small but strong constituency, but shouldn't! Daylight Saving Time is inconvenient, and very costly to our Nation," he wrote. Setting clocks forward one hour in the spring and back an hour in the fall is intended to maximise daylight during summer months but has long been subject to scrutiny. Daylight saving time was first adopted as a wartime measure in 1942.

Lawmakers have occasionally proposed getting rid of the time change altogether. The most prominent recent attempt, a now-stalled bipartisan bill named the Sunshine Protection Act, had proposed making daylight saving time permanent. The measure was sponsored by Florida Senator Marco Rubio, whom Mr. Trump has tapped to helm the State Department. "Changing the clock twice a year is outdated and unnecessary," Republican Senator Rick Scott of Florida said as the Senate voted in favour of the measure. Health experts have said that lawmakers have it



backward and that standard time should be made permanent. Some health groups, including the American Medical Association and American Academy of Sleep Medicine, have said that it's time to do away with time switches and that sticking with standard time aligns better with the sun — and human biology. Most countries do not observe daylight saving time. For those that do, the date that clocks are changed varies, creating a complicated tapestry of changing time differences.

Drones, planes or UFOs? Americans abuzz over mysterious New Jersey sightings



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

That buzzing coming out of New Jersey? It's unclear if it's drones or something else, but for sure the night time sightings are producing tons of talk, a raft of conspiracy theories and craned necks looking skyward. Cropping up on local news and social media sites around Thanksgiving, the saga of the drones reported over New Jersey has reached incredible heights. This week seems to have begun a new, higher-profile chapter: Lawmakers are demanding (but so far not getting) explanations from federal and state authorities about what's behind them. Governor Phil Murphy wrote to President Joe Biden asking for answers. New Jersey's new senator, Andy Kim, spent Thursday night on a drone hunt in rural northern New Jersey, and posted about it on X. More drone sightings have been reported in New York City, and Mayor Eric Adams says the city is investigating and collaborating with New Jersey and federal officials. And then President-elect Donald Trump posted that he believes the government knows more than it's saying. "Let the public know, and now. Otherwise, shoot them down!!!" he posted on his social media site.

But perhaps the most fantastic development is the dizzying proliferation of conspiracies — none of which has been confirmed or suggested by federal and state officials who say they're looking into what's happening. It has become shorthand to refer to the flying machines as drones, but there are questions about whether what people are seeing are unmanned aircraft or something else. Some theorize the drones came from an Iranian mothership. Others think they are the Secret Service making sure President-elect Donald Trump's Bedminster property is secure. Others worry about China. The deep state. And on.

In the face of uncertainty, people have done what they do in 2024: Create a social media group. The Facebook page, New Jersey Mystery Drones — let's solve it, has nearly 44,000 members, up from 39,000 late Thursday. People are posting their photo and video sightings, and the online commenters take it from there. One video shows a whitish

light flying in a darkened sky, and one commenter concludes it's otherworldly. "Straight up orbs," the person says. Others weigh in to say it's a plane or maybe a satellite. Another group called for hunting the drones literally, shooting them down like turkeys. (Do not shoot at anything in the sky, experts warn).

Trisha Bushey, 48, of Lebanon Township, New Jersey, lives near Round Valley Reservoir where there have been numerous sightings. She said she first posted photos online last month wondering what the objects were and became convinced they were drones when she saw how they moved and when her son showed her on a flight tracking site that no planes were around. Now she's glued to the Mystery Drones page, she said. "I find myself — instead of Christmas shopping or cleaning my house — checking it," she said. She doesn't buy what the governor said, that the drones aren't a risk to public safety. Murphy told Biden on Friday that residents need answers. The federal Homeland Security Department and FBI also said in a joint statement they have no evidence that the sightings pose "a national security or public safety threat or have a foreign nexus." "How can you say it's not posing a threat if you don't know what it is?" she said. "I think that's why so many people are uneasy."

Then there's the notion that people could misunderstand what they're seeing. William Austin is the president of Warren County Community College, which has a drone technology degree program, and is coincidentally located in one of the sighting hotspots. Austin says he has looked at videos of purported drones and that airplanes are being misidentified as drones. He cited an optical effect called parallax, which is the apparent shift of an object when viewed from different perspectives. Austin encouraged people to download flight and drone tracker apps so they can better understand what they're looking at. Nonetheless, people continue to come up with their own theories. "It represents the United States of America in 2024," Austin said. "We've lost trust in our institutions, and we need it." Federal officials echo Austin's view that many of the sightings are piloted aircraft such as planes and helicopters being mistaken for drones, according to lawmakers and Murphy. That's not really convincing for many, though, who are homing in on the sightings beyond just New Jersey and the East Coast, where others have reported seeing the objects. For Seph Divine, 34, another member of the drone hunting group who lives in Eugene, Oregon, it feels as if it's up to citizen sleuths to solve the mystery. He said he tries to be a voice of reason, encouraging people to fact check their information, while also asking probing questions. "My main goal is I don't want people to be caught up in the hysteria and I also want people to not just ignore it at the same time," he said.

Nancy Pelosi hospitalised after she 'sustained an injury' from a fall on official trip to Luxembourg



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has been hospitalised after she "sustained an injury" during an official engagement in Luxembourg, according to a spokesman. Ms. Pelosi, 84, was in Europe with a bipartisan congressional delegation to mark the 80th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge in World War II. Her spokesman, Ian Krager, said in a statement that she is "currently receiving excellent treatment from doctors and medical professionals" and is unable to attend the remainder of events on her trip.

He did not describe the nature of her injury or give any additional details, but a person familiar with the incident said that Ms. Pelosi tripped and fell while at an event with the other members of Congress. Another person familiar with the situation said she injured her hip. The people requested anonymity to discuss the fall because they were not authorized to speak about it publicly. Krager said that Ms. Pelosi "looks forward to returning home to the U.S. soon." Among the members on the trip was Rep. Michael McCaul, R-

Texas, who posted on social media that he was "praying for a speedy recovery," for Ms. Pelosi. The two lawmakers were captured holding hands in a group photo on Friday (Dec. 13) at the U.S. Embassy in Luxembourg. "I'm disappointed Speaker Emerita Pelosi won't be able to join the rest of our delegation's events this weekend as I know how much she looked forward to honoring our veterans," McCaul wrote on X. "But she is strong, and I am confident she will be back on her feet in no time." The former leader's fall comes two years after her husband Paul was attacked by a man with a hammer at their San Francisco home. The man, who was sentenced in October to 30 years in federal prison, broke into their home looking for Ms. Pelosi.

Ms. Pelosi, who was first elected in 1987 and served as speaker twice, stepped down from her leadership post two years ago but remained in Congress and was re-elected to represent her San Francisco district in November. She has remained active in the two years since she left the top job, working with Democrats in private and in public and attending official events. Last summer, she was instrumental in her party's behind-the-scenes push to urge President Joe Biden to leave the presidential ticket. She attended the Kennedy Center Honors in Washington last weekend and was on the Senate floor Monday to attend the swearing-in of her former Democratic House colleagues, Adam Schiff of California and Andy Kim of New Jersey. Earlier this week, Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, 82, tripped and fell in the Senate, spraining his wrist and cutting his face. McConnell, who is stepping down from his leadership post at the end of the year, missed Senate votes on Thursday (Dec. 12) after experiencing some stiffness in his leg from the fall, his office said.

30 people drowned every hour in 2021 globally, says World Health Organization report

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

The World Health Organization (WHO) published its first-ever global status report on drowning prevention on Friday, December 13, 2024. The report, released at an event in Geneva, reveals that three lakh people died by drowning in 2021 around the world (an estimated 30 every hour). Close to 92% of such deaths took place in low- and middle-income countries, disproportionately affecting the poor and marginalised. The WHO's South-East Asia Region (which includes India) saw 83,000 deaths, or 28% of the global burden. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, via video conference, said the report provided a snapshot of the global burden of drowning. Countries could use the report to raise awareness, guide prevention strategies and track progress on drowning prevention, he said. Compiled with the participation of 139 countries — including India — the report found that while drowning deaths declined 38% since 2000, the progress had been uneven and the pace slow. The WHO's European Region, for instance, saw a 68% drop, while the South-East Asia Region saw a decline of 48%. Children most vulnerable

Primarily at risk are children and young people. Children aged under five accounted for the single largest share of drowning deaths (24%), with a further 19% of deaths among children aged five to 14, and 14% among young people aged 15 to 29. The report notes that globally, drowning is the fourth leading cause of death for children in the age group of one-four and the third leading cause of death for children aged five to 14. Even these staggering numbers however, are an underestimate, notes Caroline Lukaszyk, technical officer, WHO, as the report does not capture deaths by drowning owing to natural disasters such as flooding, and those that occur on water transport, primarily due to a lack of accurate data. With vulnerability to flooding increasing due to climate change — and 75% of flooding deaths known to be due to drowning — this is a priority on the drowning prevention agenda, she says.

The report also states that while encouragingly, the WHO's evidence-based drowning prevention interventions



are being implemented in many countries, the implementation is to varying degrees. For instance, only 33% of countries offer national programmes to train bystanders in safe rescue and resuscitation, and just 22% integrate swimming and water safety training into their school curriculum. Quality data collection also remains a challenge. More than 7.2 million people, mainly children, could die due to this "silent killer" by the year 2050 if current trends continue.

Yet almost all drowning deaths are preventable, the report states, highlighting that political will and investment in drowning prevention are critical to save lives. Developed in response to a member-state request made through a World Health Assembly Resolution 76.18 (2023) and funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies, the report underscores the fact that drowning is a complex health issue that requires the involvement of multiple sectors to address the broad range of risk factors. Legislation, even when it exists, is often out of step with the scale of the challenge, it says. Providing day care for pre-school children and teaching school students basic swimming skills could help protect millions of lives in countries with high rates of drowning, the report states. Investing in drowning prevention efforts would not only save lives, it could help prevent economic losses of about \$4 trillion that could occur by 2050 if efforts are not taken to stem the crisis, the report points out.

U.N. General Assembly demands ceasefire in Gaza, backs UNRWA

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly overwhelmingly approved resolutions on Wednesday (December 11, 2024) demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and backing the UN Agency for Palestinian refugees that Israel has moved to ban. The votes in the 193-nation world body were 158-9, with 13 abstentions to demand a ceasefire now and 159-9 with 11 abstentions in support of the agency known as United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA). The votes culminated two days of speeches overwhelmingly calling for an end to the 14-month war between Israel and the militant Hamas group and demanding access throughout Gaza to address the growing humanitarian catastrophe. Israel and its close ally, the United States (US), were in a tiny minority speaking and voting against the resolutions. Other opposing both resolutions included Argentina, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay and Tonga.

While Security Council resolutions are legally binding, General Assembly resolutions are not, though they do reflect world opinion. There are no vetoes in the assembly. The Palestinians and their supporters went to the General Assembly after the U.S. vetoed a Security Council resolution on Nov. 20 demanding an immediate Gaza ceasefire. It was supported by the council's 14 other members but the U.S. objected that it was not linked to an immediate release of hostages taken by Hamas militants during their attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, which triggered the war. The Palestinian UN Ambassador Riyad Mansour expressed gratitude for the overwhelming support for both resolutions on Wednesday (Dec. 11, 2024), saying the votes "reflect the resolve and the determination of the international community." "We will keep knocking on the doors of the Security Council and the General Assembly until we see an immediate and unconditional ceasefire put in place and until we see humanitarian assistance being distributed at scale in all corners of the Gaza Strip," he said.

The language of the resolution adopted by the assembly on a ceasefire mirrors the text of the vetoed council resolution. It demands "an immediate, unconditional and permanent cease-fire to be respected by all parties," while also reiterating a "demand for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages."

That language is much stronger than General Assembly resolutions adopted on Oct. 27, 2023 — three weeks after the Hamas attack — calling for an immediate and sus-

tained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities and on Dec. 12, 2023, demanding "an immediate humanitarian ceasefire." The resolution adopted on Wednesday (Dec. 11, 2024) also marked the first time Germany and Italy, who abstained last December, voted in favour of a Gaza ceasefire. Their support left the United States as the only member of the Group of 7 major industrialized nations still opposed.

On the humanitarian front, the resolution rejects "any effort to starve Palestinians" and demands immediate access to civilians to provide aid indispensable to their survival. The second resolution backs the mandate of UNRWA, which was established by the General Assembly in 1949. It deplors laws adopted by Israel's Parliament on Oct. 28 banning UNRWA's activities in the Palestinian territories, a measure to take effect in 90 days.

It reiterates UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' statements that UNRWA is "the backbone" of all humanitarian operations in Gaza and no organization can replace it. And it reaffirms the necessity for UNRWA's continued "unimpeded operation." The resolution calls on the Israeli Government "to abide by its international obligations, respect the privileges and immunities of UNRWA" and uphold its responsibility to facilitate the unhindered delivery of aid humanitarian assistance throughout the entire Gaza Strip. Israel alleges that around a dozen of UNRWA's 13,000 workers in Gaza participated in Hamas' attacks on Israel that precipitated the war. It recently provided the UN with over 100 names of UNRWA staff it accuses of having militant ties. U.S. deputy UN Ambassador Robert Wood reiterated America's opposition to the ceasefire resolution ahead of Wednesday's (Dec. 11, 2024) vote and criticised the Palestinians for again failing to mention Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel. "At a time when Hamas is feeling isolated due to the ceasefire in Lebanon, the draft resolution on a ceasefire in Gaza risks sending a dangerous message to Hamas that there's no need to negotiate or release the hostages," he said. The Hamas attack killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and saw another 250 abducted as hostages. Gaza militants have not returned around 100 hostages, a third of them believed to be dead, and ceasefire efforts have ground to a halt. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed over 44,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to the local Health Ministry. It says women and children make up more than half the dead but does not distinguish between fighters and civilians in its count.

How bitcoin's surge since Trump's win could play out in India



sixth biggest cryptocurrency by market cap. Memecoins are generally seen as indicators of retail investors' interest in cryptocurrency. It is usually a marker of investors' risk appetite at any given point in time. Surging memecoin values generally indicated that retail investors are participating in the market.

In India, the crypto journey has been topsy-turvy, and investors might not share the same enthusiasm as their American counterparts owing to factors like a high taxation rate on incomes from cryptocurrencies, and the overall banking sectors' less than kind outlook towards the asset. In 2018, the Central Board of Direct Taxes had submitted a draft scheme to the finance ministry for banning virtual currencies and a month later, the RBI restrained banks from dealing in cryptocurrencies, a decision that had to be reversed by the Supreme Court in 2020. Despite this, the banking regulator has been vocal about its problems with crypto-assets, having identified them as "a macro-economic risk". In July 2022, underscoring that the RBI had sought a ban, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in Parliament that "international collaboration" would be needed for "any effective regulation or ban" on cryptocurrency as the digital currency is borderless in nature. The government had, in 2022, imposed a tax on "any income from transfer of any virtual digital asset" at a rate of 30 per cent, along with a 1 per cent tax deduction at source (TDS) on each transaction.

However, a paper that was prepared by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Financial Stability Board (FSB), at the request of the Indian G20 Presidency last year, called for licensing crypto service providers, while suggesting that an outright ban might not work given the borderless nature of cryptocurrencies. On account of the latest surge in cryptocurrencies, Bernstein in a recent note asked whether India can "afford to ignore Bitcoin". The note further added that the crypto narrative in India "has been caught in this false premise of Central bank digital currencies (CBDC) and what the government calls private crypto". "This framing is its own pitfall," the note said, even as it acknowledged that following India's success in providing digital payments solutions, and that a CBDC would be the "next logical path". But the note emphasised that Indian investors had "missed the strong proposition" of bitcoin by framing it as private currency. It said the cryptocurrency could be a way for governments to build reserves. "India has de-risked gold custody by moving almost 100 tonnes of gold back to India from the UK. Bitcoin is a way for governments to build 'digital gold' reserves, without the risk of censorship by nations that physically custody gold, in a world where international relations are fragile and dollar reserves are subject to US fiscal risks," the Bernstein note added.

After Trump's win, India Googles immigration and H1B, Americans on ways to leave the US

In India, the biggest concern many have following Donald Trump's surprise victory in the US elections is any potential impact on immigrating to the country, after the businessman turned politician drummed up anti-immigration rhetoric in the run up to the elections. These concerns were clearly visible in the way many Indians looked up information on Google, as per data on the website's 'Trends' section. Queries around 'legal immigration', 'H1B visa' and 'US birth citizenship' spiked on November 6, when Trump was declared victor. In the US, users in Democratic-leaning states like Vermont and Minnesota, looked for ways to move to Canada, and those in Republican-leaning states like Mississippi and Alabama, looked for birth control options in their states, according to the Google Trends listings.

H1B visa and legal immigration The search for 'legal immigration' in India spiked on November 6 – when Trump was announced victor – from virtually no search interest a month before that, even though Trump had spoken about the actions he would take on what he called illegal immigration if he came to power. Google users in Punjab led the search for the query on Google, followed by those in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana and Kerala. Users in India who searched for the phrase legal immigration, also searched for terms like 'Trump legal immigration,' 'legal immigration under Trump' and 'Stephen Miller'. Trump has appointed longtime aide Miller, who is known to have a hardline stance on immigration, as Deputy Chief of Staff. He played a central role in many policy decisions, particularly on immigration, including the 2018 family separation policy. With him back as a Trump adviser in his second term, it is widely expected that rejections for visas like H1B – which many skilled Indians rely on to work in the US – could go up. Google search queries for H1B visa also spiked on November 6, with more people searching for the term than anytime in the month before that. These people also searched for phrases like 'Donald Trump H1B visa,' and 'US birth citizenship'. The phrase H1B visa was searched the most by people living in Telangana, followed by Chandigarh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu.

'How to move to Canada from US' and 'birth control' Following Trump's victory, Google searches for 'how



to move to Canada from US' surged dramatically, pointing to the likelihood of users in the US looking to move to another country. There was a dramatic spike in the query 'how to move to Canada from US' on November 6 in the US, from virtually no queries for the phrase in a month before that. These queries came predominantly residing in Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Oregon and Minnesota. In all these states, Trump's key rival, and the Democratic Party candidate, Kamala Harris secured a majority. These people also searched for the phrases 'easiest countries to move to,' 'how to move to Ireland from US,' and 'how to move to move to New Zealand from US'.

Another concern that many, especially women in the US, have is potential clampdown on abortions, and increased clamp down on birth control measures, which is a likely policy measure that Trump could introduce. In 2022, the US Supreme Court officially reversed Roe v. Wade judgement, declaring that the constitutional right to abortion, upheld for nearly a half century, no longer exists. Following the judgement, a number of states in the US passed near-total abortion bans. Queries on Google on 'birth control' surged on November 6, even as the phrase was consistently being searched for on the site throughout the month before that. The states where these searches were made the most were Mississippi, West Virginia, Alabama, Louisiana, and Kentucky. Donald Trump won in all these states. These people also searched for phrases like 'is birth control being banned,' and 'over the counter birth control brand,' among other things.



legal hassles and contribute to national development". "If you have not disclosed your foreign assets and income in your original ITR, there is an opportunity to rectify this through filing a revised return. The Income Tax Department allows taxpayers to correct any omissions or inaccuracies by filing a revised return. For the AY 2024-25 revised return can be filed up to 31.12.2024," the Department said in a note. The details about foreign assets and income are shared between the countries in line with international reporting frameworks such as the Common Reporting Standard (CRS) and the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) aimed to tackle tax evasion by increasing transparency and cooperation among tax authorities globally.

What is the Maori Haka dance, which New Zealand's MPs performed in parliament in protest of a bill?



A viral video of New Zealand's Members of Parliament performing a powerful Maori haka in parliament has reignited global interest in this powerful dance form. The youngest MP in Parliament, Hana-Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke, made headlines when she led a traditional haka performance in Parliament on November 14. This time, the traditional Maori dance was a protest against a controversial bill that aimed to redefine the Treaty of Waitangi. The dramatic display led to a temporary suspension of Parliament. The haka, often associated with New Zealand's All Blacks rugby team, is much more than a pre-game ritual; it is a cornerstone of Maori culture, embodying history, identity, and emotion.

Origins of the haka The haka traces its roots to the Maori people, the indigenous Polynesian inhabitants of New Zealand (Aotearoa). Traditionally, the haka was a ceremonial dance or challenge performed by warriors before battle. It was designed to intimidate opponents with synchronised movements, powerful chants, and piercing expressions. Beyond warfare, the haka also served as a means of storytelling, a way to express communal griev-

ances, celebrate triumphs, or honour ancestors. The chants, or waiata, convey deep messages about Maori heritage, values, and connection to the land. The haka is not a single dance but a category of performances. The most well-known haka, Ka Mate, was composed in the early 19th century by Maori chief Te Rauparaha of the Ngati Toa tribe. It celebrates a narrow escape from enemies, blending themes of resilience and unity. Other haka forms serve distinct purposes: Haka powhiri: Performed to welcome visitors. Haka taparahi: A ceremonial, non-war dance, used for social occasions. Peruperu: A war haka featuring weaponry and leaping movements. Each haka carries symbolic gestures and expressions, such as wide eyes, protruding tongues, and forceful stomps, representing strength, defiance, and solidarity.

Evolution over time While the haka remains a vital aspect of Maori culture, its significance has grown far beyond its traditional boundaries. Sports and Global Recognition: The New Zealand rugby team, the All Blacks, popularised the haka internationally, performing it before matches as a show of unity and respect. Protest and Solidarity: The haka has been used in political protests, honouring Maori rights and advocating for social justice. State Ceremonies: It is now a feature of state functions, honouring visiting dignitaries and marking national milestones. The haka continues to inspire awe worldwide, symbolising unity, pride, and respect for indigenous traditions. Its viral resurgence not only amplifies Maori culture but also fosters global appreciation for the depth and diversity of indigenous art forms. In the words of the haka, "Ka ora, ka ora" – It is life, it is life. The haka thrives, bridging the past and present, uniting New Zealanders and captivating the world.

Here are four dietician-approved vegetarian superfoods to lower your blood sugar levels

Managing one's blood sugar levels can be testing, especially if one relies on conventional medicines. Thankfully, organic remedies have always been around; while some aim to deliver, others fail to qualify. But since Indians do love a quick home-fix, we've got a special curation for you, which actually makes the cut, when it comes to managing your diabetes – vegetarian superfoods. Kannika Malhotra, dietician and diabetes educator, explains the importance of these superfoods and their relation to lowering the risk of diabetes. Artichoke is rich in fibre, which helps slow down "the absorption of glucose". Moreover, it contains inulin, a type of prebiotic fibre that can "improve insulin sensitivity", Kanikka said. It's also a good source of vitamins and minerals, including vitamin C, vitamin K, folate, iron, magnesium, and potassium. Cabbage, nutrients it contains essential minerals like potassium, calcium, and manganese. Your local cabbage may just be more than a Thursday-night soup entree. Turns out, cabbage is low in carbohydrates and high in fibre, making it a "blood sugar-friendly" vegetable, Kanikka shared.

It contains essential minerals like potassium, calcium, and manganese. Additionally, its sulfur-containing antioxidants can aid digestion. Barley contains whole grains rich in "beta-glucan, a type of soluble fibre that has been shown to lower blood sugar levels", according to Kanikka. It additionally provides a steady release of energy, preventing blood sugar spikes. Barley is a good source of B vitamins and minerals like magnesium, potassium, and selenium. As a



plant-based protein source, tofu can help stabilise blood sugar levels. It's low in carbohydrates and fat, making it a suitable option for individuals with diabetes. Tofu is also a good source of calcium, iron, and manganese.

How can we inculcate these superfoods in our diet?

Besides incorporating these foods multiple times during meals, Kanikka suggests, Combine with other blood sugar-friendly foods: Pair them with lean protein and healthy fats for balanced meals. Be mindful of portion sizes: While these foods are beneficial, overconsumption can still impact blood sugar levels. Consider cooking methods: Steaming, grilling, or roasting are generally healthier options than frying.

Try dandelion tea in the mornings to slim down your waist and reduce bloating

You must have come across various concoctions on social media claiming to be the next solution for a fitter waist. But can dandelion tea be it? Thought to benefit digestion by boosting bile production, dandelion tea is widely regarded as a good cure for bloating. Learn below how it can be helpful in reducing bloating.

How does dandelion tea work to reduce bloating?

According to Kanikka Malhotra, dietician, and diabetes educator, "Owing to its diuretic characteristics, dandelion tea can help in reducing bloating, which can help reduce water retention. Also, increased urine production may help decrease the feeling of fullness or puffiness associated with bloating." The effectiveness of dandelion tea in treating bloating varies from person to person. While some people may feel relieved, others may not see major improvements. It is also crucial to exercise caution because dandelion tea may interfere with some drugs or produce allergic responses in certain people. If bloating persists, see a doctor to rule out underlying causes such as gastrointestinal diseases, food intolerances, or other health issues. People with allergies to ragweed or related plants may experience allergic reactions. Additionally, individuals with specific medical conditions, such as kidney or liver disease, should consult their doctor before consuming dan-



delion tea. It's also important to note that dandelion tea can interact with certain medications, including diuretics, blood thinners, and blood sugar medications. Fennel tea can also help reduce bloating and gas. Moreover, ginger tea aids in digestion and can alleviate bloating. These beneficial bacteria can improve gut health and reduce bloating, says Kanikka.

I-T Dept nudges taxpayers to disclose foreign assets correctly

Income Tax The Department, it is learnt, will also begin an e-campaign in the next few days to facilitate filing of details of foreign assets and income by taxpayers, a government official said. In an explicit nudge to taxpayers citing compliance with global disclosure norms, the Income Tax Department has urged them to disclose details of foreign assets and income correctly in their income tax returns and file revised returns by December 31, if there is a requirement to update the information. The Department, it is learnt, will also begin an e-campaign in the next few days to facilitate filing of details of foreign assets and income by taxpayers, a government official said.

The campaign is being launched with the aim to reach out to those taxpayers who have not disclosed details of their foreign income and assets correctly in their income tax returns but the tax department has received information about them through various information-gathering and sharing agreements of India with other countries, an official said. "There is substantial information being received from other countries about ownership of foreign income and assets. This campaign will provide a window to taxpayers to disclose their information of foreign income and assets correctly in their income tax returns," the official said. The Income Tax Department has urged taxpayers that by ensuring full transparency in tax returns, taxpayers can "avoid

People can't tell difference between human, AI-generated poetry — new study

Has the bell finally tolled for Shakespeare and Byron? New research conducted by philosophers of science Brian Porter and Edouard Machery suggests that the latest AI-generated poetry is "indistinguishable from human-written poetry" and "rated more favourably". Ten poets, from the medieval Geoffrey Chaucer to modern writer Dorothea Lasky, were successfully impersonated by AI chatbots, with most of the 696 participants slightly preferring the imitation to the real thing.

Porter and Machery conclude that "the capabilities of generative AI models have outpaced people's expectations of AI". But they don't say AI has been proven an adequate replacement for human poets – and rightly so, as such a conclusion would require a great deal more testing. That the research participants were fooled is not particularly worrying. Porter and Machery set out to include a wide range of poem types, which meant choosing poets who mostly belong to ages past. In such cases, modern readers are likely to have a hard time looking past the obvious signs of antiquity – outdated diction, rigid formalism, and obscure cultural references. It's not so hard to disguise yourself as someone when that person is chiefly known for the odd clothes they wear.

But what about the matter of preference? As well as overall quality, the researchers asked participants to rate

poems on a range of qualitative dimensions. How was the imagery, rhythm, sound or beauty? How "inspiring", "lyrical", "meaningful", "moving", "original", "profound", "witty" (and so on) was it? AI won out over Shakespeare and company in nearly every category. Does this mean human poets have been supplanted? Not really. Participants in the research overall reported "a low level of experience with poetry". Lack of familiarity with any artform severely limits our ability to get the most out of it. All the AI has to do is sand off the more challenging elements – ambiguity, wordplay, linguistic complexity – in order to produce a version which is more palatable to those with little interest in the art. If that sounds snobbish, think of it this way: when we aren't used to eating a foreign cuisine, most of us gravitate toward the blandly familiar end of the menu. But poetry is not a medium many look to for instant gratification. The reason poets of the calibre of Byron and Walt Whitman (both of whom were included in this study) continue to command respect is because their poetry rewards extended, rather than cursory, attention. The report agrees on this point, noting that participants complained more often of the human-authored poems that they "don't make sense". Every recent generation of poets has been deeply interested in adapting and absorbing new technologies, along with shifts in cultural mood.

‘Kapil Sharma sat next to me for 10 minutes, ignored me throughout’: Mukesh Khanna slams comedian for having ‘no courtesy’, calls his show ‘obscene’



Veteran actor Mukesh Khanna, best known for his iconic role as Bhisma Pitamah in the TV series Mahabharat, has spoken out about why he declined to appear on Kapil Sharma's popular comedy show. Khanna revealed that he was never contacted by the show's producers, and even if he had been, he would have turned down the invitation due to his reservations about the show's content, calling it "obscene". Talking to Siddharth Kannan on his podcast, Khanna said, "I don't know what his problem was, but he never contacted me," referring to Kapil Sharma. "It could be ego and shame. I know this because people have spoken about it extensively..." Khanna then shared why exactly he decided not to appear on Kapil Sharma's popular comedy show. According to Khanna, his colleague Gufi Paintal had informed him that the Ramayan star-cast was set to appear on the show, and assumed that the Mahabharat cast would also be invited. However, Khanna had already developed reservations about the show's content, which he felt relied too heavily on "ashlita (obscenity)" and "below the belt jokes". As he explained to Paintal, "Though people laugh, mujhe koi shalinta nahi dikhti (I don't see any decency in it)."

Khanna's concerns were only reinforced when he saw a promo for the show featuring Ramayan actor Arun Govil, who was asked a crass question. He shared, "My explanation was that I had seen a promo, not even the whole epi-

sode, where Arun Govil was there, and Kapil Sharma is asking them a question, a funny one, isko pakad ke maine bohoh sunaya. The question was, 'Arun ji, you are taking a bath, and the crowd screamed, dekho dekho dekho, Ram bhi VIP underwear pehenta hai (look, even Lord Ram is wearing VIP brand underwear). Arun Govil just smiled and sat there. If I were there, main chadh jaata (I would lose it). You are asking this question to a person who has such a large image. Usko aisa ghatiya sawaal puchte ho (you ask him such a shoddy question)?' Khanna was appalled by the joke, and felt that it was unacceptable to ask such a question to someone of Govil's stature. Khanna also expressed his discomfort with the show's humour, which he feels often relies on double entendres and below-the-belt jokes. "I see obscenity in that show. I see double-meaning dialogues, below-the-belt jokes. Though people laugh, I don't see any decency in it," he said. Khanna also shared an anecdote about how he was once ignored by Kapil Sharma at an award function. "In my first interaction with Kapil, he was sitting next to me at an award function. I had bagged an award for best supporting actor. He also appeared there, maybe he was shooting somewhere there in the Film City. Now, in our industry, even if we have not worked with each other, we ask each other, 'Kaise hai aap sir (how are you, sir) ?'. It's a gesture. I have never worked with Amitabh Bachchan, I have met him four times, I have patted on his shoulder and asked him how he is doing, and he said, 'Acchha hoon main (I am alright)'. He is a big man. Forget my seniority, he (Kapil) kept sitting next to me for ten minutes but he didn't even say 'hello!'. It's not that I want him to say hello but I say you have no courtesy." Khanna also took a dig at Kapil Sharma's comedy style, and expressed his satisfaction at not appearing on the show, citing a statement made by fellow Mahabharat cast member Gajendra Singh Chauhan, who appeared on the show without him. "Bhisma Pitamah ke bina Mahabharat kahaan hoti hai? (Mahabharat is incomplete without Bhisma Pitamah). Arjun, Krishna, Duryodhana went, everybody went. Yudhishthira also went and somewhere he gave a statement that, 'Mukesh ji ko toh bulaya hi nahi tha (Mukesh ji was not invited), they needed people who have a sense of humour,' I said, 'Oye, when these cricketers come, are they asked if they have a sense of humour? They are treated as VIPs, as if they have done someone a favour by appearing on his show.' He also took a jibe at Kapil Sharma's cross-dressing antics on his show, saying, "When Kapil Sharma showed up dressed up as a woman... I still make fun of him because I can't do it."

Allu Arjun's arrest a 'black day for Indian film industry', says Ravi Kishan: 'Who will answer for his kids' trauma?'

Actor Ravi Kishan is upset with how Pushpa star Allu Arjun was treated by the police; on Friday, Arjun was arrested in connection with the death of a woman during a stampede at the premiere of his new film, Pushpa 2: The Rule. The Telugu star, who, according to Ravi, was 'dragged out of his house' in front of his family on Friday, returned home on Saturday. Calling it 'a black day in the history of Indian cinema', Ravi Kishan said that this isn't how a national icon should be treated. In a conversation with news agency ANI, Ravi said, "Bahut dukhad (It is really sad). Mere acche mitra, mere co-actor. Hum logo ne saath main film ki (He is a good friend and we have worked together). Ek gentleman insaan ko iss tarah unke ghar se bahar kheeche kar lana unke chote bachchon aur boodhe maata pita ke saamne (It was not right to drag someone like him out of his house in front of his kids and old parents)." He added, "Ek National Award-winning actor ke saath you're behaving like this. (He is a National Award-winning actor). This is a black day for the actor fraternity, for the film industry and for all his fans all over the world. Ek insaan tax-payer hai, itna bada business cinema ko diya aur ek bohoh hi tehezebdaar insaan (gentleman, well mannered)... uske saath koi personal revenge hai (He pays his taxes, brings business through cinema... And this is how you behave with him. Was it some personal vendetta)?"

The actor said that the state government owes an explanation for the incident. Ravi said, "Yeh bohoh hi bura din raha aur hurt hue hain hum... Unke chote bache par jo dimaagi asar hua hoga apne papa ke liye, usko kaise mitayenge (How one will tackle the trauma that his kids went through looking their father go to jail)? Who will pay for the mental torture that the family went through?" Allu Arjun was released from jail on Saturday morning. After reaching



home and reuniting with his wife Sneha Reddy and kids, Allu Arjun thanked his fans for their support. He told the media, "I'll cooperate with them, and I'll do the needful. And very importantly, I would like to give my condolences once again to the family. It (death of a woman) is very, very unfortunate." Meanwhile, the complaint that led to his arrest has now been withdrawn by the woman's family.

Vivek Oberoi recalls declining stardom, says bouquets stopped coming on birthdays: 'Dal-roti chalani hai, EMI bharna hai'



Bollywood actor Vivek Oberoi has opened up about the financial struggles he faced during his career. In a candid conversation, Oberoi shared his experiences of navigating the ups and downs of the film industry. Recalling the highs and lows of his career, Oberoi, at an Franchise India event, said, "The film industry has been that kind of industry where one night you feel like you've made it, you've got everybody lining up behind you spending crores for your time. And, then you have a patch which could be for whatever reasons. But you have a lean patch."

Oberoi revealed that he used to gauge his success by the number of bouquets he received on his birthday. "You can tell your lean patch by your birthday. Because on your

birthday, when you are doing well, there's no place in the house for the bouquets that come in from producers, directors, co-stars, it's just filled up. And when your films are not doing well, the number of bouquets start to reduce and you realise, "Oh! I am not doing too well, am I?" he said.

Despite facing financial struggles, Oberoi said that many actors have to maintain a certain lifestyle. However, he emphasised that this comes with its own set of expenses. "This is what has empowered me today, where I don't need to do a movie that I don't believe in or I don't like the script because dal-roti chalani hai, EMI bharna hai (I have to run my household, pay my EMI). Lots of people think, 'Actor hai, isko kya problem hai humare jaise... (He's an actor, what problems can he possibly have, like us ordinary people...)' But actors also have their problems, they are used to a certain lifestyle. They are required to create a certain perception, woh perception ka bhi kharcha hai (it costs to maintain that perception). You have to live up to it," he said. Vivek Oberoi's career in Bollywood has been a tumultuous one, marked by soaring highs and crushing lows. After a promising debut with Company in 2002, Oberoi's career seemed to be on the fast track, with films like Saathiyaa and Yuva earning him critical acclaim. However, his very public feud with Salman Khan and a string of box office flops led to a decline in his fortunes, with many in the industry seemingly turning their backs on him. Despite his efforts to revive his career, Oberoi struggled to regain his footing, and for a time, it seemed as though he had been all but ousted from the Bollywood mainstream.

‘Abhishek Bachchan was fairly new, Aishwarya Rai was a superstar’: Rohan Sippy recalls working with couple on Kuch Naa Kaho



Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and Abhishek Bachchan worked together in Rohan Sippy's Kuch Naa Kaho. Rohan Sippy talks about Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and Abhishek Bachchan in Kuch Naa Kaho. Actor couple Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and Abhishek Bachchan have worked together in several films, including Dhoom 2, Raavan, Kuch Naa Kaho and many others. In an interview with Friday Talkies, Kuch Naa Kaho director Rohan Sippy recalled his approach

towards the movie, and spoke about the love and respect that he has for Aishwarya in his heart. He also mentioned that Abhishek was fairly new, and she was already a superstar by the time they started filming.

During the candid conversation, Rohan said, "Refugee had just been released and next was Bas Itna Sa Khwaab Hai. He was quite fresh at that time. I had a good informal rapport with him. On the other hand, (we had) a superstar like Aishwarya." He further added that till date, there's no one like Aishwarya Rai Bachchan - "On the craft level, there are very few actors like her. Especially, now if you see, a complete Hindi film heroine package, there have not been many after Aishwarya. Generations after her have not done that."

Rohan recalled how the Taal actor motivated him during the initial years of his career. "Aishwarya was a complete package, just fantastic. I have learnt so much from her. Just everything, her dance and looks are on another level. Even as an actor, she is amazing. For me, it gave me a lot of confidence that she was ready to listen to me. She was far more experienced. Would have been easier for her to tell me that I know how it's done. But, she was very encouraging and supportive, so these things help. It makes you feel good when you yourself are just beginning," he said. Besides Abhishek Bachchan and Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Kuch Naa Kaho also starred Arbaaz Khan and Tannaz Irani. Meanwhile, on the work front, Abhishek was last seen in Shoojit Sircar's I Want To Talk and Aishwarya last appeared in the Tamil film Ponniyin Selvan: II, helmed by Mani Ratnam.

Rekha blesses Amitabh Bachchan's grandson Agastya, Saif Ali Khan admires Tiger Shroff's biceps.

The Kapoor family celebrated the legendary Raj Kapoor's 100th birth anniversary in a grand manner. After the family traveled to Delhi to invite Prime Minister Narendra Modi to join in the celebrations, they marked the occasion with a special event in Mumbai on Friday. Several videos and pictures of the event are being widely shared on social media. From Rekha blessing Amitabh Bachchan's grandson Agastya Nanda to Saif Ali Khan appreciating Tiger Shroff's biceps, the star-studded celebration witnessed many heartwarming moments.

Each member of the Kapoor family was wearing ethnic attire for the event. In a video shared on a paparazzi page on Instagram, Alia could be seen directing the guests to head towards a screening of Raj Kapoor's iconic film Awaara. She said, "Which film is starting? Awaara! Who wants to go see Awaara? Please go."

In two separate clips from the event, veteran star Rekha was seen hugging and talking to Ranbir Kapoor and Amitabh Bachchan's grandson, Agastya Nanda, with a wide smile. She exchanged a heartwarming moment with Agastya, when she held his face to pay him a compliment, after which he bowed before her with folded hands. It looked like Saif was in awe of Tiger Shroff's muscular physique. The actor was stroking Tiger's bicep and praising him with a smile. Tiger met both Saif and his wife, actor Kareena Kapoor Khan, with a warm hug, and conversed with them for a while. The occasion witnessed many other special moments, such as Karik Aaryan having a deep conversation with filmmaker Ayan Mukerji. Meanwhile, Aditya Roy



Kapur met Kareena and Saif as he arrived for the gala event. As a part of Raj Kapoor's centenary celebrations, RK Films, the Film Heritage Foundation, and NFDC-National Film Archive of India joined hands to present Raj Kapoor 100 - Celebrating the Centenary of the Greatest Showman. This festival will feature screenings of 10 iconic Raj Kapoor films in 40 cities and 135 cinemas, including PVR-Innox and Cinepolis theaters. Tickets are priced at Rs 100.

‘Raj Kapoor used to eat, drink and sleep only his films,’ says Boney Kapoor



very close to him. There are so many things we have spoken of that I will never speak of. I used to consider him my God, ki 'Mere bhagwan Raj Kapoor hain.' That's the way I looked up to him. I will remain indebted to him for eternity." Boney Kapoor mentions that he was known by the name Cinderella in Raj Kapoor's house. "We used to live in Chembur in the same neighbourhood. There were times when his car used to be parked waiting for me to come from the office. Then, we used to have dinner together and chat till 4-5 am in the morning. I used to be known as Cinderella in their house. Dabboo and Neetu used to call me by that name because Cinderella only used to go out only around midnight."

Sharing how Raj Kapoor wanted to honour his wife and actor Sridevi with an award, Boney Kapoor tells us, "The last function we attended before he went to Delhi and ultimately passed away was Mr. India's silver jubilee. I wanted him to give the award to me, but he insisted that he wants to give it to Sridevi. He said, 'I will give it to her.' He gave the award to her. He made sure she sat on the same table where he was sitting. He confessed to me that he wanted her to do the film Ghunghat Ke Pat Khol." Boney Kapoor reveals Raj Kapoor also went through highs and lows and Mera Naam Joker was one such film where he "banked a lot on it, but it didn't do well initially." "Later on, it started doing well. It was a money spinner in the re-rounds. He re-edited the film. A person who was so fond of drinking, he used to give it up when the film was in its final stage. He never used to touch alcohol during that period, till the copy was out. The entire post-production period used to go without him drinking. I was the privileged one who he used to share his most expensive alcohol with, so I know about this really well." Boney went on to share an anecdote about Kapoor's last film Ram Teri Ganga Maali. "At dinner, he was working on Ram Teri Ganga Maali and he played two songs that he had recorded. Ravinder Jain was the music director. They played Sun Sahiba Sun and Raj uncle showed the entire movement of how the song has to be picturised and it wasn't yet recorded. While leaving, he just told me before you go to the office, come and see me in the morning," he says, adding, "He woke up and we discussed the songs. I told him that the first song is going to be a blockbuster song. He said, 'Son, you are right.' Then, for four and a half hours, he narrated the entire script to me and the plans he had for this film. I told him that this will be his career's biggest hit." "When the legend passed away Boney Kapoor says that he didn't even want to see his 'hero' Raj Kapoor in his final moments. "When I went to see him in Delhi when he was in the ICU, I didn't want to go inside and have a look at him because he was my hero and I didn't want to see him like that. Ultimately, I had to when his body came to Bombay. I didn't want to do any posturing, so I stayed away. Anyway, his whole family was present to do the last rites."

Film producer Boney Kapoor, whose father Surinder Kapoor was a distant relative of actor Prithviraj Kapoor, shared a tight bond with legendary actor-filmmaker Raj Kapoor. In an exclusive conversation with SCREEN, ahead of Raj's birth centenary, Boney shared several anecdotes about the legend's professionalism and the life lessons he learned from him. Talking about Raj Kapoor, Boney says, "To begin with, he is the only filmmaker-actor-director-producer-editor who has lasted for five decades and given a blockbuster in each decade. He caught up with trends, created trends and even changed with time. He used to eat, drink and sleep only his films. There is nobody like him, and there never will be. He grew with every decade, and that made him a legend. Prem Rog, Bobby, every film was different and so many were ahead of his time. A lot of his thoughts are my thoughts now." "I learned the craft of making films from Raj Kapoor"

Boney Kapoor shares that he learned a lot from Raj Kapoor. "I haven't directed films, but as a producer, I have been involved with every aspect of filmmaking, with full independence to the director. I always become their first assistant director (AD) before starting the shoot. As he was a complete filmmaker, I learned the craft of making films from Raj Kapoor," he says. Not just professionally, Boney bonded with Raj personally as well. "I had a very close and affectionate relationship with him. After seeing my first film Hum Paanch, he said, 'You will be responsible for the first branch of Kapoors.' We discussed not only professional matters but personal matters too. He was my mentor. He had contributed in so many ways to my growth. He was my God. His career motivated me. I made up my mind that even if I achieve one percent of what he has, I will attain whatever I want to achieve." He adds, "We were like friends, and I was also his student. He gave me that love and respect. I was

Australia's booing crowd should know Mohammed Siraj's back story



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

In the second Test at Adelaide, Mohammed Siraj got his first wicket after 21 frustrating overs. Though, he would finish the inning with figures of 4/98 in 24.4 overs. During his barren period of play, Siraj had pace, rhythm and plan, but no wickets. He would square up the batsmen, beat them with pace and fox them with bounce but the ball, as if to tease the bowler, kept missing the edges and the stumps. Siraj would look exasperated, he would wipe the sweat on his face with his untucked shirt. There has always been something charmingly amateurish about Siraj. Such annoyingly hair-pulling days are part of every bowlers' journey but only those with the right stuff pull through. These are the moments this quirky game of fine margins decides to ask an important question to a bowler: You have the skills, but do you have heart? In a match he didn't get a five-for nor proved to be a match-winner, Siraj showed he did have heart.

Pacers love attention and the rising cheer from the terraces. It makes them run fast and bowl faster. Life hasn't indulged Siraj. He doesn't depend on love to be the bowler he is. It helped at Adelaide. Mohammed Siraj India's Mohammed Siraj, left, interacts with Australia's Travis Head during the day three of the second cricket test match between Australia and India at the Adelaide Oval in Adelaide, Australia, Sunday, Dec. 8, 2024. (AP Photo/James Elsbey) The wicket of local star Travis Head and his subsequent angry send-off turned the local crowd against him. They booed him relentlessly. Not just when he bowled but even when he walked in to bat later.

This trend is expected to continue for the rest of the series. Chances are Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney too would take a cue and target Siraj. But will the jeering and heckling make Siraj nervous and impact his play? Not with Siraj. Actually, it fired him to bowl an inspired spell – the adrenaline rush of Head dismissal helped him run over the tailenders. Australian fans need to look beyond Virat Kohli, be slightly more inquisitive about the other Indian cricketers. Had they known Siraj better, they wouldn't have dared to intimidate him.

Back in 2020-21 BGT, he made his debut at Melbourne. In the next match at Sydney, the rookie was brutally booed. They called him names. It was ugly. The Indians said it was racist too. And then within days, Gabba happened. Series of injuries made him the pace spearhead. That turned out to be his real international launch. Unlike in Adelaide this time, things fell in place for him. Edges flew to fielders; stumps couldn't hoodwink the balls. Unlike in 2024, he got a fiver and India won.

Mohammed Siraj India's Mohammed Siraj signs autographs for fans after the second cricket test match between Australia and India at the Adelaide Oval in Adelaide, Australia. (AP) The Aussies would have been wiser had they heard Siraj on an old Royal Challengers Bengaluru podcast. It's where he gets emotional while talking about his early days of struggle and the sacrifices of those around him. It's on Spotify. He chokes; he laughs. Siraj comes across as a

real person not a PR agent-tutored pro cricketer. It's easy to conclude, he is no lily-livered, mollycoddled cricketer. He is a charming rustic Hyderabad, till he is poked. He is also an outlier and very obstinate. He is from Hyderabad, and thus wisty. But he isn't a batsman. Siraj's late father was an auto driver and his biggest supporter. Mother, a domestic help, was the more pragmatic parent. She wasn't sure if her son could be that sharp shining needle in the piles of shattered cricketing dreams that are littered like haystacks around the country.

She would try and coax her son to keep a distance from cricket. "Kuch kaam karle, chhod ye khelna (Do some work, leave playing the game)," she would say. But the cricket-smitten teen would sneak out in his chappals to the Eidgah ground located near his home at Toli Chowki locality. On the way out, he would leave behind a grand promise for the mother to ponder. "Purra ghar bhar dunga paise se, cricket khelke (Will fill the home with money by playing cricket)," he would say. "Ja ja chod tere vaade (Go, go don't give me such promises)" – mother would scoff at her daydreaming son. Travis Head said he was displeased with Mohammed Siraj's send-off during the Adelaide Test on Saturday. (AP) Travis Head said he was displeased with Mohammed Siraj's send-off during the Adelaide Test on Saturday. (AP) This was followed by years of rewardless hard work – just like those 21 wicketless overs at Adelaide. He would borrow money to sustain his cricket. Give up the game for a bit, get a regular job but soon quit it and head to the Eidgah ground. The relentlessness would give him a break, he would play for Hyderabad, be an IPL net bowler, make it to the India team but get dropped soon.

Siraj was bowling well but the edges were being missed. But he would keep wiping the sweat with his untucked shirt and keep returning to the top of the run-up. The world around Siraj wasn't known for its sensitivity. He would get sledged by fans at the stadium and on social media. Siraj has heard a lot of abuses but he does remember this one. It was when someone from the stands shouted at him: "Go back and drive an auto like your father". That hurt.

Fate would give him a big break when he would get picked for IPL for Rs 2.6 crore. After that auction, he would tell his parents that their working years were over. They now need to enjoy the fruits of their son's cricketing toil. Since he had to join the team within a week, he told his elder brother to buy a new house. Mohammed Siraj reclaimed his rhythm after dismissing Marnus Labuschagne in the first innings of the Perth Test. (AP) Mohammed Siraj reclaimed his rhythm after dismissing Marnus Labuschagne in the first innings of the Perth Test. (AP)

The demand was met and when Siraj returned home, he saw a sight that gave him the ultimate 'sukoon' – spiritual satisfaction. "My mother and father were at home, sitting on the dining table and having meals. This was my biggest achievement in life," he would say. Siraj's aazmaish, loosely translated as test, was not over. While in quarantine during the Covid time IPL, Siraj was told that his father wasn't keeping well. Once in a while when he would talk to him, it would always be about the advice of "making the country proud." After that he would break down.

The father's pet wouldn't understand why he was repeating this message. The bad news would arrive during the Australia tour. The virus had not yet been tamed, the cricketers were still indoors. For 12 days, Siraj was all alone in his room dealing with the news of his father's death. "Only Allah knows how much I suffered. I couldn't meet anyone, there was security outside my door," Siraj says in the RCB podcast. While at his lowest in life, barely with two Tests behind him, he bowled the spell of a lifetime. For someone who has dealt with all this, what are 21 wicketless overs? But then the high on spirits dusk time Australian fans booing the boy from Toli Chowki, wouldn't have known this.

In farewell match, Tim Southee equals

Chris Gayle's Test sixes tally, two short of 100 maximums

GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Walking in at No. 10 in his farewell Test, Southee equalled West Indies legend Chris Gayle's tally of 98 sixes with his third maximum during a 10-ball 23 cameo. (AP) Walking in at No. 10 in his farewell Test, Southee equalled West Indies legend Chris Gayle's tally of 98 sixes with his third maximum during a 10-ball 23 cameo. In his potentially penultimate walk to the crease, Tim Southee smote three maximums against England at the Seddon Park in Hamilton to move up to joint-fourth on the all-time Test six-hitting charts on Saturday. Walking in at No. 10 in his farewell Test, Southee equalled West Indies legend Chris Gayle's tally of 98 sixes with his third maximum during a 10-ball 23 cameo for the Kiwis. His third strike over the fence also took him past Jacques Kallis on the all-time charts. Southee walked out to cheers and a guard of honour from the English side led by Ben Stokes. New Zealand reached 315 for nine at stumps on the opening day of the third and final Test.

The 36-year-old, playing in his 107th Test, is on the cusp of an unlikely Test record with potentially another innings left in his career. Southee could become only the



fourth batter after his former captain Brendon McCullum, Adam Gilchrist and Stokes to slam 100 sixes in Test cricket. In all likelihood, Southee will become the fastest batter to hit the century mark, after boasting a jaw-dropping six-hitting ratio in whites. Southee's balls-per-six ratio stands at a staggering 27.65 deliveries per maximum in Tests, the best for all batters with at least 50 sixes. To put into context, it took the mighty Gayle 11915 deliveries to reach 98 maximums, a mark Southee reached in only 2708 balls on Saturday!

Notes from a rainy Brisbane day: Team India selection puzzle, Allan Border's series prediction and fans winning refund battle

Relentless thunderstorms allowed just 13.2 overs of play on the opening day in Brisbane. The play will start half an hour earlier on day 2, but there is more rain forecasted. Near the end of the first day, though, the main interest revolved around whether they will be able to get in 10 balls more — the rule is if there are 15 overs of play, then Cricket Australia won't have to refund the ticket prices to the crowd. In the end, 30,145 people won. Many filed out to nearby pubs to have more drinks, some in Indian turbans — there was a stall not far from the stadium entrance that was not only selling them but also helping them fix on their heads.

Apart from the toss, the interest in the game was about the inclusion of Ravindra Jadeja. A buzz went up in the broadcaster's room first when someone spotted him bowl in the pitch adjacent to the main track before the toss. 'Is he playing? So neither Washington nor Ashwin, then?' Soon, Ashwin came and rolled his arm alongside Jadeja. Sundar didn't and the talk was now about who among Jadeja and Ashwin would play. In the end, the man who didn't bowl or

bat much in the nets in the preceding days was chosen in the playing XI. With Jadeja's inclusion, India have played three different spinners in each game. Jadeja was presumably kept out of the first two matches because of the presence of two attacking left-handers Travis Head and Alex Carey. He did train a lot before those two games, and just when he eased up a touch on that front in Brisbane, he was selected. There was talk that this pitch could aid spin on the last day, if not the fourth afternoon if rains stayed away. Just before the toss, another cry went up this time from one of the radio booths — all media boxes are lined up in one inexorably long corridor on level 3 of the stadium. This time someone had noticed an Indian support staff running to Rohit Sharma, whispering something in his ears, taking the team sheet from his hand and scribbling something. Little later, when a picture of that sheet was circulated in the media, it became apparent that the scribble was crossing out a name. It was in the substitutes section. Abhimanyu Easwaran was listed as the 12th man but his name was crossed out and Devdutt Padikkal's name was handwritten just above.

Ding Liren played better quality chess than Gukesh at World Championship: Richard Rapport



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Gukesh and Ding. Richard Rapport, who was Ding Liren's second said that the Chinese Grandmaster played better quality of chess than D Gukesh. Grandmaster Richard Rapport, who was Ding Liren's second at the chess World Championship, has said that the Chinese Grandmaster played better quality of chess than his opponent, D Gukesh, during the 14-game title match.

Speaking to Chinese Chess Association's social media channel, the Hungarian said: "I think he played overall better chess than the opponent (Gukesh). It's painful from him to lose last game this way. I can only imagine how he feels". Ahead of the final game, the scores were tied at 6.5

each with both players winning two games each. Game 14 was headed for an easy draw with tie-breaks looming before Ding, who was playing with white pieces, made a fatal error in the endgame that saw 18-year-old Gukesh become the youngest-ever world chess champion. Mind you, Ding was rated as the favourite had the match gone into the shorter-format tiebreaks. "I'm proud of him and the way he played. He had two wins which is difficult to achieve (at the World Championships). Those two wins were at a very high level, completely outplaying the opponent in both games." Experts were skeptical based on his performances (in the lead-up to the event). We (his team) managed to put him in good shape where he had many good fighting chances till the very end," Rapport, who was Ding's second at the 2023 World Championship too, said. After winning the title in 2023 against Ian Nepomniachtchi, Ding struggled to deal with the pressure of being a world champion. His performances throughout the year had dropped and in the classical format, Gukesh was picked as the favourite. Ding, however, showed great character to fight back against Gukesh, even when the chips were down. After losing Game 11, excerpts had written him off, but he came back with a surreal performance to win the next game in commanding fashion. "It's a bit of mixed feeling. He played better than he played in the previous tournament. The quality was better this time, but the result was worse," Rapport said.

We worked late into the night: Gukesh's second Vincent Keymer reveals behind-the-scenes preparation that led to World Championship win



GNS News Agency, Dec 17

Gukesh's team at the World Chess Championship. Vincent Keymer with Indian grandmaster Pentala Harikrishna and the Polish grandmaster Radoslaw Wojtaszek in Manilva, Spain. (Vincent Keymer/instagram and FIDE) Gukesh D's opening gambits and match strategies that ended dethroned Ding Liren and crowned him as the youngest-ever chess world champion were prepared at a hotel room in Spain's coastal town of Manilva. The work behind the scenes often went late into night and was exhaustive. Vincent Keymer, one of Gukesh's seconds for his World Championship match against Ding Liren, revealed in an interview with German publication Der Spiegel.

After he was crowned the world champion on Thursday, Gukesh named Keymer, the German sensation, as one of the players who was a part of his back-room team. "Gukesh asked me during the Grand Chess Tour in Warsaw in June to be part of his team for the World Championship," Vincent was quoted as saying.

It is rare for a young player with his own ambitions to become a world champion someday to be a part of his direct rival's team. But Keymer couldn't refuse Gukesh when the Indian teenager approached him after sealing his place in the World Championship tie by winning the Candidates tournament in April. "I myself saw it as an opportunity to gain experience with work at the absolute highest level... Among other things, with a view to qualification for the candidate

tournament 2026," Keymer told Spiegel. At the Candidates tournament, the player who would challenge Gukesh for the world crown will be determined. Keymer said that in the months leading up to the World Championship, multiple training camps were held. After Gukesh beat Ding in Game 14 to dethrone the Chinese and become the new champion, Keymer posted a photo of him from Manilva with Indian grandmaster Pentala Harikrishna and the Polish grandmaster Radoslaw Wojtaszek. "During the World Championship itself, I was in Manilva, Spain, together with Pentala Harikrishna and Radoslaw Wojtaszek, from where we supported Gukesh's opening preparation," Keymer told the German daily. "The work itself was intensive and exhausting, especially during the match we often worked late into the night. I was all the more pleased that the efforts of everyone involved were ultimately crowned with success." Keymer has been considered to be the greatest German chess talent since Emanuel Lasker, the only German chess world champion to this day. Lasker held the title 1894 to 1921. Grzegorz Gajewski, another integral member of Team Gukesh, told The Indian Express they were taking a 'risk' by including Keymer but it 'paid off' because he brought a lot of interesting ideas. "With Vincent, we knew that he is a very nice person, a very strong player. But we didn't know how he works. We didn't know what he would actually bring to the team. We were kind of taking some kind of a risk. It paid off because he brought a lot of interesting ideas and a lot of just willingness to work hard. But that's something we were hoping for," Gajewski said.

Viswanathan Anand on his bond with Gukesh: 'He's a fun guy, laughs a lot... we often sit and discuss chess'

Occasionally, even Viswanathan Anand gets shocked. The five-time world champion has seen all kinds of hell break loose on the chess board. But there is a certain rumbling in the air when the storm clouds start to gather over the chessboard. Thursday was not shaping up to be one of those days. That's why Anand was at his home keeping only half an eye on game 14 of the World Chess Championship battle between Gukesh and Ding Liren when the world of chess changed in the blink of an eye.

In a single move of his rook, Ding had opened the door for Gukesh to become the 18th world champion of the sport. "Sometimes history walks in when you are not expecting it to. Like on Thursday. I was kind of just sitting around, not watching the 14th World Championship game live in the end game. I was expecting it to end in a draw at some point and the match to continue in tiebreaks on the next day. I was still following the game. But you know how it is, you put your attention into doing something else at home, and you glance from time to time at the game to see what's happening, then you go back to doing something else," recollected Anand in an interview with The Indian Express. He added: "Then suddenly, I see that Ding Liren has blundered his way into a lost game with a king and pawn ending. Boom! It went up. That was quite dramatic. In a few seconds, everything changed."

Gukesh's rise to the top has stunned everyone in the sport. Success in chess comes much earlier than in most sports, but a teenager becoming the world cham-

pion is still unprecedented. "18 is just an unbelievable age to become a world champion. I think what made him succeed in the end was his attitude. In Singapore, he just came ready to fight in each of the 14 games. Gukesh's opponent Ding seemed to hesitate a bit in many games. In the 14th game, he tried a bit too hard to get a draw. He was still a bit conflicted. Gukesh kept trying every day to get a win. And in the end, his perseverance and his attitude were rewarded," said Anand. "The thing with Gukesh is I'm quite close to him. We speak a lot. We hang out at tournaments. He's a fun guy. Laughs a lot, is very good company and I've always enjoyed that. Besides that, I know his team well. Gukesh and I often sit and discuss chess. Every time he gets back home to Chennai, he often calls me and says, 'Sir, I want to share my thoughts', and we would go over stuff together. All these things I enjoy very much with him," Anand said.

As Gukesh tried to chart his way to the throne, Anand added that the teenager would seek him out to pick on his brain. Just trying to get lessons from Anand's career. "Just things like 'What were you thinking in this moment of your career?' I think he was looking to get a sense of what my journey was like. Literally, he could imagine it happening to him a few months later. He would kind of just ask me what getting to the throne and staying there has been like. I told him many times, you know, things have changed: The way you train for the match, the openings you play, all that will be very different from what I did. But my experiences will be what you will most benefit from. We shared a lot of conversations like that.