# INDIAN CHRONICL

#### Schoolgirls jump out of window mistaking sounds of road roller for earthquake!

Lahore: Eight schoolgirls were seriously injured after jumping from a first-floor classroom in panic, mistaking the vibrations and sounds of a road roller for an earthquake in Pakistan's Punjab province, Rescue 1122 said on Wednesday. The incident occurred on Tuesday in Jahanian, Khanewal district, approximately 350 kilometres from Lahore.

According to Rescue 1122, the students, aged between 12 and 14, were present in class at the Government Girls High School Jahanian when they felt strong vibrations and heard a thunderous noise caused by a road roller operating near the school as part of road construction work.

### planning team demolish footpath encroachments Hyderabad: Mild tension prevailed when GHMC town planning teams, amidst heavy police bandobast, on Wednes-

Mild tension prevails at Mailardevpally as GHMC town

day started demolishing footpath encroachments including shops that have occupied pavements at Laxmiguda in Mailardevpally. The town planning officials along with local police reached the spot with earthmovers and staff to take up the demolition on the route between Laxmiguda towards Vambay Colony on both sides of the road. According to police officials, several complaints were made by the locals regarding illegal structures and shops occupying the pavements, causing inconvenience to pedestrians and traffic congestion in the area.

## Telangana Congress Leaders Stage Chalo Raj Bhavan Rally Against Manipur and Adani Issues

Hyderabad witnessed a massive political rally as Telangana Congress leaders, under the leadership of Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) Chief Mahesh Kumar Goud, staged the "Chalo Raj Bhavan" protest on Tuesday. Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka, and several ministers participated in the rally, which began at the Indira Gandhi statue on Necklace Road and culminated at Raj Bhavan.The rally was organized to protest against the Central government's alleged inaction on key issues, including the Manipur unrest and the Adani controversy. Holding party flags, a large number of Congress workers, leaders, and followers marched in unison, showcasing their solidarity. To ensure the



rally's smooth conduct, city police made elaborate security arrangements along the route from Necklace Road to Raj Bhavan. Despite the heavy police presence, the leaders and protesters remained firm in their demands.Upon reaching Raj Bhavan, Revanth

Reddy, Mahesh Kumar Goud, and other Congress leaders squatted on the main road, staging a protest. They denounced the Central government's attitude toward the Adani controversy and the ongoing crisis in Manipur. The Congress leaders announced their intention

the Governor, highlighting their concerns and demanding immediate action on the pressing issues

This rally underscores the Congress party's efforts to bring these matters to the forefront as they prepare for the upcoming political challenges in Telangana.

## Congress and its rotten ecosystem: Modi's scathing attack over Ambedkar row

GNS News Agency, Dec 18

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday launched a blistering attack at the Congress party, accusing it of indulging in every possible dirty trick to obliterate the legacy of Dr. Ambedkar and also humiliate the SC/ST communities.PM Modi's tirade came on back of Congress's demand for the resignation of Home Minister Amit Shah, whom they accused of disrespecting Dr Ambedkar during his speech in the Rajya Sabha.In a series of posts on X, PM Modi lambasted the Congress, claiming the party had a long history of undermining Ambedkar's contributions."In Parliament, HM Amit Shah ji exposed the Congress' dark history of insulting Dr. Ambedkar and ignoring the SC/ST Communities. They are clearly stung and stunned by the facts he presented, which is why they are now indulging in theatrics! Sadly, for them, people know the truth!""If the Congress and its rotten ecosystem think their malicious lies can hide their misdeeds of several years, especially their insult towards Dr. Ambedkar, they are gravely mistaken!"PM Modi further wrote. "The people of India have seen time and again how one party, led by one dynasty, has indulged in every possible dirty trick to obliterate the legacy of Dr. Ambedkar and humiliate the SC/ST communities."He emphasized his government's commitment to realizing Ambedkar's vision, citing landmark initiatives aimed at improving the lives of marginalized communities."It is due to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar that we are what we are! Our government has worked tirelessly over the last decade to fulfill his vision," he said

Shedding light on flagship programs of his govt, the Prime Minister pointed to various initiatives such as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Jal Jeevan Mission, and Ujjwala Yojana, highlighting their transformative impact on the poor and marginalized. "Our Government has worked tirelessly to fulfil the vision of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar over the last decade. Take any sector - be it removing 25 crore people from poverty, strengthening the SC/ST Act, our Government's flagship programmes like Swachh Bharat, PM Awas Yojana, Jal Jeevan Mission,



Ujjwala Yojana and more, each of them has touched the lives of the poor and marginalised," he said.PM Modi also detailed steps taken by his government to honor Ambedkar's legacy, particularly the development of Panchteerth, five key sites associated with Ambedkar's life. Among these, he mentioned the resolution of the long-pending issue of land for Chaitya Bhoomi and the government's acquisition of 26, Alipur Road in Delhi, where Ambedkar spent his last days."The house in London where Dr. Ambedkar stayed during his studies has also been acquired and preserved," PM Modi added, underscoring the government's efforts to enshrine Ambedkar's memory in the national consciousness. The Prime Minister also mentioned how Congress tried to obliterate the legacy of Dr Ambedkar. "The list of the Congress' sins towards Dr. Ambedkar includes: Getting him defeated in elections not once but twice. Pandit Nehru campaigning against him and making his loss a prestige issue. Denying him a Bharat Ratna. Denying his portrait a place of pride in Parliament's Central Hall," he said. "Congress can try as they want but they can't deny that the worst massacres against SC/ST Communities have happened under their regimes. For years, they sat in power but did nothing substantive to empower the SC and ST communities," PM Modi added.PM Modi's sharp retort at the Congress party goes to spotlight the 'hypocrisy' of grand old party on the Dalit icon while positioning his government as the one which upholds and respects Ambedkar's legacy.

### KTR drives autorickshaw to Assembly to raise problems faced by three-wheeler drivers



GNS News Agency, Dec 18

Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) working president K. T. Rama Rao reached the Telangana State Assembly by driving an autorickshaw to highlight the problems faced by autorickshaw drivers following the implementation of the free bus travel scheme by the Congress government in the state. Other MLAs and MLCs of BRS also came to the Assembly and Council in three-wheelers wearing khaki shirts as a mark of solidarity with autorickshaw drivers.

The legislators of the main opposition party reached the Legislature complex in a rally from MLA Quarters. They

were carrying placards and raising slogans, drawing the attention of the government. They demanded that the Congress government implement the promises made to the autorickshaw drivers Talking to media persons, Rama Rao said that during the elections, the Congress party made numerous promises to 8 lakh auto drivers but none of those promises have been fulfilled. "The deaths of 93 auto drivers by suicide in the state are nothing short of governmentdriven tragedies," said KTR, as Rama Rao is popularly known. The BRS leader said they provided the list of auto drivers who died by suicide during previous Assembly sessions but the state government remains indifferent.

KTR demanded that the government should immediately come to the rescue of the families of auto drivers who died by suicide. "The government, which used auto drivers for election gains, has forgotten all the promises made to them," he said, demanding that the financial aid of Rs 12,000 promised to auto drivers should be announced immediately. The promise to establish a welfare board for auto drivers must be fulfilled without delay, the former minister said. He appealed to autorickshaw drivers not to resort to suicide and promised that the BRS party would fight for their rights."In solidarity with auto drivers, we are heading to the Assembly in autos, wearing their uniforms. The BRS party stands with auto drivers and will continue to fight for their cause," KTR added.

## **BRS MLC Kavitha questions Congress** Govt over Musi Riverfront project secrecy

GNS News Agency, Dec 18

Hyderabad: BRS MLC K Kavitha questioned the Consecrecy regarding the Musi Riverfront rejuvenation project. She said the State government, in contrast to its earlier statements, had approached the World Bank for a loan. She questioned the government's plans to displace thousands of families and mortgage the State to execute the Chief Minister's dream real estate project. Speaking to mediapersons at the Assembly media point on Wednesday, Kavitha said Legislative Affairs Minister D Sridhar Babu provided false information, misleading the Assembly and the public about the project's funding and intent, exposing a deliberate attempt to deceive. "The Minister claimed that no assistance was sought from the World Bank. When I insisted of having evidence to prove him wrong, he admitted to have sent a proposal, but for sewerage interceptors project along the Musi River, which is false," she said.

The preliminary project report, submitted on September 19, 2024, clearly outlines plans for the Musi Riverfront project and seeking Rs 4,100 crore for it where the government mentions about Musi Riverfront Development Project, but not Rejuvenation Project as was being claimed. Highlighting the discrepancies, the BRS MLC pointed out that while the government claims no Detailed Project Report (DPR) exists, it has informed the World Bank that they have a DPR or Detailed Engineering Design (DED). On October 4, 2024, the State government released Rs 160 crore to a consortium, comprisig Meinhart Consultancies, Cushman and Wakefield India, and RIOS Design Studios, for project preparation. Kavitha charged Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy of attempting to mortgage the State's resources and lands to the World Bank."In 10 years of BRS rule, we never sought World Bank loans to execute any government project. But within a year, the Congress government is ready to mortgage the State and



displace over 16,000 families living near the Musi River," she said. The project, estimated to cost Rs 1.5 lakh crore, includes significant land acquisition along the 55-km stretch. The BRS leader said the Chief Minister recently submitted a report to the Centre seeking Rs 14,000 crore for the project. She warned that the plan prioritizes commercial interests, such as shopping malls and real estate, over the welfare of displaced families. Demanding transparency, Kavitha called for an explanation on the lack of public consultation and the misleading information surrounding the project. "This government must answer: why is there no transparency, and whose profits are being prioritised over public welfare? Why is the government giving contradictory statements to the Centre, the Legislature, the World Bank and the people of

#### Ravichandran Ashwin announces retirement from international cricket



GNS News Agency, Dec 18

India's ace spinner Ravichandran Ashwin announced his retirement from international cricket on Wednesday (December 18, 2024) after the end of the third Test match against Australia in Brisbane. The announcement was made during the post-match press conference after the Gabba Test. "This will be my last day as an Indian cricketer in all formats in the international level," the 38-year-old told reporters at the Gabba ground. Ashwin added, "I have had a lot of fun. I must say I have created a lot of memories alongside Rohit and several of my other teammates even though I have lost some of them over the last few years. We are the last bunch of OGs. Obviously, there are a lot of people to thank but I would be failing in my duties if I didn't thank the BCCI and the fellow teammates. I want to name a few of them. All the coaches who have been a part of the journey, most importantly Rohit, Virat (Kohli), Ajinkya (Rahane), (Cheteshwar) Pujara, who have taken those splendid catches to give me the number of wickets I have managed to get over the years."The spin-master ends his Test career with 537 wickets at an average of 24 in 106

Test matches, the second-highest wicket-taker from India. The BCCI in a post on X (formerly Twitter) thanked the all-rounder and said, "A name synonymous with mastery, wizardry, brilliance, and innovation. The ace spinner and Team India's invaluable all-rounder announces his retirement from international cricket."While speaking at the press conference, Ashwin said, "Also a big thank you to the Australian cricket team who have been very fierce competitors. I have enjoyed my time playing against them. I think it is already getting long. I wouldn't be taking

### any questions. But it is truly a very emotional moment." VP Jagdeep Dhankhar to meet 500 organic farmers in Krishi Vigyan Kendra in Medak

GNS News Agency,

Medak: Vice-president Jagdeep Dhankhar and Governor Jishnu Dev Varma will visit the Krishi Vigyan Kendra-Thuniki in Medak district on December 25.Dhankhar will interact with over 500 organic farmers during his visit. At least 300 other farmers will also participate in the programme. Collector Rahul Raj visited the Krishi Vigyan Kendra on Wednesday to review arrangements for



Dhankhar's visit. He directed Narsapur RDO Mahipal Reddy, and R&B EE Sardar Singh to make all the arrangements for the Vice-president's programme.A helped was prepared for the landing of the chopper near Vigyan

### Four cases booked against fans of Allu Arjun for alleged derogatory comments on CM



GNS News Agency, Dec 18

Hyderabad: The Cybercrime police in the city and other places in Telangana State have reportedly booked at least four cases on fans of actor Allu Arjun, for allegedly making derogatory comments on Chief Minister, A

Revanth Reddy. The cases were booked following complaints from Congress party leaders and others.

According to officials privy to the developments, the units of Cybercrime police in Hyderabad and districts are also tracking social media activity of fans of Allu Arjun, who are indulging in spreading unverified and malicious posts, especially against Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, after the actor's arrest. The social media monitoring teams of the Cyberabad police have been directed to maintain high vigil and track the activities of such individuals. The police have also warned people against posting inappropriate and inflammatory content on social media in view of the arrest of the actor. The authorities (police) are also closely watching miscreants who indulge in circulating such malicious content on social media. It is learnt that all the senior officers and Station House Officers have been instructed to register specific cases in every such instance and initiate action against such offenders.

## Indian Chronicle

English Daily

#### Modi-AKD meeting

THE meeting between Sri Lankan President Anura umara Dissanayake (AKD) and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Monday marks a critical juncture in ndo-Lanka relations. As Sri Lanka rebuilds after years of economic and political turmoil, Dissanayake's visit signiies Colombo's trust in India's partnership for its recovery. Notably, this is Dissanayake's first international visit since assuming office in September. It underscores his priority o deepen bilateral ties with India and reaffirm Sri Lanka's commitment to a collaborative regional vision. President Dissanayake's tribute to Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat earer in the day set the tone for the visit. Modi and AKD ocused on deepening economic cooperation, exploring nvestment opportunities and bolstering regional security. t is a reflection of their shared aspirations for prosperity and stability in the Indian Ocean Region. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's earlier visit to Colombo undercored India's commitment to Sri Lanka's economic rerival and laid the groundwork for this fruitful dialogue. The sland nation's significance as India's closest maritime neighbour ensures it occupies a central role in New Delhi's strategic outlook — from fostering trade to safeguarding egional security. Dissanayake is known for his pragmatic eadership. Anchored in leftist ideology and focus on anticorruption reforms, AKD's regime marks a move away rom the dynastic politics that has long dominated Sr ankan governance. It aligns well with Modi's own rassroots approach, offering opportunities for renewed cooperation, particularly in addressing economic rebuildng and ensuring regional stability. The meeting under cored Delhi's support for Sri Lanka's economic recovry, recalling India's \$4-billion assistance during the 2022 risis and its role in facilitating an IMF bailout. By advancng mutual interests and focusing on sustainable solutions. ndia and Sri Lanka are poised to forge new paths for coperation in a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape.

# Narayana Murthy calls for compassionate capitalism, says technology is catalyst for growth

GNS News Agency, Dec 18

Narayana MurthyOn the importance of embracing technological advancements, Murthy said, "Technology is not just a tool for convenience; it's a catalyst for growth. It reduces costs, increases revenue, and creates new opportunities." Infosys co-founder N R Narayana Murthy on Sunday emphasized the importance of compassionate capitalism and highlighted the role of technology in India's future

Speaking at the centenary celebration of the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) at Calcutta Town Hall, Murthy said, "I humbly request that we embrace compassionate capitalism. Compassionate capitalism combines the best aspects of free-market capitalism with the compassion found in liberalism and socialism. By doing so, we can create a model for the world—an India that stands as a shining example of how capitalism can succeed while still uplifting the most vulnerable members of society."On the importance of embracing technological advancements, Murthy said, "Technology is not just a tool for convenience; it's a catalyst for growth. It reduces costs, increases revenue, and creates new opportunities. Take the example of AI- it's revolutionizing industries, especially in sectors like healthcare. Al is already helping to detect diseases like cancer far more effectively than traditional methods."

Commending the ICC for its longevity, he said, "The true measure of success in any organization is its longevity. This is why I have such deep respect for those corporations in India that have stood the test of time and continue to grow. This institution we are celebrating today is also a shining example of enduring strength and vision. A legacy like this is not built overnight but through dedication, hard work, and a commitment to excellence. It's truly inspiring to witness such growth and resilience." Sanjiv Goenka, chairman of the ICC advisory council and chairman of RPSG Group, said: "It is indeed a momentous occasion as we gather here to celebrate the century-long legacy of the Indian Chamber of Commerce. A century of excellence, collaboration, and commitment to the cause of Indian industry." Abhyuday Jindal, president of the ICC, highlighted the organization's pivotal role in India's industrial growth. "For a century, the ICC has been a symbol of excellence, collaboration, and commitment to fostering economic growth in India. This evening is a reflection of the hard work and dedication that has shaped the organization into what it is today."Brij Bhushan Agarwal, senior vice president of the ICC, delivered the vote of thanks, expressing gratitude for the support and contributions of all stakeholders. The event was attended by several prominent industrialists, including Parthiv Vikram Neotia, vice president of the ICC, and Dr Rajeev Singh, director general of the ICC

#### Bengaluru braces for chilliest December night since 2010 tomorrow, here's what IMD has to say

GNS News Agency, Dec 18

The weather forecast for Bengaluru this week indicates that night-time temperatures may drop to the lowest levels in December since 2010, with average minimum temperatures expected to be below normal. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) weather forecast for Tuesday night predicts that the minimum temperature may drop to 12.4 degrees Celsius. This will be lower than the previous record low in the last 14 years—12.8 degrees Celsius, which was recorded on December 24, 2011. Bengaluru's average minimum temperature in December is typically 15.7 degrees Celsius. On Sunday (December 15), the recorded minimum temperature was 15.5 degrees Celsius. In the HAL airport region, it was 14.7 degrees Celsius, while in the Bengaluru International Airport region, it reached 14.5 degrees Celsius. The weather forecast for the next 48 hours indicates mostly clear skies. Fog and mist will likely occur in some areas early in the morning. Maximum temperatures are expected to be around 27 degrees Celsius, while minimum temperatures will be around 16 degrees Celsius. The cooler December weather in Bengaluru is attributed to constant rains caused by low-pressure systems along the coast in the recent weeks. According to the IMD's historical data, the lowest-ever minimum temperature in Bengaluru was 7.8 degrees Celsius on January 13, 1884

# Inside Kolkata's Fort William, a military museum that tells many stories—from colonial Bengal to India-Pak War of 1971



GNS News Agency, Dec 18

It was two years ago that Sekhar Chakrabarti first visited the Indian Army's Command Museum in Fort William in Kolkata. An author and vexillologist, it was Chakrabarti's interest in military history and the flags on display at the museum that drew him to Fort William. The septuagenarian recalls that October day in 2022 vividly. "I am nearing 80 but I still remember it. Something interesting happened. That day, a war veteran of the 1971 war was also visiting the museum," says Chakrabarti. The veteran was Major General Ian Cardozo AVSM SM (Retd.), whose battalion, the 4/5 Gorkha Rifles, was deployed in what is now Bangladesh during the country's Liberation War. The meeting that occurred by happenstance resulted in Cardozo reminiscing about the war as the two went through the museum's galleries. This year, on Vijay Diwas on December 16, Fort William will witness a series of events to commemorate India's victory over Pakistan, leading to the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. And though there was initial speculation that the deterioration in India-Bangladesh relations would mean that the Mukti Jodhas, Bangladesh freedom fighters who fought against Pakistan for their freedom, would skip the annual event, the Eastern Command in Kolkata has confirmed the participation of 10-12 veterans in this year's

Fort William's Command Museum is the only one of its kind in West Bengal that documents the origins of the 328-year-old British-built fort, the early days of Calcutta, and the three major wars that the Armed Forces' Eastern Command has witnessed: the Second World War, the India-China War of 1962, and the India-Pakistan War of 1971. Inside the Fort William's Command Museum in Kolkata. Photo credit: Neha Banka Inside the Fort William's Command Museum in Kolkata. Photo credit: Neha BankaWhile the museum was first established in 2018, it was rarely opened for civilians and public access was available only in 2022. Even today, not many in Kolkata are aware of its existence. But this less well-known museum in the city serves as one of few institutions that documents the history of the Eastern Command, particularly its important role during the India-Pakistan War of 1971. "The Eastern Command led the war in 1971. It was integral in all operations during the eastern theatre of the war," said an Indian Armed Forces personnel, requesting anonymity because he was not authorised to comment. Over the years, particularly post Covid in 2020, the museum has expanded its collection to highlight not only the Eastern Command's role in the 1971 War but also other important wars that it contributed to. The ground-floor building that houses the museum was once an ammunition storage dump when the fort was still controlled by the British in pre-Independence India. "In order to preserve the ordnance used during that time, we have a weapons gallery adjacent to the museum," the PRO, Ministry of Defence, Kolkata, told indianexpress.com.Fort William occupies an area of approximately 177.42 acres in Kolkata and has an octagonal shape with five sides towards land and three sides towards the Hooghly River. In 1963, the Indian Army's Eastern Command was shifted from Lucknow to Fort William.

The 1971 gallery in Fort William's Command Museum pays tribute to the Mukti Bahini which comprised military and paramilitary personnel and civilians who fought for the liberation of Bangladesh, Photo credit; Neha Banka The 1971 gallery in Fort William's Command Museum pays tribute to the Mukti Bahini which comprised military and paramilitary personnel and civilians who fought for the liberation of Bangladesh. Photo credit: Neha BankaThere are six galleries in the museum that document major turning points in the history of Fort William and the Eastern Command. According to a response from the PRO, Ministry of Defence, Kolkata, while "renowned scholars" have contributed to the research that went into the assembling of the galleries, much of the information displayed in the museum on the early days of the fort has been obtained from the 1995 book Fort William: A Historical Perspective, authored by Bhaskar Chakrabarty, Basudeb Chattopadhyay and Suranjan Das. The 1971 gallery in Fort William's Command Museum

pays tribute to the Mukti Bahini which comprised military and paramilitary personnel and civilians who fought for the liberation of Bangladesh. Photo credit: Neha Banka The 1971 gallery in Fort William's Command Museum pays tribute to the Mukti Bahini which comprised military and paramilitary personnel and civilians who fought for the liberation of Bangladesh. Photo credit: Neha BankaWhile the first gallery is dedicated to the history of Fort William during pre-Independence India, the next focuses on the armed forces during the Second World War (1935-1945). In his 2019 book Calcutta Under Fire, David Lockwood writes, "Calcutta served as an industrial centre, a port and a transit point for troops moving up to fight the Japanese in Malaya and then in Burma. It was a city of considerable strategic importance to the allies." Therefore, one section of the museum is dedicated to the Second World War.

The next gallery focuses on the India-China War of 1962 that centred around the Aksai Chin region. The fifth gallery focuses extensively on the India-Pakistan War of 1971. Here, in addition to archival photographs, the museum also houses some artefacts captured from the Pakistani Army during the war as well as regimental flags. One of the most striking displays in the 1971 gallery is a large flag that once belonged to 18 Punjab of the Pakistan Army, which was brought to India after it was captured by the Indian Army in Jessore. Like all captured flags, including regimental flags, that belonged to various battalions of the Pakistani Army during the 1971 war, these have been displayed upside down, following flag etiquette."After war, captured flags are displayed upside down to show that the flag was captured by the victor. I enjoyed the displays and the write-ups because often the exhibits do not have good texts," says Chakrabarti. Fort William's Command Museum houses regimental flags as well as Pakistani flags captured by the Indian Army during the 1971 war. Photo credit: Sekhar Chakrabarti Fort William's Command Museum houses regimental flags as well as Pakistani flags captured by the Indian Army during the 1971 war. Photo credit: Sekhar Chakrabarti

The Command Museum's 1971 gallery is important from an archival perspective because it documents pivotal occurrences in the 13-day war and the people who contributed to it. The 1971 gallery also pays tribute to the Mukti Bahini which comprised military and paramilitary personnel and civilians who fought for the liberation of Bangladesh. Although the gallery displays only important moments during the 1971 war as part of its permanent exhibit, the Eastern Command's wider collection of archival photographs is shown at the annual Vijay Diwas commemorations. These include a fascinating collection of photos and declassified maps, featuring several aspects of the warfrom pictures of the Mukti Bahini receiving weapons training to photographs of Bangladesh's founding leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.A photograph of Indira Gandhi along with Bangladesh's Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1971 that is a part of Fort William's archival collection. Photo credit: Neha Banka A photograph of Indira Gandhi along with Bangladesh's Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1971 that is a part of Fort William's archival collection. Photo credit: Neha BankaRepository of the pastThe museum is also an important resource for researchers and scholars focusing on military history, says Manas Dutta, Assistant Professor at Aliah University's Department of History, whose area of research covers issues related to war and conflict in South Asia. "The Eastern Command played a pivotal role during the India-Pakistan War of 1971. Museums like the Command Museum need to be opened for the public as well as researchers who are working on the military history of South Asia and India, in particular, as this will generate interest among generations of people across gender and class,' says Dutta, who has made previous visits to Fort William for his research.On display at Fort William's Command Museum, a Pakistani flag captured by the Indian Army during the 1971 war. Photo credit: Sekhar Chakrabarti On display at Fort William's Command Museum, a Pakistani flag captured by the Indian Army during the 1971 war.iThe museum may also serve to connect with the wider public, he believes. "Civil-military relations could be enhanced by opening such museums and this will generate greater cohesion between these two stakeholders for better understanding. Academic institutions should connect with such museums to generate interest among scholars and common people towards war studies or war and genocide studies in general," says Dutta. In September this year, when 21-year-old Rohit Mondal, who recently graduated from Dum Dum Motijheel Rabindra Mahavidyalaya, visited the Command Museum with a large group of friends, it seemed to him as though "the 1971 Liberation War came alive" in front of him. For Mondal, the museum was an accessible space where he could learn more about the history of the Bangladesh Liberation War. "There may be some museums dedicated to guns and artillery, but the one at Fort William is a war museum and we do not have this anywhere else in the state," says Chakrabarti.

# Revolutionary Workers Party of India and students' organisation hold protest over Delhi school boy's death

GNS News Agency, Dec 18

The Revolutionary Workers Party of India (RWPI) and Disha Students' Organization Sunday held a protest to demand justice for the 12-year-old student who reportedly died during a scuffle with another boy at a private school in Delhi's Vasant Vihar earlier this month. During the protest held at Jantar Mantar, the victim's family, neighbours, and schoolmates along with activists and JNU students raised concerns over the school administration's alleged negligence and the police's handling of the investigation. While addressing the crowd, the boy's parents alleged that the school administration failed to inform them about the incident promptly and attempted to expedite the cremation process.

"Even after 13 days of the incident, the investigation has not moved forward." She further alleged, "Police has been continuously shielding the school... Their callous attitude clearly shows their intention to close the case as quickly as possible," claimed Lata from RWPI. Sarthak and Keshaw of the Disha Students' Organization highlighted the alleged discrimination faced by Dalit students at educational institutions and criticised the Centre's education policies. "The demand for free education for everyone is an important step for ending caste discrimination and the youth of the country must play their role in this struggle," Sarthak, a student of Jawaharlal Nehru University, said. The protesters submitted a memorandum to the Ministry of Education demanding a thorough investigation into the boy's death,



strict action against the school administration, free and equal education for every child of India, special provisions under the Right to Education Act to take action against discrimination within school premises, and the formation of a parent-teacher committee, with equal representation of parents from the area where the student lived.

They also asked for "a free and independent investigation of the case by the said committee whose recommendations should be legally enforced."

On December 4, the Delhi Police apprehended his classmate, another 12-year-old student, for allegedly hitting him during a "scuffle" a day before. Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, who visited the victim's family, ordered a magisterial inquiry into his death.

#### Doctors' body plans 10-day demonstration over RG Kar hospital rape-murder as 2 key suspects get bail



GNS News Agency, Dec 18

Rape ProtestAn on-duty female doctor of the staterun Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata was found dead on August 9, triggering nationwide protests. The West Bengal Joint Platform of Doctors (WBJPD) was planning to begin a sit-in demonstration in the heart of Kolkata from Tuesday over the CBI investigation into the Kar hospital rape and murder case, in which two key suspects were granted bail.

The proposed demonstration of the WBJPD, an umbrella organisation of five associations, will be held till December 26 at the Doreena Crossing, an office-bearer said. "We also demand the immediate submission of the supplementary chargesheet by the CBI," said doctor Punyabrata Gun, a joint convener of WBJPD. He said WBJPD wrote to Kolkata Police Commissioner Manoj Verma, seeking permission for the 10-day demonstration. "We have sought permission from the police to set up a temporary stage without any interruption to the traffic movement. We have assured them that the demonstration will be conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner following all legal and safety guidelines," Gun said.

They have also asked the police to ensure the safety of all participants. The WBJPD on Saturday organised a march to the CBI office at CGO Complex in Salt Lake over the issue. An on-duty female doctor of the state-run Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata was found dead on August 9, triggering nationwide protests. the Sealdah court granted bail to the ex-principal of Kar Medical College Sandip Ghosh and former officer-in-charge of Tala police station Abhijit Mondal in the rape-murder case. They were granted bail after the CBI "failed" to file a charge sheet within the mandatory 90-day period.

#### Delhi Police arrest former guard who conned dozens of women by posing as wealthy manager on matrimonial sites

GNS News Agency, Dec 18

Delhi Police on Sunday arrested a former security guard who allegedly posed as a high-earning professional on matrimonial websites and cheated dozens of women over seven years. The accused was identified as Manoj Gahlyan, 35, a native of Jorashi Khalsa village in Haryana's Panipat district. During interrogation, Gahlyan revealed that he had been cheating women in this manner since 2017, officers said

Deputy Commissioner of Police (West Delhi) Vichitra Veer said Monday that Gahlyan used to create profiles on popular matrimonial sites posing as a nign-earning man ager and targeted women seeking marriage or companionship. The police suspect that hundreds of women may have been targeted by him, but many victims are unlikely to have reported the matter due to shame or fear. He was arrested after a raid in Northeast Delhi's Usmanpur area by a team led by Inspector Dharmender (Cyber West). Five debit cards and a mobile phone bought using the complainant's card were recovered from him. "The accused used to identify gullible women and lure them by pretending to be a highsalaried man in a reputed office, earning Rs 15-20 lakh. He would build trust by meeting them and then steal their credit or debit card details to siphon off money," the DCP said.On November 23, a victim approached the Cyber (West) police station and raised a complaint. After getting acquainted with her on a matrimonial site, the accused allegedly took her bank account and credit card details over the course of time. Later, he used the information to make unauthorised transactions, the police said. Investigation revealed details of the crime and the police traced the withdrawals to the accused's bank account, but his address was found to be incorrect. Further probe through CCTV footage analysis, account withdrawals, and purchases, confirmed Gahlvan's involvement. "Investigation is on to determine the total number of victims and the amount of money stolen," DCP Veer

# Man succumbs to injuries, death toll rises to 8

GNS News Agency, Dec 18

A 55-year-old man, who was among the several persons injured in the BEST bus accident in Kurla area here, died on Monday morning, taking the death toll to eight, a civic official said.

The electric bus, hired by the civic-run Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) undertaking on wetlease basis, ploughed into a crowd and fatally knocked down seven persons and injured 42 others on a crowded road in Kurla area on December 9..One of the injured persons, identified as Fazlu Rehman, died during treatment at the Sion Hospital on Monday morning, the official from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said.BEST has set up a five-member committee to investigate the Kurla accident.Driver Sanjay More (54) is in police custody for alleged reckless driving.In a statement issued last week, BEST said a committee, headed by Chief Manager (Transport) Ramesh Madavi, will investigate the accident.

It also said that BEST would provide Rs 2 lakh each to the families of those who lost their lives and bear treatment expenses of the injured.BEST administration has claimed that More received three days' training before he was allowed to drive the electric bus.RTO officials suspect human error and lack of proper training for driving automatic transmission buses could be the reason behind the accident, among the most horrific involving BEST buses in recent history.

# sibling rivalry or a property dispute'; What was behind the South Delhi triple murder?



GNS News Agency, Dec 18

Delhi Triple Murder Case News: Devli in Delhi's Neb Sarai area is a slum, with houses packed together like sandwich loaves, but it meant the world to Rajesh Tanwar and his family. This unkempt urban village, after all, is where he built his home, putting down roots to raise a family after years in the Army. It wasn't much, this jungle of crammed dirty lanes, but it was enough for Rajesh, 51, and his wife, Komal, 46. They were married for 25 years and they seemed happy. They had their small dream of a home and two children on the cusp of starting promising careers and, hopefully, changing the family fortunes for the better. And they also had a close-knit community in Devli.

It was the evening of December 3 and Rajesh and Komal were preparing to mark their 25th wedding anniversary. Nothing too fancy, just a small family celebration with their son Arjun, 20, and daughter Kavita, 23. The next morning, police arrived at their home and took away Rajesh, Komal and Kavita - in body bags. The police had received a call at 6.53 am. It was Arjun. He had just returned from his morning workout and found his father, mother and sister lying on the blood-soaked floor, their throats slit.

Who could have murdered them? And in such a sav-

That's what Joint Commissioner of Police, Southern Range, S K Jain and Deputy Commissioner of Police, South, Ankit Chouhan wanted to ascertain. The two top Delhi Police officers had personally taken charge of the investigation. Rajesh, who grew up in Haryana's Mahendragarh and retired from the Army as naib subedar in 2007, worked security for a businessman in the nearby Sainik Farms, a posh neighbourhood where many people from Devli make livelihoods as security guards, gardeners, drivers, helpers, and the like. His wife was a homemaker. Kavita was equally good at studies and sports, earning a taekwondo black belt alongside her bachelor's degree, and was preparing for the UPSC examination. Arjun, Bunty to his folks, was training to be a national boxer after winning a silver medal at the Delhi Olympic Games. He was also studying for a graduate degree in political science at Delhi University's Motilal Nehru College, admitted under a quota for sportspersons. He wasn't good at studies, however, and this police said invited tongue-lashings from his

The police team was accompanying forensic investigators. They first tried to find out how the murderer managed to enter the house especially because Arjun had told them he had locked the gates before leaving. They didn't find any sign of a forced entry. The police team camped at the house for the next six hours. Arjun was questioned inside one of the rooms. The forensic team diligently scanned the place for any shred of evidence left behind by the murderers. By afternoon, when police officers reappeared from the crime scene, they had "solved" this triple murder. "He was the only surviving member of the family and the last person to see them alive, so we decided to question him," a police officer involved in the investigation

"During questioning, he (Arjun) began making contradictory statements about the chain of events. For example, he changed the time he left for his gym and when he returned to see his family lying murdered. First, he said he had gone to the gym... Then he said he hadn't gone to the gym but for a run in Sanjay Van. He also kept changing his statement about how he discovered the bodies."Then, the police officer claimed, "the forensic team found bloodstains on the house keys and his motorcycle key which he carried in his pocket". "Confronted with this, he was unable to dodge the investigators. He admitted to his role."The story Arjun allegedly told police was remarkably simple and straight: he was furious with his parents for berating him about neglecting his studies for boxing and resented them growing fonder of his sister merely because she was more studious and obedient. The trigger, police said, was another piece of information that Arjun allegedly gave them. "He claimed his parents had recently decided to transfer their property - the house in Devli and a plot in Harsaru village in Gurgaon – to Kavita and leave Arjun nothing," the police

"This had especially enraged Arjun. There was a lot of pent-up anger," the officer said, explaining the motive. "We don't even know who told him about such a plan," the officer said. "But he believed it was so." It was Kavita's birthday on December 1 and the family had gathered to celebrate. They ended up quarreling instead, Arjun against the three of them, he told them during questioning, police claimed. "He (Arjun) also told us his father had also thrashed him in front of their relatives recently," the police officer claimed. That's when he allegedly planned to murder his family. "He had been angry for months and chose the night of his parent's anniversary for the murder."

Three days after the murder, on December 6, police supplied "further details" about Arjun's alleged motive. He also resented his father for scolding him in front of his girlfriend, they claimed."A week before the murder, Rajesh

found Arjun with his girlfriend in a nearby market and asked who she was. When Arjun said she was his girlfriend and they planned to get married, Rajesh slapped him. He also scolded his girlfriend," the police officer said. Rajesh reminded Arjun he was not earning a living yet and, therefore, not equipped to get married and take the responsibility that

"He didn't like this," the police officer said. "He (Arjun) said he felt humiliated."The police officer also said Arjun claimed that one of his father's recent outbursts was overheard by labourers working at the building next door and they laughed at him. "This further infuriated him," the officer said. The crime happened in the early hours of December 3. "Around 5 am, Arjun took his father's service knife and allegedly slit the throat of his sister who was asleep on the ground floor of the house," Joint Commissioner Jain said. She had apparently woken up and tried to fight back. There is a small knife cut on Arjun's arm that was caused when his sister tried to push him away," the officer explained. Arjun went to the second floor where Rajesh was sleeping. "He put his hand on his father's mouth to stop him from making a noise and allegedly slit his throat," the officer said. "His mother had gone to the washroom. He then waited outside. As soon as she came out, he covered her mouth with a cloth and allegedly killed her as well."

The police officer said once Arjun needed an alibi and sticking to his daily routine of a morning workout appeared a solid bet. His questioning and the forensic evidence did him in, however. "Arjun first said he had gone to a gym run by a resident in the neighbourhood out of his house. Then he said he went to walk in Sanjay Van every morning," Jain said. The day after the murder, police recovered the knife and "a blood-soaked sweatshirt" from Sanjay Van, a sprawling forest about 8 km away from Arjun's house.

"He changed clothes after committing the murders and dumped the sweatshirt in bushes," the police officer claimed. The knife is two-three inches bigger than a kitchen knife. We think it is a knife his father got while he was in the Army."The police's story, however, didn't have many takers in Devli.A neighbour of the Tanwars, who works as a driver in Sainik Farms, said he had known them for over a decade. "Rajesh was soft-spoken. His kids were also wellmannered. I never saw them argue in public. I never saw or heard that boy fight with anyone," he said. Rajesh's cousin Sube Singh, who came to Devli from Kapashera after learning about the murders, was also skeptical. "There were no problems between Rajesh and his son. He was very proud of his son winning a silver medal. He always said Arjun would play in the nationals one day," Sube said. He also questioned the property dispute theory. "Apart from the house, Rajesh did not have much. His piece of land in Mahendragarh is still in his mother's name," he said.

Rajesh's brother, Rakesh Tanwar, who works for the Haryana police, visited Arjun in jail the day after he was arrested, a police officer said. Rajesh and Rakesh spent their childhood in Mahendragarh. Their mother, Azad Devi, 75, still lives there and the family land is in her name. "Rajesh came to Delhi when he got posted here. He lived in Delhi Cantonment, where he was a PT teacher of new entrants in the Army. His son lived in the village for some time and then joined him in the cantonment," Sube Singh said. Arjun's arrest has also shocked his college teachers

He failed his first semester at the college, skipped the exams for the second, and did not bother filling in the examination form for the third. "The student's records show he has not been performing academically," the college's officiating principal Vichitra said. "He was probably going through something since last year. We are unaware."He excelled at sports, though. He was awarded Rs 9,000 by the college for winning the silver medal at the Delhi Olympic Games. "It's surprising for us that a student like him may have committed a serious crime," the principal said. "We are unaware of the psychological pressures he may have faced at home. But we never had any complaints regarding

Amit Tomar, his sports instructor at the college, described him as "well-behaved, very respectful, and quiet". "Usually, when a student is admitted under the sports quota, they don't attend college regularly as they are busy with practice and representing the institute in matches. That's why we didn't see enough of him attending classes or interacting with other students," Tomar said. "The last time I spoke to Arjun was in November when I signed his eligibility proforma to participate in the inter-college boxing trials. He also messaged me, sharing that he had participated in the trials and was awaiting the results."The college doesn't have a boxing ring, so Arjun trained with his coach, Manoj Kalosia, at the Bijaasan Boxing Academy in Saket. Kalosia too was shocked to learn of his arrest. "After Arjun lost a state competition, his father brought him to me. He asked me to train him because he saw potential in Arjun to be a great boxer," the coach said. "It didn't seem like his family discouraged him from pursuing boxing." Saurav, who is constructing a house next door in Devli, said he knew the family "very well". "I used to teach both Bunty (Arjun) and Kavita back when they were in school. Right now, I am preparing for UPSC and Kavita had recently come to ask me about the exam as she was also thinking of appearing," he said. Saurav said that he had a chat with Rajesh regarding the construction of his house recently. "We used to talk frequently. Even after retiring, uncle (Rajesh) used to work out a lot. Every morning, he and Arjun would work-out together on their roof," he said. Arjun's cousin Deepak said he uploaded a WhatsApp status message at 4 am that dreadful morning, wishing Rajesh and Komal on their 25th anniversary. At 6 am, Arjun replied 'Thanks'.

### I hope it is not true...he was at the peak of his career: Shrinivas Joshi on Zakir Hussain

GNS News Agency, Dec 18

I heard something about Zakir Hussain which I don't want to hear. I hope it is not true. If the news is true, it is saddening. He was looking quite fit and was at the peak of his career. I have heard the great tabla maestro at various places. Even for those who do not like or understand classical music or have any love for tabla, he managed to get them interested and popularised the instrument for the general public. Zakir Sahab was conscious of this right till his end.In the 1980s, when we lived in a rented house, Zakir Sahab used to visit us and have meals with us. He was a part of the Sawai Gandharva festival right from the beginning for 25 years. He would be present on all three days. When I was 11 years old, there was a time when my



father, Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, was performing. Zakir Sahab's performance was immediately before my father's slot. Zakir Sahab, who loved to talk to small kids, chatted away with me in the green room.

#### South Delhi Triple Murder Case: 'An angry teen, Two more mounds at Harappan site of Rakhigarhi declared protected



GNS News Agency, Dec 18

At a time when the excavation work is underway at the over 5,000-year-old Harappan site of Rakhigarhi in Haryana's Hisar district, the central government has declared two more mounds at the largest Harappan civilisation site at Rakhigarhi village in Hisar district protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958. Rakhigarhi is considered one of the two big Harappan sites in the country, with the other being Dholavira in Gujarat.In a notification issued on December 10 this year, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has declared the mound number 6 and 7 as protected. Four mounds had already been declared protected. There are a total of seven mounds at the site and only one mound (number 4) is yet to be declared protected as it is thickly popu-

ASI's Joint Director General Dr Sanjay Manjul told The Indian Express that the excavation had already taken place at mound number 7 in 2005-2006, 2015 and 2023, while the small-level excavation had started at mound number 6 in 2005-06 and 2015. "We have plans to launch excavations at mound number 7 again too. Currently, the excavation work is going on at mound number 3," said Manjul."The newly declared protected area (40.26 acres) of mound number 6 and seven will be acquired by the government and compensation will be given to the farmers concerned. Vacation of the land would be required after its acquisition. Till the land is acquired, agriculture at the land will be allowed but cutting of the mound would be prohibited. The cultivation would be allowed at the soil but a penetration inside the earth will not be allowed. Nobody can disturb and cut the mound. The soil concerned cannot be sold," he added. Earlier, a threemonth long excavation at three of the seven mounds at the Harappan site in 2022 had revealed the structure of some houses, lanes and drainage system, and what could possibly be a jewellery-making unit apart from pieces of copper and gold jewellery, terracotta toys, besides thousands of earthen pots and seals. The skeletons of two women found at mound number 7, were believed to be nearly 5,000 years old. Pots and other artefacts were found buried next to the remains, part of funerary rituals back, ASI officials had stated then. Former Haryana chief secretary DS Dhesi had earlier stated that the archaeological site in Hisar dates back to 2600- 1900 BC and areas where urban planning aspects have been discovered, were being excavated.

#### Audit flags CRRID flaws: Delayed release, non-receipt of grants; non-recovery of guest room charges



GNS News Agency, Dec 18, From non-recovery of guest room charges to delayed release in grants leading to loss worth lakhs in bank interest — the audit has flagged serious issues. The general examination of the accounts of the CRRID for the years 2021-24 was conducted by an audit team from May 27, 2024 to June 5, 2024. Delayed release of grants made CRRID to incur loss of Rs 68.92L

The CRRID is being supported by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) to the extent of 45% grant, with matching grant of 45% from Government of Punjab and the remaining 10% finances are to be arranged by this institute at its own level. During the test check of records, it was noticed by the audit department that CRRID paid funds from State Bank on India, Sector 7, Chandigarh Branch during the year 2021-22 in the shape of overdrafts of Rs 166.40 lakh for which interest amounting to Rs 68.92 lakh had been charged by the bank up to March 31, 2024.

"It was noticed that the outstanding balance on 01-04-2021 of overdraft was Rs 199.20 lakh, which reached Rs 385.03 lakh on 31.03.2024. As a result of huge overdraft, the bank had attached the earned interest of FDRs of five crore corpus funds provided by the Punjab Government to the overdraft account, the interest earned on these FDRs was being directly transferred to overdraft account by the bank which was the part of grant provided by Punjab government. Due to the huge amount of overdraft and interest, the liability as overdraft was increased speedily. The administration/management of CRRID did not make efforts to reduce the overdraft, which resulted in a huge loss of grant spending in the interest of overdraft," the audit observed. On being pointed out, CRRID stated that efforts would be made to reduce the liability, though final reply is awaited. Non-re-

ceipt of grant from ICSSR, Punjab The CRRID is being supported by ICSSR to the extent of 45% grant, with matching grant of 45% from the Punjab government and the remaining 10% finances are to be arranged by this institute at its own level. During test check of records, it was noticed that grant of Rs 49.48 lakh had

not been received by this department for the year 2023-24 so far.Non-recovery of guest room charges of Rs 1.32 lakhDuring test check of records, it was noticed that the department of animal husbandry, Punjab, had booked faculty guest rooms at CRRID from 22.01.2024 to 24.01.2024. It was further noticed that against the booking, bill for Rs 1,32,300 has been raised but the same had not been received by the department so far. Rule 9 of General Financial Rules, 2017, envisages that it is the duty of the department concerned to ensure that the receipts and dues are correctly and promptly assessed, collected and duly credited to the government/relevant accounts.

On being pointed out, CRRID stated that several telephonic and email requests have been made by the director and the department concerned of CRRID to the officials concerned of the animal husbandry department, Punjab, to release the amount to CRRID against the booking of the rooms. As per Rule-1 (V) Financial Regulations of Service Rules 2010 applicable to CRRID, the director is authorised to incur all necessary expenditure on projects as per the conditions and funds provided by the funding agencies and these powers can be further delegated to other employees. During test check of records, the audit team noticed that the department has incurred an excess expenditure of Rs 1,96,048 against the grant received for the projects. On being pointed out, CRRID stated that the excess amount incurred on the project was provided from the available sources at CRRID. Also, as to claim the balance amount from sponsoring agency, the statement of UC and progress report has to be sent. Once the balance amount is received, the excess amounts incurred are adjusted, they said. The CRRID, an autonomous research institute, was registered as a scientific and educational charitable society under the Indian Societies Registration Act, 1860, in the Union Territory of Chandigarh in July 1978. It is among the 27 research institutes in the country funded by the ICSSR, New Delhi. The CRRID was accorded the "national status" in 1984 by the ICSSR, Ministry of Education, Government of India, in recognition of its contribution to the cause of social science research in the broader national perspective. Since 1984, both the Government of India and the Government of Punjab have been supporting CRRID in its endeavours by providing financial grants on matching basis through the Indian Council of Social Science & Research (ICSSR), New Delhi, and the Department of Planning, Government of Punjab, Chandigarh. The Centre is also able to mobilise resources by way of project consulting services, sale of publication, subscriptions and advertisements in its quarterly journal "Man and Development" apart from obtaining donations for the purpose of society. The office is situated at Plot No. 2A, Sector 19A, Madhya Marg,

#### In the middle of a 'fowl storm'

GNS News Agency,

At a time when politics in Himachal Pradesh is centred around " if a junglefowl or a desi murga" was served in a dinner attended by CM Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu at Tikkar village, junglefowls particularly Kalij pheasant (Black Junglefowls) and Red junglefowls, protected birds under the Wildlife (amendment) Protection Act, 2022, roam around freely at the Himalayan Bird Park in

Shimla. Both species of junglefowls are called 'junglee murga' in the local dialect. Himalayan Bird Park is the only open aviary covered by an iron mesh through which people can walk and enjoy the presence cluding of birds of eight species in a close proximity. The aviary was constructed in 1972 but later dismantled between 1986-87. It was reconstructed on the directions of then Governor Gusher Ahmad Sahib in 1994. Elaborating on how the park is different, a staff member said fowl," he said. that unlike in zoos, where birds are kept in small and big cages, here the birds are

allow visitors to go beyond their path inside the aviary. There are around 70 birds in the park but junglefowls dominate the space. Of 70, 47 birds are junglefowls, in-Junglefowls (8 males, 12 females) and 27 Red Jungle Fowls (10 males and 17 females). Other species of birds in the aviary are domestic goose, Indian peafowl, female Himalayan Monal, cheer pheasant, silver pheasants and Guinea

Giving details on the diet of the birds, another staff kept in the open. "We don't member said, "Everyday

these birds are given around 28 kg diet, including 10kg mixed grains and 18kg mixed vegetables, including 2 kg fruits. Multiple perching platforms along with natural vegetation are present inside. During winters, we lay dry grass in small shelters for them."A DFO with the State Wildlife Wing requesting anonymity "Junglefowl is Scheduled-2 protected bird under Protection of Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2022, and IUCN classifies it as least concern. But we don't promote junglefowl breeding in the state. Himalayan Bird Park is the only

open avairy in the state but there is a proposal to make another large aviary in the under construction World Class Zoological Park at Bankhandi near Dehra in Kangra district.

"While the entry fee of the park is Rs 25, it remains open from 10am to 5pm everyday except for Monday. On Sunday, the park received a footfall of around 110 people, including children. "During summers the average daily footfall in the park is 1000 and these days merely 60-70 visitors are coming each day," a staff member added.

### In yet another high-profile corruption case, Punjab govt fails to obtain prosecution sanction



GNS News Agency, Dec 18

In another high-profile case of alleged corruption involving former cabinet minister Sadhu Singh Dharamsot, the state government has failed to procure the prosecution sanction. The case against Dharamsot was registered in February last year by Punjab's Vigilance Bureau (VB). The court issued a notice to the investigating officer (IO) to file a reply on December 19. Earlier, in October, a court had pointed out that the Punjab government failed to secure the prosecution sanction for initiating a trial against Indian Administrative Services (IAS) officer Sanjay Popli in a corruption case even after registration of the FIR more than two years ago. In its order on December 5, the court of Additional District and Sessions Judge (ADSJ) Dr Ajit Attri noted that Punjab government's additional public prosecutor has submitted that the sanction for prosecution Dharamsot has yet not been received, though the investigating agency is in the process of getting the necessary sanction. "Notice to the IO be issued for December 19 to apprise the court as to what steps have been taken for obtaining the sanction for prosecution and what may be the tentative time for obtaining the sanction for prosecution," the order said.

The notice was issued by the court while dismissing an application filed by Dharamsot for allowing him to operate his bank account. The counsel for the accused had submitted that he had moved an application for permission for operating his bank account in HDFC Bank's Nabha Branch, Punjab. It had been argued that during the last election for the Punjab Legislative Assembly in 2022, Dharamsot contested the election from Nabha constituency on a Congress ticket and as per law a new bank account in his name bearing with HDFC Bank's Nabha Branch was opened on January 27, 2023, so that details of the expenses incurred for contesting election can be accounted for and submitted to the election authorities. The former minister had claimed that the account was opened for election purposes only in

compliance with the directions and guidelines of the Election Commission of India. The application further had said that with the coming of the new state government in Punjab, the accused has been falsely implicated and during the investigation the said bank account was blocked by the investigating agency. "The bank account has no relation and connection with the offence and allegations made and attributed against the applicant/accused," it had stated. The additional public prosecutor for the state on the other hand had submitted that in the present case, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) had also registered the case and for further investigation does not want the accused to operate his bank account. The VB had considered a check from March 1, 2016 and March 31, 2022 for calculating income and expenditures relating to Dharamsot and his family members. had been found that additional expenditure of Rs 7.02.30,841.14 (Rs 7.02 crore) was incurred by the applicant during the period, which was 588 per cent more than the income earned by him. He, being public servant, committed the offence under Section 13(1)(b) read with Section 13(2) of the Prevention of Corruption (PC) Act, according

On the basis of investigation conducted under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), it was found that the former minister had amassed total disproportionate assets worth Rs 5,22,30,841.62 (Rs 5.22 crore) during the check period. It was also found that with the assistance of his sons Gurpreet Singh and Harpreet Singh, he had also integrated proceeds of crime to the tune of Rs 1,11,91,686.27 (Rs 1.11 crore) in the bank accounts of his sons, making the total proceeds of crime under PMLA to be Rs 6,34,22,527.89 (Rs 6.34 crore). Dharamsot's various movable and immovable properties being proceeds of crime have been attached via an order on March 13. The funds to the tune of Rs 3,74,260.52 (Rs 3.74 lakh) including future interest accrued in the HDFC Bank account was provisionally attached. After hearing all parties, the court noted: "it is not in dispute that the challan has already been filed and is pending. It has also come on record that the ED has also proceeded with the matter on the basis of the FIR registered by the Vigilance Bureau and has filed a complaint which is still pending". It said that the application had been filed by the applicant for the purpose of operating the account for the election, which is already over. While dismissing the application, the court ordered: "it appears that the account also contains the amount which is alleged to be the proceeds of crime and the cases are pending to reach to the conclusion. In view of this and all the allegations coming on the file, the applicant/accused cannot be allowed to operate

# Madrasa students from nearby districts were called to Sambhal, police cite 'anonymous letters'

GNS News Agency, Dec 18

The Sambhal police on Sunday said they have received several anonymous letters alleging that students from madrasas in nearby districts were summoned to the area on November 24. This was reportedly in connection with their involvement in the large-scale violence that occurred during and after the second survey of the Shahi Jama Masjid, as directed by the local court. The violence resulted in four deaths and left many others, including police officers, injured. "We have received many letters claiming that students from madrasas in Rampur, Hapur, and Bulandshahr districts were specially called in to Sambhal that day. We are verifying the authenticity of these letters, and after proper checking, we will go ahead with strict action if the content of letters is found to be true," said Krishna Kumar Bishnoi, Superintendent of Police (SP) in Sambhal.

Nearly 40 people, including three women, have been arrested by the police so far for their involvement in the violence. Additionally, 93 people identified by the police for their "active participation" in the clashes are absconding. The Sambhal police will soon announce rewards for information leading to the capture of these fugitives. "None of those involved in the violence will be spared. We will take legal action against all of them. We will soon announce rewards for absconders who have fled their homes after the incident. During our raids on the houses of those identified, we only found female members present, while the males were missing," said Bishnoi. The police in the town have



released photographs of around 400 suspects involved in the violence that day. They are also being identified by their residential locations, according to the police. Twelve First Information Reports (FIRs) concerning the violence have been filed in various police stations in Sambhal town. O these, seven FIRs were registered by police officers, while four were filed by family members of the individuals who were killed during the violence on November 24. Additionally, one FIR was lodged by a man named Naseem, who alleged that his nephew Waseem, who died on November 25, was struck by bullets "fired by descendants of Turqic Mongols."The founder of the Mughal Empire, Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur, was a Turqic Mongol who invaded India in 1526. The soldiers who accompanied him during this invasion settled in various parts of the country, including Sambhal, and were referred to

### 4-Day UP Assembly Session begins today: Opp gears up for Sambhal & Bahraich, demands extension of winter session

GNS News Agency, Dec 18

With the winter session of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly set to start on Monday, two recent incidents of violence – in Sambhal and Bahraich – are expected to rock the House as the opposition is prepared to raise the issues, apart from unemployment, farmers' issues etc.In the brief session, which is expected to last four days, the government will also table its supplementary demands for grants on December 17 along with some significant Bills. During an allparty meeting as well as business advisory committee meetings that took on Sunday, ahead of the session, the opposition demanded that the duration of the session should be increased to allow more time for discussion and also sought the need for bringing the supplementary demands for grants.

"When the government does not listen to the issues of the public, the opposition has to say it forcefully. The session should continue for as many days as possible but they run it at their own convenience. There is a rule that session should at least run for a minimum of 90 days a year, but this does not happen," said Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly and senior SP leader Mata Prasad Pandey.

Asked about the issues that his party or the opposition would raise during the session, he said, "There are issues of public interest that we will raise. Most importantly, there have been communal incidents, such as Sambhal and Bahraich. There are issues of farmers, electricity, price rise etc. We will try to attract the attention of the government towards all these."Congress Legislature Party leader Aradhna Mishra said after the all-party meeting, "In a state with a population of nearly 25 crore, if an Assembly session is merely for four days, one can understand the seriousness of the government about the issues of the public. What is the point of a session? It is to discuss important issues related to our constituencies and the state such as

law and order, unemployment, issues of farmers, educa-



tion, health. Thus, we have requested to increase the duration of the session."Mishra also said, "This was the demand of the entire opposition during the all-party meeting. We also wanted to ask about the reasons for bringing the supplementary demands, when there are many departments that have failed to utitilise even their 30 per cent of the annual budget so far."The Congress has already announced that it would gherao the Vidhan Sabha on December 18. "When the government will not allow discussion inside the House, we will have no choice but to raise the issues on the streets," added Mishra.

Speaker Satish Mahana, who convened the all-party meet, urged all party leaders to cooperate in the smooth running of the session. Mahana said that as the country's largest Vidhan Sabha, the proceedings of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly also "present a standard" for Vidhan Sabhas across the country. He also requested all the party leaders to put forward their views in the House under "parliamentary decorum."

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath emphasised that all parties would get opportunities to present their views and expressed hope that in the coming session too, there would be meaningful discussions on issues related to the public.

# TMC sweeps Contai Coop Bank polls held under watchful eyes of Central armed forces



GNS News Agency, Dec 18

The voting was held earlier in the day with the Central forces deployed in the booths on the direction of the Supreme Court - a first in the history of cooperative elections in the state. There were reports sporadic incidents of clashes between TMC and BJP working during the voting in Contai town that falls under Purba Medinipur district. The elections began at 9 am amid tight security. There were 430 candidates in fray and over 80,000 enrolled voters. In a heated verbal altercation at Heriya, the BJP alleged that the TMC workers snatched away the voters' slips of their supporters, forcing them to take slips handed by the ruling party. Police managed to bring the situation under control soon.In Kolaghat, a similar incident was reported. In another incident, the BJP workers blocked a road in Ramnagar alleging that they were beaten up by TMC supporters. As voting progressed at Ramnagar College amid tight security, the BJP alleged that its voters were prevented from entering the polling station and that their voter slips and voter ID cards

The BJP further alleged that TMC supporters were beating their supporters in the presence of the police. Local BJP leader Tapan Maiti said, "We will go away only if the administration ensures everyone votes." The protesters lifted the blockade only after police reached the spot and assured the safety of voters. TMC MLA from Ramnagar and former minister Akhil Giri rejected the BJP's allegations. "There is no news of any violence in Ramnagar. The BJP is trying to spread unrest in the area by making false allegations to

sabotage the vote. We want to complete the vote peacefully," he said. Some distance from Raghunath Ayurved Mahavidyalaya and Hospital, the Left supporters alleged the Trinamool workers ransacked a booth. Pranab Panda, a CPI(M) area committee member, said, "From morning onwards, we could see Trinamool goons, instead of the Central forces, patrolling the streets. Since our booth was getting a good response, a group of goons came and threw our table and the voters' list on the streets. This is the type of progress the state is seeing."Thanking the Supreme Court for the deployment of Central forces, former MP Sisir Adhikari after casting his vote said: "In the last municipal election, Assembly elections and Lok Sabha elections, people could not vote in this area due to the hooliganism and looting by the ruling TMC. I am thankful to the Supreme Court and the judiciary that the Central forces have been deployed to restore faith in the voters.'

Sisir Adhikari is the father Suvendu Adhikari, Leader of Opposition in Assembly. Suvendu Adhikari has been the chairman of the bank until his removal from the post in August 2021.At Namal Kaliprasad Vidyalaya, four km from Contai town, the booth was manned by Central forces. Mukteshwar, a 70-year-old voter, said, "Times are changing. So, we have to adapt to the change. I had never seen paramilitary forces for a co-operative bank election, but in the current situation prevailing in the state, this decision has been taken for peaceful voting." Meanwhile, local TMC MLA Akhil Giri said: "Voters were very happy for two reasons. One that the polling is taking place after a long time and secondly because they do not have to travel far; the polling centres are close to where they stay." On the deployment of Central forces, Giri said it was an excuse used by the BJP. "The BJP knew they would lose from the beginning so they asked for the deployment of Central forces". Apart from the deployment of central armed forces, a total of 300 CCTV cameras were installed to monitor voting at 14 polling stations.On December 8, the Tamluk Co-Operative Agriculture and Rural Development Bank election witnessed violence as bombs were hurled. Voting took place for 69 seats in 12 branches of the bank, including in Haldia, Sutahata, Mahishadal, Maina, Tamluk, and Chandipur. The

#### 6 from MP caught with fake notes

GNS News Agency, Dec 18

Ahmedabad police have arrested a gang of six men from Madhya Pradesh, apprehending them red-handed as they were trying to pass off Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN) as real ones at a vegetable market in the city, officials said. The arrests were made on Friday and the accused were sent to 12 days' police custody on Saturday.

The arrested persons include Dipak Badshah Ramsahay Jatav (21), Umesh Kamlesh Kalicharan Jatav alias Anurag (24), Vikas Janvedsingh Lalaram Jatav (25), Umesh Rajkumar Makundilalprasad Jatav (22), Dharmendra Kailash Ramratan Jatav (22), and Rushikesh Udaybhansingh Shravanlal Jatav (19) – all from different villages in Mehgaon taluka of Bhind district in MP. They were booked on the basis of a complaint by Yogesh Bhikhabhai, Assistant Head Constable of Sola police station. Police seized a total of 247 notes of Rs 500 denomination FICN from them. They were booked under BNS sections 179 (using counterfeit note or coin as genuine), 180 (possession of counterfeit note or coin), 178 (counterfeiting notes or coins), 181 (making or possession of instruments to make counterfeit note or coin), and 61(b) (criminal conspiracy)

Police said Anurag is the main accused in the case and was involved in printing the fake notes, cutting them, and attempting to put them into illegal circulation in the Indian market. He also taught some of the others to print the FICN, Sola police said on Sunday. The police said that several of the accused had earlier printed a total of 100 fake



notes of Rs 100 denomination, totalling Rs10,000 in value. They then fraudulently circulated Rs 6,000 worth of fake notes in Delhi and spent the other Rs 4,000 FICN in Bhind, MP. They then allegedly decided to print Rs 500 denomination notes to make money faster, said police. In the present case, officials said that Anurag, Vikas, Umesh Rajkumar, and Dipak came up with the idea of printing FICN of Rs 500 denomination and going to the city to spend them as real currency. Following this, Anurag and Vikas met the latter's uncle Jayveer, who lives in Mehgaon, and took his colour printer on the pretext of some work. They then printed the notes on sheets, cut them, tied them into bundles and reached Ahmedabad to dispose of them in the market, said police. They stayed at a relative's house near the Chanakyapuri vegetable market and on December 13 evening, spread out in the market to dispose of the fake

# Eye on polls, BJP steps up outreach in Delhi's slums to woo voters

GNS News Agency, Dec 18

With the Assembly elections around the corner, Delhi BJP leaders have stepped up the slum expansion campaign, which began five months ago, by staying overnight in slums and JJ clusters to strengthen the party's vote base among the lower middle-class. Under the campaign, senior BJP leaders, including its seven Delhi MPs, and workers stay in different slums and JJ clusters overnight and interact with the residents. So far, the party leaders have conducted such campaigns in 1,194 slum clusters across the

"The main aim behind this campaign is to interact with the slum-dwellers and understand possible solutions (to their issues) directly from them," a statement from the party quoted Vishnu Mittal, the state general secretary and coordinator of the campaign, as saying. Under the Slum Expansion Campaign, the party has appointed slum-expanders and slum-caretakers to run the drive across the city.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva, who took part in several jhuggi stays overnight, said, "The BJP is the first party whose leaders have been directly communicating with people, especially the youth, in all the jhuggi clusters in Delhi for the last five months, understanding their problems and solutions... Through our workers, the party has understood



the life & problems of the residents living in jhuggi clusters." If the BJP is voted to power in Delhi, it will ease their lives, and provide facilities, timely water, electricity and food through Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB), he promised. According to the statement, South Delhi MP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said the BJP believes in improving, not dismantling, the jhuggi clusters. "Our upcoming government will create a separate department to ensure cleanliness in the jhuggi settlements," he said. BJP national general secretary Dushyant Gautam expressed confidence that the BJP was going to form the next government in Delhi.

#### 'We believe in investing in human capital': Arvind Kejriwal on 'Delhi Model'

GNS News Agency, Dec 18

Hours after the AAP announced its final list of candidates for the upcoming Assembly polls, party chief and former Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal said candidates were chosen purely based on their performance and the caste equation of a particular seat was never discussed. Speaking on Sunday at the launch of a book, The Delhi Model, written by senior AAP leader and former vice-chairperson of Delhi's Dialogue and Development Commission, Jasmine Shah, Kejriwal said, "When we were discussing our candidates for Delhi, we never discussed the caste of a particular seat. We chose candidates purely based on their performance. We only considered who was working well, who was liked by the public, and who wasn't. Elections can be fought and won based on governance, and we have proven that in this country. Previously, it was said elections were fought on religious lines, but now in Delhi, their politics of polarisation doesn't work anymore."The former CM said during the 2020 elections, the BJP tried to bring up the Shaheen Bagh issue repeatedly but "the schools and hospitals we built defeated their narrative". In 2020, protesters gathered at Shaheen Bagh to oppose the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens, which they called "anti-Muslim". "Even after they attempted to make Shaheen Bagh an issue, we won 62 out of 70 seats. The most important thing is to focus on the basic problems of the people, and, clearly, what we're doing is appreciated by the public," he added.Kejriwal also compared the AAP and BJP's governance models. "They (BJP) want to give all the money to a few corporations. Their model revolves around the belief that large industries will generate jobs, and as jobs are created, the money will slowly reach the people." "But our model is the opposite," he said. "We believe in investing in human capital. We educate people, provide healthcare, and prepare them for the future.

# Syria is turning into battleground of geopolitics



GNS News Agency, Dec 18

President Bashar al-Assad's reign over Syria, which began in 2000 after he succeeded his father Hafez al-Assad, ended on December 8. The rapid takeover of major cities across Syria (Aleppo, Hama and Homs) by the rebels, culminating in the capture of Damascus and Assad's eventual flight to Russia, has stunned the world, reminiscent of how quickly the Taliban took over Afghanistan after the United States of America withdrew its forces in 2021.

Although it took just around 10 days for the Syrian rebels to seize power, the struggle to topple Assad was a protracted 13-year-long battle that began during the Arab Spring in 2010. This period saw revolutionary uprisings in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, all aimed at overthrowing autocratic leaders. In these 13 years of civil war, Syrians under Assad endured severe repression, widespread violence, suppression of dissent and human rights abuses, including rape, torture and the use of chemical weapons against civilians. The civil war triggered a massive refugee crisis. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 4.8 million Syrian refugees are registered in neighbouring countries, including Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt. Additionally, nearly 7.2 million people are internally displaced within Syria. The human toll of the conflict has been unprecedented, drawing the attention and involvement of both regional and extra-regional powers, further complicating the situation in the war-torn country. Syria is situated in a geopolitically significant location on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea and is home to a diverse population of approximately 22 million people, including Sunnis, Alawites, Christians, Shias and Druze. The country shares borders with Iraq to the east, Turkey to the north, Jordan to the south, and Israel and Lebanon to the southwest. Over its turbulent history, all these neighbouring States have played a role in shaping Syria's trajectory, either directly or indirectly. While Syria is recognised as a sovereign nation-state, much of its territory has been controlled by various factions. The eastern and north-eastern parts of the country are predominantly under the control of the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a US-backed force. Before the ouster of Assad, the north-western region, including Idlib governorate, was controlled by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a rebel group led by Abu Mohammed al-Jolani and a former al-Qaeda affiliate that played a prominent role in the anti-

Some pockets in northern Syria were held by the Syrian National Army (SNA), a Turkish-backed rebel force. Significant areas, including major cities such as Aleppo, Homs, Hama and Damascus, remained under the control of the Assad regime. The Syrian Army, supported by the pro-government paramilitary National Defence Forces, was the primary force governing these regions. Assad's government also received substantial support from Russia, Iran and Hezbollah, enabling it to retain power for much of the conflict despite mounting opposition. To a normal observer, the conflict in Syria might appear as a domestic civil war aimed at toppling an autocratic ruler. However, the reality is far more complex. Syria has become a geopolitical battleground where various nations have pursued their strategic interests.

According to the UNHCR, Turkey hosts nearly 3 million registered Syrian refugees who fled since the outbreak of the civil war in 2011. While Turkey initially welcomed these refugees, mounting domestic pressure forced the government to take measures to address the crisis. Additionally, it views the Kurdish rebels in Syria as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which is designated as a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the European Union and the US. Turkey has provided support to rebel factions such as the SNA, which operates in coordination with HTS.had been sending Hezbollah fighters to support Syrian government forces against the rebels. By aligning with Assad, Iran aimed to solidify its 'Axis of Resistance', which includes Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, against Israel. However, with the toppling of Assad, Iran risks losing its crucial land connect to Hezbollah, potentially disrupting this alliance.entered the fray in 2015 to support Assad. Russian forces played an important role in helping Assad reclaim lost territory through extensive airpower and military assistance. Moscow also maintained strategic military installations in Syria, including a naval base in Tartus and an airbase in Hmeimim, which served as platforms for projecting power in the Eastern Mediterranean. These bases underline Russia's broader aim of preserving its global influence and countering Western dominance in the region.

has long-standing interests in Syria, particularly concerning the Golan Heights, which it seized during the 1967 Six-Day War and unilaterally annexed in 1981. Its move was not recognised internationally, except by the US in 2019. Israel's primary concern remains countering Iranian influence in Syria. also has a significant presence in Syria, with about 900 soldiers deployed, primarily supporting the Kurdish-led SDF in their fight against the Islamic State (ISIS). US forces have established a 55-km deconfliction zone around their garrison in al-Tanf in southern Syria, which serves as a base for counter-ISIS operations and training Syrian opposition factions.

Most importantly, the effects of the Syrian Civil War were felt in European nations due to the ensuing refugee crisis. Approximately 95,000 Syrians now reside in Austria, a development that has fuelled the rise of far-right politics in the country. Germany hosts the largest Syrian diaspora population outside the region, with about one million Syrians. According to the United Kingdom's Home Office, over 27,000 people from Syria have sought asvlum in the UK. Although many European countries initially adopted an open-door policy for refugees, over time, it became a burden. As a consequence, the political landscape in these nations has increasingly shifted towards the right and the leaders were highly involved in finding a solution to the problem. So, the question arises as to what led to the swift capture of Syria by the rebels led by HTS. The answer lies in the shifting geopolitics of the region. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Russia became deeply entangled in the war, diverting the majority of its resources to the conflict with Ukraine. Meanwhile, the October 7 attack on Israel by Hamas pulled Iran and Hezbollah into a war with Israel, opening multiple fronts. Israel's well-executed strikes on Hezbollah's rank and file nearly crippled the organisation

causing significant setbacks to its leadership. With Iran directly engaging in attacks on Israel for the first time, its focus also shifted towards that conflict. Additionally, corruption within the Syrian government forces, an ongoing economic crisis and widespread defections to rebel groups severely weakened the army. The regime's heavy reliance on external manpower and material support, particularly from fighters originating in Hezbollah, Iraq and Afghanistan, exacerbated its vulnerabilities. With Russia, Iran and Hezbollah preoccupied with their own battles, the Syrian rebels, especially HTS, with support from Turkey, seized the opportunity to launch an offensive against Assad's regime. Interestingly, all this while the US remained on the sidelines.

Given the latest geopolitical developments in West Asia, it has become increasingly apparent that all members of the Iranian 'Axis of Resistance', including Iran itself, are now prioritising their domestic security and stability over regional ambitions. While the Houthis continue to engage in attacks on shipping in the Red Sea, the combination of military and economic pressures has constrained Tehran's capacity to project power as effectively as it was in previous decades. Simultaneously, Ankara's growing influence, bolstered by strategic alliances and an expanding economic footprint, has not only reshaped Turkey's relations with its neighbours but also redefined the balance of power across West Asia.

Israel has moved swiftly to remilitarise and consolidate its control over the Golan Heights. This strategic manoeuvre underscores Israel's intent to secure its northern frontier and pre-empt any potential threats emerging from the vacuum left by Assad's regime. The reoccupation of this contested territory has heightened tensions with neighbouring States. This evolving landscape underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of the interplay between domestic priorities and external ambitions among key regional actors.

The collapse of Assad's regime signifies not only a redrawing of Syria's territorial map but also a fundamental redefinition of power dynamics across West Asia. Iran's long-standing ambitions in the region have suffered a severe blow, as its strategic project — centred on maintaining a foothold in Syria and preserving its land bridge to Hezbollah in Lebanon, has unravelled alongside the fall of Damascus. Similarly, Russia's Mediterranean and Middle Eastern strategy now faces an existential challenge. The potential loss of its military bases in Syria, particularly the naval facility at Tartus and the airbase at Hmeimim, would significantly diminish its capacity to project power into West Asia and Africa. These setbacks mark a critical turning point for two of Syria's most prominent allies during the conflict.

In contrast, Ankara finds itself in a stronger geopolitical position, capable of influencing post-conflict dynamics and leveraging its ties with various factions in northern Syria. Turkey's strategic priorities, including managing Kurdish ambitions and maintaining its influence over rebel forces such as the SNA, are likely to become increasingly central to West Asian regional power calculus. From a Western viewpoint, the fall of Assad's regime has so far yielded tangible benefits. For one, the dismantling of Iranian influence in Syria disrupts Tehran's ability to support Hezbollah and other proxy groups, thereby reducing the threat posed to Israel and other regional actors. Additionally, the prospect of millions of Syrian refugees returning home could alleviate significant domestic political pressures on Turkey and European countries that have borne the burden of hosting displaced populations for over a decade, stabilising certain aspects of regional politics and easing social tensions in host nations. In Syria, it is hard to predict the kind of polity that will be established. The rebels have appointed Mohammed al-Bashir as Syria's interim Prime Minister, Al-Bashir previously led a "salvation government" in Idlib and is backed by HTS. Although US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has stated that the US fully supports Syria's political transition process, he remains sceptical about the inclusive nature of the governance. Meanwhile, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer remarked that it is still "far too early" to consider a policy shift regarding HTS. This caution stems largely from the historical patterns in nations that have experienced the overthrow of autocratic leaders, often followed by civil wars and the rise of religious extremism.

Al-Bashir has guaranteed a "peaceful transition to democracy." However, given the presence of numerous factions within the country, achieving an inclusive domestic polity that secures the rights of women and minorities remains elusive. For the international community, this moment represents both a chance to facilitate a sustainable political resolution and a warning against complacency in the face of unresolved tensions and emerging threats(Anudeep Gujjeti is Assistant Professor, Centre of Excellence for Geopolitics and International Studies, REVA University, Bengaluru, and Young Leader, Pacific Forum, USA. Dr Akhil Kumar is a PhD from the Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad)

# India evacuates its 77 citizens from Syria amidst panicky situation

Seventy seven Indian nationals have been evacuated from war torn Syria. The evacuees recall panicky situation prevailing and looting on the streets of Damascus

New Delhi: A batch of Indian nationals, who returned to their homeland on Saturday after being evacuated from crisis-hit Syria, recalled the panic situation they faced in that country but praised the Indian Embassy there for being in "constant touch" with them. Some of the returnees, soon after landing at the Delhi airport late evening, shared with media their experiences of the last week. Sunil Dutt, a native of Chandigarh, and a mechanical engineer, alleged that there were some "anti-social elements" too in the streets who were also "looting stuff". It was a very bad situation and sights of fire and sounds of bombarding made it worse, he said. However, the Indian Embassy was in "constant touch with us" and its personnel" asked us to be calm, not open doors" to ensure safety, Dutt told reporters at Delhi airport. India has evacuated from Syria all its nationals who wished to return home after rebel forces overthrew President Bashar Assad's authoritarian government in the Arab nation. The Syrian government collapsed on Sunday as the rebels seized control of capital Damascus after capturing several other prominent cities and towns. "We have evacuated all Indian nationals in Syria who wished to return home following recent developments in that country. So far, 77 Indian nationals from Syria have been evacuated," Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on Friday during his weekly briefing.

# Ahmedabad University V-C: Parents of students, companies need to understand the value of liberal arts



The Ahmedabad University (AU) recently launched an International Fintech Institute (IFI) at GIFT city along with IIT-Gandhinagar and University of California, San Diego. In an exclusive interview with The Indian Express, AU Vice Chancellor Dr Pankaj Chandra talks about the need for IIMs to "convert to universities", the value of liberal arts, and challenges faced by students today.

Where do you see the IFI in the next five years?

GIFT City (Gujarat International Finance Tec-City) is really a large fintech place and one of the challenges there is that there are about 600-odd companies, which kept saying we don't have adequate talent...The biggest challenge is that operations guys have no clue about technology. Which finance programme in this country teaches you technology? And the tech guys coming out with computer science have zero knowledge on banking, on finance, on regulatory tech, insurance, pension etc. And hence, the need to train people differently. These trained people (from IFI) will become a strong (source of) supply of very relevant talent for GIFT companies or other firms in the country and those who want to get into start-ups.

How would you compare AU with other institutions? We have the advantage of newness. You could do experiments without any penalty... If we, at a new institution, start to design things like them (existing institutions), why should we be here? So, we have to think very differently.

By 'them' you mean the IIMs?

IIMs, IITs, JNU, Delhi University — all the existing institutions in that sense. I was from IIMA, my other colleagues were from the IITs and some others were coming from other university systems. We felt that we needed to bring complex problems into the classroom. So, we built four studio courses. These are called: Water; Climate Change; Democracy and Justice; and Neighbourhoods, which is a proxy for urbanisation. (From 2024-25, the fourth studio has been replaced with critical thinking and writing)... in the water studio, the very first day, we give the kids a bottle to get samples from every ward of the city. For the first time, kids are going from South Bopal (a posh area in West Ahmedabad) to Maninagar (south Ahmedabad) or in Juhapura (a Muslim neighbourhood) or somewhere else. And that's an education in my mind. Because you will engage, you'll see people doing different kinds of things. So, they'll go collect data. Then, they build an instrument and after that, measure the quality (of water). Then, they learn data science, put this data on a GIS map. they'll put the whole city's map — That's research-based thinking. Now, you can teach them any theory you want because you have primed them.

Have you faced parents objecting to their wards going to certain areas in the city?

We cancel (their) admission. Go home (we say). This is our education...we launched in 2019...I sat with a class of 50 kids on the first day. There was a clear divide with engineers and science guys saying, "what nonsense is this foundation programme?", and the humanity and social science management children who were happy. And now, students are coming to AU from all over the country because of our foundation programme.

What have been the major challenges since you took charge in 2015?

Our education system is very content-oriented. Everybody talks about content and not pedagogy...we had to bring in very different kinds of people. In nine years, we

have built a curriculum structure, which is very different from anybody in India and several places globally...We won't have departments because we want people to talk with each other. And that's why we put arts and sciences together. Physicists sit next to the biologists who sit next to a history person and they talk and conduct courses together. The NAAC chair told us: "You are an institution of the future."

How much of NEP (National Education Policy) have you implemented?

We have not done it (the implementation) 'as NEP'. We've just done it as good practices that we have learned from many other places. We have a very long way to go. If I have 20 steps to climb, I am probably on step five. We have a plan for 2035.

Any expansion plans?

We will grow but in terms of student numbers and not geography. Today, we have about 75-80% undergraduate students and 20-25% masters and Ph D. We will grow our masters and Ph D... We have around 4,000 students; in five years, we may go up to 6,000. We have about 200 full-time faculty, we are going to go up to 500. We are putting out a new school of performing in visual arts. We are enhancing STEM very strongly and setting up a new lab. We have just started India's first M Tech programme in composites, in partnership with ATIRA (Ahmedabad Textile Industry Research Association)...last academic year, we started a new programme, which we call BXMX, where you do a bachelors in one and masters in another school.

A large number of people are pursuing liberal arts but not getting jobs. How do you see this panning out?

I think liberal arts' education is very valuable. The challenge is with the companies. They need to understand the value of liberal arts, parents need to understand. These kids are very bright; they cannot make it to MBA at IIM because of that stupid CAT test, which is skewed towards those who are quantitatively inclined. You want to talk about business in industry that's an agent of social change. How do you make that agent? Not through engineers. You make it by bringing such people into the workforce who think differently, whose training is different, whose understanding of society is different. I think it's a long haul for Liberal Arts education.

Where do you see the problem with the IIMs?

These (IIT, IIM, AIIMS) are "siloed" institutions. Today, you can no longer solve epidemics like COVID if you are just a biologist. You cannot solve a financial crisis if you are just a management guy. You need humanities. You need social sciences. You need a whole lot of others to come here, which only universities provide...all great business schools (globally) are part of a university, like Harvard, Wharton and Stanford. These (IIMs etc) are institutions that have served India very well, they have very good faculty and get absolutely top-class students. But I think these institutions need to enlarge and become a university with other knowledge systems influencing them. Otherwise, they would shrivel and die in due course of time.

Recently, there were incidents such as a student dying by alleged suicide at the IIMA and an MBBS student's death in an alleged ragging incident. What do you make of these?

It is very complex. I think with rising income there's been a very big gap between parents and children. There are lots of resources at the disposal of children very early on, things are happening for them and as a result, this resilience has vanished... Somewhere or the other, the bridge between the parent and the child has broken...The internet has so much information and things that these kids are not mature enough to handle. We have a counselling system and I keep getting reports every month on the areas that the kids are conversing in...it is all about family and relationship, not about academics, not about pressures from jobs.Growing up (in my time), you always nad a student who looked out for you; I don't think they (the present generation) have such bonds. Schools have also become "over pressured". Despite all pressures, we (at AU) have decided not to keep any examination or test. Each test heightens

# Syria rebel leader meets U.N. envoy in Damascus

The Syrian Islamist leader whose group led the offensive that toppled Bashar al-Assad met on Sunday with U.N. envoy Geir Pedersen, who was visiting Damascus, said a statement on the rebels' Telegram channel. Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) leader Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, now using his real name Ahmed al-Sharaa, discussed with Pedersen "the changes that have occurred on the political scene which make it necessary to update" a 2015 United Nations Security Council resolution "to suit the new reality", the statement said. Jolani's HTS is rooted in Syria's branch of Al-Qaeda, the Al-Nusra Front, designated a "terrorist" organisation by many Western governments.

U.N. Security Council Resolution 2254 of 2015, to which the rebel statement referred, set out a roadmap for a political settlement in Syria, and also mentioned Nusra's "terrorist" designation.On Tuesday, Pedersen said the fact that Nusra was listed by the U.N. Security Council as a terrorist organisation was "obviously a complicating factor" in efforts to find a way forward.

However, he stressed that it was important to view HTS, which broke with Nusra in 2016 and has sought to soften its image, through the events of the civil war. The



rebel statement on Sunday said Jolani had emphasised "the need to focus on Syrian territorial unity, reconstruction and achieving economic development". He also raised "the importance of providing a safe environment for the return of refugees and providing economic and political support for this", said the statement. Earlier on Sunday, Pedersen urged a "political process... that is inclusive of all Syrians. "That process obviously needs to be led by the Syrians themselves" with "help and assistance" from the rest of the world, he said.

# U.S. agencies should use advanced technology to identify mysterious drones, Schumer says

GNS News Agency, Dec 18

After weeks of fear and bewilderment about the drones buzzing over parts of New York and New Jersey, U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer is urging the federal government to deploy better drone-tracking technology to identify and ultimately stop the airborne pests. The New York Democrat is calling on the Department of Homeland Security to immediately deploy special technology that identifies and tracks drones back to their landing spots, according to briefings from his office.

Schumer's calls come amid growing public concern that the federal government hasn't offered clear explanations as to who is operating the drones, and has not stopped them. National security officials have said the drones don't

appear to be a sign of foreign interference. "There's a lot of us who are pretty frustrated right now," said Rep. Jim Himes, D-Conn., the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, on Fox News Sunday. "The answer 'We don't know' is not a good enough answer." President-elect Donald Trump posted on social media last week: "Can this really be happening without our government's knowledge? I don't think so. Let the public know, and now. Otherwise, shoot them down." Certain agencies within the Department of Homeland Security have the power to "incapacitate" drones, U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas told ABC's George Stephanopoulos on Sunday. "But we need those authorities expanded," he said, without saying exactly how. The drones don't appear to be linked to foreign governments, Mayorkas said.

# US case against India's Gautam Adani appears strong but extradition unlikely, experts say



The US fraud case against Indian billionaire Gautam Adani appears to be backed by documents that will help prosecutors make a strong case, legal experts said, but the tycoon is unlikely to be extradited to stand trial anytime soon. Federal prosecutors in Brooklyn last month unsealed an indictment accusing Adani of bribing Indian officials to convince them to buy electricity produced by Adani Green Energy, a subsidiary of his Adani Group conglomerate, and then misleading US investors by providing reassuring information about the company's anti-corruption practices.

Adani, his nephew Sagar Adani, and another Adani Group executive were charged with securities fraud and conspiracy. Five people affiliated with Azure Power Global, a formerly US-listed company also allegedly involved, were charged with conspiracy to violate the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA). Azure has said it had cooperated with the investigation and that those charged were no longer with the company. Adani Group has called the allegations "baseless" and vowed to seek "all possible legal recourse." According to the indictment, prosecutors found ledgers of the alleged payments on Sagar Adani's cellular phone, which they called "bribe notes." Prosecutors also said Gautam Adani emailed himself a copy of a search warrant and grand jury subpoena the FBI had served on his nephew on March 17, 2023.

Those electronic records could be important pieces of evidence for prosecutors to try to prove that Sagar Adani and Gautam Adani knew they misled investors by failing to disclose the investigation and insisting they had strong anticorruption practices when in fact they had paid bribes, ex-

perts said. "The allegations include references to corroborating material, and that always provides for a stronger case," said Stephen Reynolds, a former federal prosecutor and current partner at law firm Day Pitney. "To be sure, prosecutors may face challenges. Gautam Adani could argue that he was not personally involved in crafting the statements the company made to investors about its anti-bribery practices", said Paul Tuchmann, a former federal prosecutor in Brooklyn and now a partner at law firm Wiggin & Dana. "Prosecutors may also struggle to secure live testimony from witnesses in India because the process could require assistance from New Delhi, and the government may be reluctant to facilitate testimony that could paint Indian officials in an unfavorable light", said Mark Cohen, a former federal prosecutor in Brooklyn and current partner at law firm Cohen & Gresser.

India's foreign ministry on Friday referred to a November 29 statement in which it said it had not received any request on the case from Washington and called the case a matter between private firms and the US Justice Department. The US Justice Department declined to comment on whether the United States had asked India to extradite Gautam Adani. 'Play by the rules' Both Adani Group and Adani himself have recently made public statements emphasizing that the conglomerate's executives had not been charged with violating the FCPA.

Conspiracy to violate the FCPA is punishable by up to five years behind bars. The fraud charges Gautam Adani and the other Adani Group defendants face are each punishable by up to 20 years in prison. Drew Rolle, the deputy chief of the business and securities fraud section at the Brooklyn US Attorney's office, said his office had a responsibility to protect the integrity of US capital markets. The office has secured a number of convictions in foreign bribery cases with US connections. In August, jurors found Mozambique's former finance minister guilty of fraud and money laundering conspiracy charges for embezzling loan proceeds he had told banks were destined for economic development projects. Rolle said honest companies are harmed when firms like Adani's allegedly mislead investors. "It's not only a bribery case, it's an important securities enforcement case," he said at a December 6 conference in New York hosted by the Practicing Law Institute. "If you're going to access our capital markets, you're going

# Bitcoin surges above \$106,000 on strategic reserve hopes

Bitcoin surged to a record high above \$106,000 on Monday after President-elect Donald Trump suggested he plans to create a US bitcoin strategic reserve similar to its strategic oil reserve, stoking the enthusiasm of crypto bulls.Bitcoin, the world's biggest and best-known cryptocurrency, hit a high of \$106,533 and last traded up 3.2% to \$104,462.

"We're in blue sky territory here," said Tony Sycamore, an analyst at IG. "The next figure the market will be looking for is \$110,000. The pullback that many people were waiting for didn't happen, because now we've got this news."Investor sentiment also lifted from MicroStrategy's inclusion in the tech-heavy Nasdaq 100 index, which will likely lead to more inflows for the software firm turned bitcoin buyer.

"We're gonna do something great with crypto because we don't want China or anybody else – not just China but others are embracing it – and we want to be the head," Trump told CNBC late last week. When asked if he plans to build a crypto reserve similar to oil reserves, Trump said: "Yeah, I think so." Governments around the world held 2.2% of bitcoin's total supply as of July, according to data provider CoinGecko, with the United States possessing nearly 200,000 bitcoins valued at more than \$20 billion at current levels. China, the UK, Bhutan, and El Salvador are the other countries with significant amounts of bitcoins, data site BitcoinTreasuries showed.

Other countries have also been considering cryptocurrency strategic reserves. Russian President Vladimir Putin earlier this month said the current US administration was undermining the role of the US dollar as the reserve currency in the global economy by using it for political purposes, forcing many countries to turn to alternative assets, including cryptocurrencies. "For example, bitcoin, who can prohibit it? No one," Putin said.

There are skeptics though, with Federal Reserve Chair
Jerome Powell likening bitcoin to gold earlier this month.
Analysts also point out that any such move will take time to implement. It hink we still need to be cautious on a BTC strategic reserve, and at least consider that this is not likely to happen anytime soon," said Chris Weston, head of research at Pepperstone. Of course, any comment from



Trump that offers an increased degree of hope that plans for a strategic reserve is evolving are an obvious tailwind, but this would come with consequences which would need to be carefully considered and well telegraphed to market players."Bitcoin has surged more than 50% since the November 5 election that saw Trump elected along with many other pro-crypto candidates. The total value of the cryptocurrency market has almost doubled over the year so far to hit a record over \$3.8 trillion, according to CoinGecko.Trump - who once labeled crypto a scam embraced digital assets during his campaign, promising to make the United States the "crypto capital of the planet."Trump this month named a White House czar for artificial intelligence and cryptocurrencies, former PayPal executive David Sacks, a close friend of Trump adviser and megadonor Elon Musk. Trump also said he would nominate pro-crypto Washington attorney Paul Atkins to head the Securities and Exchange Commission. On Friday, exchange operator Nasdaq said MicroStrategy will be added to the Nasdaq-100 Index, with the change coming into effect before the market opens on December 23. MicroStrategy, an aggressive investor in the world's largest crypto asset, has seen its shares soar more than sixfold this year, taking its market value to almost \$94 billion. It is now the largest corporate holder of the cryptocurrency. Pepperstone's Weston said the market was "front running the idea that Michael Saylor (MicroStrategy CEO) will capitalize on the likely rally in the MicroStrategy share price, given the impending passive flows from its inclusion into the NAS100 - where he'll presumably sell

# Does homemade amla tea have more antioxidants than green tea?

You may have tried green tea, black tea, milk with tea, and many other varieties of this much-loved beverage. But have you ever tried amla or gooseberry tea which, according to chef Venkatesh Bhat, has 2500 more antioxidants than green tea? In a snippet from one of his shows shared online, he is seen sharing the recipe of the tea prepared with amla, ginger, mint leaves, and ajwain or carrom

According to Bhat, this tea is a good remedy for heartburn, and heart health, and even helps delay ageing. He went on to say that the combination of amla with mint, ginger, and carrom seeds has more than 2,500 antioxidants than green tea which has 10 antioxidants. "The proportion of antioxidants is more. So, make this tea every day and drink," said Bhat. For the uninitiated, green tea has compounds



like catechins, which is a type of polyphenol that has antioxidant properties and numerous health benefits. So, is amla tea better than green tea?

ter than green tea?

According to clinical dietitian Garima Goyal, the

claim that amla tea has 2,500 times more antioxidants than green tea is "likely exaggerated" or taken out of context. Concentration and preparation — The antioxidant content in a tea form depends heavily on how it is

prepared. "Fresh amla and dried amla powder both differ in antioxidant concentration. When you make tea, some antioxidants might not fully transfer from the fruit or powder into the water," said Goval.

# Pakistan's economic crisis: Will the IMF's \$7-billion bailout stabilise the economy, stem the youth exodus?



Amid fresh reports of the World Bank cancelling a \$500 million loan for a clean energy programme, Pakistan's cashstrapped economy continues to lurch from one crisis to the next as it waits for a bailout. This fresh cancellation of the World Bank loan comes after Pakistan failed to implement some conditionalities that came with it, according to Karachibased The Express Tribune, including revision of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) power purchase agreements. In September, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif successfully secured a \$7 billion package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This deal was accompanied by a commitment to break Pakistan's long-standing reliance on bailout programmes that it has taken recourse to at least 20 times since 1958. Even as Islamabad tried yet another shot at fixing the cash-strapped economy, the country is, at the same time, battling a worsening unemployment crisis and brain drain. A study by Karachi-based Pulse consultants said that close to a million workers have left Pakistan since 2008, and that exodus is only gaining momentum. ILO reports too flags alarming rate of unemploy-

The IMF package could help Pakistan's economy stay afloat, at least temporarily. The World Bank, in its October update noted that the Pakistani economy is showing signs of recovery. Following the recession in FY23, economic activity bounced back in FY24. This growth, which increased from 40.2 per cent in FY23 to 40.5 per cent in FY24, is insufficient. "For now, the return to stability is akin to a patient having decent vitals after coming out of the intensive care unit," said Uzair Younas, Principal, South Asia Practice at The Asia Group, Washington DC. "This growing stability has allowed the central bank to aggressively cut rates, and the stock exchange has entered a dramatic bull run due to greater optimism around economic stability. However, sustaining this recovery requires fundamental economic reforms," he said.Chinese investments

The IMF loan comes to Pakistan with an uncomfortable precondition: stopping Chinese investments. Pakistan has to stop all incentives to the investors from China, including tax breaks and subsidies to any new or existing special economic zones. All this were rolled out when Pakistan was looking to attract more Chinese companies. There were plans to build at least nine SEZ under the CPEC. Earlier this year, PM Sharif, who sought BRI (China's Belt and Road Initiative) investment, returned empty handed from China. According to the World Bank's International Debt Report 2024, Chinese investments have dropped from 25 per cent in 2023 to 22 per cent in 2024. "Chinese investments have stopped. Pakistan is managing to fulfill IMF bailout conditions. For now measures are looking fine, no one knows what happens next," said Karachi-based business journalist, Khurram Hussain.Burden of taxes

As per the IMF deal, Pakistan must bring retail, agriculture and export sectors into normal tax regime by imposing tax hikes and abolishing exemptions. The IMF wanted additional taxation equal to 3 per cent points of GDP. "The revenue targets can only be achieved by expanding the tax base, which is a politically challenging decision given the influence of lobbies such as the retailers. So long as Pakistan does not have an equitable distribution of taxes and includes sectors such as retail and real estate into the tax net, these issues will persist," says Younas. Fasi Zaka, a Pakistani media commentator, said, "There is now greater commitment to the idea of working towards the fulfilment of IMF conditions than there has been in the past because people, not just youth, need investing in, and they need relief. The programme contains that."

Since June 2023, the Special Investment Fund Council (SIFC) — a federal government body and investment promotion agency that works under the Pakistan's PMO is said to be looking after the major financial decisions. However, the involvement of the army in this context is taken with a pinch of salt. "The SIFC represents the growing influence of the military in economic decision-making. While the Council may be able to streamline some bureaucratic hiccups in the near-term, its long-term implications are not good as it creates a parallel bureaucratic system for decision-making related to the economy," says Younas. "It's how Pakistan approached CPEC mid-cycle, and now with SIFC the same approach is being repeated. It's fine for a short period, but for the long run it will just make our systems weaker. It also gives the army an increased formal role in the economy...," says Zaka.Internet curbs adding to woes

This year so far, Pakistan has achieved \$3.2 billion of IT exports with a growth of 24 per cent from the previous fiscal. PM Sharif wants to achieve \$25 billion in the next three years. However, the internet curbs, due to political instability, are not helping the cause."Internet shutdowns, slowdowns, and restricted access to VPNs have all dented confidence in the IT sector... Which is why IT companies and their associations are speaking up against blocks on VPNs," said Younas."... It is also indicative of a policy formulation problem - where an unclear need (security) is triumphing in the short run over an established bright spot (IT). The messaging for the curbs has been poor and opaque," said Zaka. All of this is said to be contributing to the youth exodus. Younas says politics has been the biggest headwind for economic reforms and improvement in Pakistan. The disillusioned youth amid the political and economic crisis will remain undecided on their future in the country, looking for other avenues to earn livelihood. In times of polarisation the economy is a balm that prevents tensions from spilling over. We are some time away from that stage even if we stay on the course correction path we are on

Course correctionZaka said Pakistan needs to both drive growth and reduce economic vulnerabilities. "Export oriented industries like textiles (which account for about 60 per cent of Pakistan's exports) need to be supported and revitalised... Agriculture needs investment as our arable land is used for other purposes (contributes approximately 22-24 per cent of GDP and employs 37 per cent of the workforce)...," he said. "Also, the state needs to get out of the business of doing business. We need privatisation of loss making entities, a roll back of security institutions having their own businesses...," Zaka added.

# Tributes pour in for 'magical' Ustad Zakir Hussain: 'His nimble fingers could play all kinds of rhythms..it was so musical'

Tabla virtuoso Ustad Zakir Hussain passed away at the age of 73 in the United States on Sunday after complications from idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, the family said in a statement. "He leaves behind an extraordinary legacy cherished by countless music lovers around the globe, with an influence that will resonate for generations to come," the statement read.

The news of his untimely demise sent shockwaves in the music world, and many paid their tributes to the fivetime Grammy award winner. Sitarist Shujaat Khan, who spoke to Hussain's wife, Tony (Antonia Minnecola), expressed in a conversation with indian express.com that the loss enormously saddens him. "I just finished talking with Tony, his wife, who has been a friend since 1976. You can imagine how close I feel to the family. I can only add to what millions of others know and will say about his greatness as a musician — that he was probably the greatest musician of our time. More than that, a huge pride for our music fraternity. The way he went about his work, fame, business, music, performances...I have personal memories of traveling together, spending time with him, and performing togethers. My condolences to his family and his music family for going through this really difficult time,' Khan, who recollected how the couple came and danced at his daughter's wedding a few years ago, said. Photojournalist and visual historian Raghu Rai, who took portraits of him for his book Raghu Rai: Great Music Maestro, expressed shock at his passing. "Strange, shocking. How could this happen to him? Nobody has ever been like him. No one can ever come close to him. Zakir was handsome, flamboyant, and magical. He was a madman, a great artiste. He was and will be remembered as a magician of tabla. Nobody has ever created silence with an instrument like he did," Rai told indianexpress.com.

Kathak maestro Shovana Narayan went down memory lane. "It is shocking to hear the news of Zakir bhai's demise. I had known him since he entered the scene in the early 70s. And then because he and Ustad Shafaat Ahmad Khan were very good friends. So there were many occasions when the three of us used to meet. Shafaat Bhai, Zakir Bhai and myself. I remember he used to come for my performances when I was performing at NCPA Bombay. Once in 1982, when he had come to Vienna for a performance, he and Hari Prasad Chaurasia, they even stayed with us. And we had a great time those three, four days," Narayan recollected.

Calling the legend a "fabulous artiste", Narayan described, "his nimble fingers could play all kinds of rhythms and it was so musical". "It was like he was playing music with his fingers on the tabla. And he was adept at all instruments, all percussion instruments. You name it, and he would just pick it up and do it. What I liked about him was his immense humility and friendliness. He was so humble and friendly, not an ounce of arrogance in his personality. And that is, and with the great artiste, he was made absolutely another exceptional artist and human being," Narayan



shared. Narayan elaborated that very few people like him "have reached the top of their professional careers and yet have their heads firmly and their places and their feet firmly on the ground". Indeed, Hussain Sahab was one of the few rare gems.

Echoing similar sentiments, singer and composer Shubha Mudgal said, "I am unable to come to terms with the fact that we will no longer be fortunate enough to witness the genius and charisma of an artiste like Ustad Zakir Hussain, a true Bharat Ratna. I mourn his loss and grieve with his family, disciples and admirers and thank him for being the icon he was for me and countless other music

The passing of Ustad Zakir Hussain ji is an "irreparable loss" to the world of music, noted Santoor maestro and composer Pandit Abhay Rustum Sopori. "His unparalleled mastery and lifelong dedication to Tabla elevated it to global prominence. One of the most remarkable aspects of his artistry was how effortlessly he made complex variations accessible, captivating even first-time listeners. His tabla transcended generations, and will forever resonate in the rhythms he created, and he will be remembered through his music as it was often said "Wah Ustad Wah"."Indian lyricist and playback singer Swanand Kirkire expressed his "deep admiration for the legend". "I didn't have a direct association with him but I had a very deep admiration for him. You can say like from my childhood, I'm listening to him. I always wanted to become a tabla player. I always wanted to become Zakir Hussain. I have seen him live. I have heard him live many times. I have seen him perform with Birju Maharaj and Ravi Shankar. I've seen him perform with various big, big artistes. I've seen him in films. And then I got a chance to work with him at the Prithvi Memorial Festival, which happens every year," shared Kirkire. Kathak dancer and filmmaker Beenu Rajpoot said: "The news of the passing away of the outstanding table player Ustad Zakir Hussain is extremely sad. Indeed, the rhythm of Indian notes is over. No one can replace the lost rhythm in the world. His tabla spoke a global language. I extend our condolences to his family and his fans worldwide. The departure of the legendary table player has left the whole world in silence. His table has left behind a legacy cherished and respected by countless music lovers worldwide, the impact of which will be visible for generations to come."

### Vivian Dsena's wife leaves him in tears on Bigg Boss 18, gives him a reality check: 'It boils my blood to see you not being vocal'



pleasant for actor Vivian Dsena. On Saturday, Vivian received a strong reality check from host Salman Khan and on Sunday's episode, Vivian was schooled by wife Nouran Aly for not being very vocal and getting easily manipulated on the show. Nouran also exposed Shilpa Shirodkar and Karanveer Mehra's real side to Vivian and further questioned his friendship with Eisha Singh and Avinash Mishra. After Tajinder Bagga's eviction, Vivian was called to the confession room where Nouran interacted with him through a video call. She asked Vivian, "What's going on?" Responding to her Vivan said, "Whatever has happened I am grateful that it has happened now before it was too late. Today I felt on the edge, realization was there for a long

Nouran started to explain to Vivian and asked, "What is taking you back from being vocal about what you have

been realizing? I know you have decoded everyone very well. Even your fans have seen this, but you are not you. What is Vivian? Are you image-conscious? I know what you are, you have never cared about what people say or do, and you never carried yourself low despite everything you faced in life. Is everything inside the house bigger than what you have faced in life? Before leaving you promised me that you would put your foot forward and you will get the trophy home, do you see yourself doing that?"While Vivian clarified, "I was trying to avoid conflicts. Initially, I thought these people were my friends." Nouran went on to add, "This is not life, it's just a show which will last for 3-4 months. Are you willing to save any of these relationships outside the house? They have started using you since the third week, it's time to wake up. Be very vocal, and stop fighting with people who don't matter. Why are you not facing the real people who have been manipulating you from day one? With all due respect, Shilpa, Karan, or anyone, Karan has stated very clearly that he is not your friend. For me, he is like a junior artiste. It boils my blood to see you not being vocal. They have called you spineless, do you agree with that?"As tears well up in Vivian's eyes, he revealed that he was mentally down and was missing everybody back home. Nouran pointed out that Vivian was not coming out aggressive enough. She said, "Sometimes I feel like I don't know you, I want to see my husband on screen. We don't like to see you getting stabbed and not saying I am hurt. If you are scared of what will happen outside, I am there to take care

## Vikrant Massey addresses his 'retirement post', says he felt 'creatively saturated': 'I wrote it at night, was unable to sleep'

Vikrant Massey's career break social media post took everyone by a storm. Initially mistaken for a retirement announcement, the actor later clarified that he is not going on a permanent break. However, at the Times Network India Economic Conclave, Vikrant addressed the misunderstanding and gave a sigh of relief to his fans. He also opened up about the emotional and physical toll his career was taking on him, and handling the success of his films 12th Fail and The Sabarmati Report. Talking about his Instagram post, Vikrant explained, "As mentioned in that post, the last few years have been truly phenomenal. I probably reflect upon the year gone by with utmost humility and gratitude. I got much more than what I asked for. As an artiste, I have been working for the past 21 years professionally. But after 12th Fail, it has really been remarkable. Just to put things into context, I put out that post at midnight because I was not

Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi came at the special screening of his film The Sabarmati Report, with the entire cabinet. "The very next day, PM Modi and the entire cabinet were going to watch my film The Sabarmati Report. I never thought this would happen in my life. I might be sounding borderline pompous but I am being as honest as I can. The kind of love and reception the film got, I was truly overwhelmed by it," he added.

The actor felt that he reached a stage of 'creative saturation', when he decided to announce the break on social media, after discussing with his wife, actor Sheetal Thakur. "I was on a call with my wife and we were chatting. Iss desh mai isse zyada koi kya ni kar sakta nai as an actoi (What more can an actor achieve in this country)? 12th Fail got acclaim and now Sabarmati Report is also receiving so much love. Physically also, I am kind of exhausted. I have been doing non-stop work, I nearly shot 284 days last year out of 365 days, so there was creative saturation as well," he shared. Vikrant continued, "I personally felt that it was the right moment when the honourable Prime Minister of my country is going to watch a film which is so close to my heart, I have to better myself as an actor now, to be worth people's time and money. How will I do that? I reflected and wanted to better myself as an actor. Take a break, recalibrate and better yourself!" adding, "I tried doing the same but the problem was that I wrote a lot of English in that post, many people couldn't understand it, hence I issued a clarification."



When asked if there was a moment when he took pride in himself or arrogance came in the way as a successful actor, and he answered, "If I am at my peak and all good things are happening, meri nazrein ulta neeche hojaati hain (my eyes bow down instead). I know for a fact that everything in life is very transient, nothing is permanent. It is better to keep arrogance away. Many people came before me and many will come after that, arrogance can take you nowhere. When I sit at home and talk to my family about a person who made me wait for 4-5 hours earlier is calling me today, I also feel really good but it stays in those four walls. I go when they call me, I keep that respect." Talking about his future plans, Vikrant expressed his desire to don the director and producer's hat. "There is one film I am doing next year and my entire focus is on that film. I am doing the film as an actor by the end of next year. I also want to direct and produce but it's not the right time to talk about it publicly. My entire focus is on watching my son grow, to take that necessary break, to write more, and look after my health a little more. There is no problem as such, but health could be better. I haven't slept for more than 4-5 hours for so many years, so I want to do that," he shared.

### Diljit Dosanjh says he will not perform in India till 'concert infrastructure is developed'

Diljit Dosanjh's latest music concert as part of his ongoing Dil-Luminati Tour took place in Chandigarh recently and photos and video from the event have been shared online. Diljit's Chamkila director, Imtiaz Ali too shared a few clips on his Instagram to showcase how the singer recreated the Chamkila moment.

Imtiaz re-shared a video on his story that showed a huge crowd enjoying the concert outside the stadium. Some people were also seen climbing trees to watch the Punjabi sensation perform live. Sharing the clip of fans going crazy, Imtiaz Ali wrote, "Diljit effect" and added that he is "recreating Chamkila." The director's next story shows people dancing outside the venue of Diljit's performance. The third story of Imtiaz Ali featured Diljit performing a song from his recently released film Chamkila, and the text on the clip read, "Chamkila in Chandigarh.'

At the concert, Diljit also highlighted the poor concert infrastructure in In-



#### Diljit Dosanjh made a big announcement during his Chandigarh concert, saying he will not perform in India till proper infrastructure for such shows is developed.

dia and said he wants to perform with audience all aapke Songs ne????," while time proper infrastructure is developed, he won't perform

Reacting to hi post, a fan wrote, "Dil Jeet liya Bhai

around him. He said till the another called him, "G.O.A.T??."Before Diljit's show, the Chandigarh Commission for Protection of Child Rights (CCPCR) had issued an advisory urging him to avoid performing al-

cohol-themed songs during his live performance, and it specifically referenced songs like Patiala Peg, 5 Tara, and Case.Diljit Dosanjh's Dil-Luminati Tour will be held next in Mumbai on December 19, and Guwahati on December 29

### Inside Ranbir Kapoor-Alia Bhatt's kitchen with fridge magnets of animals and family portrait with Raha.



A video from Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt's home has emerged on social media, taking us through the actor couple's huge kitchen. Ranbir and Alia live in an apartment in Pali Hill. They will move into their new house soon, which is a six-storey bungalow in Mumbai's Bandra. Videos and pictures of them visiting their under-construction home keep surfacing on the internet. The duo even had a Diwali Puja with their daughter Raha Kapoor and other family members. Now, a clip of Alia and Ranbir's home chefs cooking food in their kitchen has gone viral. The chefs shared a video revealing a look of their kitchen. The duo has kept their

kitchen quite subtle and simple. In the glimpse, it was shown that it's rather filled with kitchen appliances that they require for daily usage. Having said that, Ranbir and Alia have also added a personalised touch to the kitchen with customised items. The duo has kept an adorable handmade family portrait of them with their little one Raha. The video also showcased many cute fridge magnets of animated animals. It looks like their baby loves animals and they have made sure to make their kitchen Raha-friendly.

The chefs also revealed that their kitchen is well lit and also has a huge window on one end. The bright kitchen also has a centralised AC and a stove hood that helps with orderly cooking. The glimpse also showed that the celebrity chefs put together a bunch of delicious dishes. From chicken to a bourbon biscuit dessert, the menu had everything scrumptious. Along with the video, the chef wrote, "On today's episode, we are cooking for #ranbirkapoor, @aliaabhatt and baby Raha! (sic)."The couple has been living in the same house where they got married in April 2022. They are expected to move to their newly constructed home soon. Meanwhile, on the professional front, Ranbir Kapoor was last seen in Sandeep Reddy Vanga's Animal and is now shooting for Nitesh Tiwari's Ramayana, which is scheduled for a Diwali 2026 release. Alia Bhatt last appeared in Vasan Bala's Jigra. The duo is also set to star in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's Love And War, also featuring Vicky

### Madhur Bhandarkar says he is 'not the flag bearer' of women-centric cinema, reveals he was asked to add 6 item songs in Chandni Bar

National Award-winning filmmaker Madhur Bhandarkar was part of a panel discussion at Cine Talkies 2024 held by Sansar Bharti in Mumbai. At the event, Bhandarkar spoke about issues he faced while making women-centric films. While talking to SCREEN, the filmmaker also commented on the Hema Committee report. He said, "A stringent law is already there. All the people named in the wake of Hema Committee are facing the law. So let that take its course. Even during MeToo a lot of allegations came about, a lot of people were banned too. So action

Madhur Bhandarkar also spoke about how the femaleled film Chandni Bar, starring Tabu in the lead role, was a game-changer for him. The filmmaker said, "When I started making films, the atmosphere was about commercial cinema. It needed to have a mass appeal. I didn't want to make those films, but I did because I was getting a break. Chandni Bar was the sunrise in my career, from there, the perception changed."He added, "For Chandni Bar, I had to go to so many people. They said it was a good subject but asked me to put 6 item songs in it. I was reluctant to do that. Very few producers want to back women-centric cinema.'

While talking about the gender and pay disparity in Bollywood, Madhur Bhandarkar pointed out how Tabu, Kareena Kapoor, and Priyanka Chopra slashed their fees for him. "10 years back, they would say only Madhur can make a film in that budget, we cannot. People were reluctant. I remember Kareena Kapoor, Tabu, Priyanka Chopra cutting their fees to do my films. Higher fees would add to budget constraints. It has been difficult. Even male actors should consider reducing their fees for a woman-centric film."Madhur Bhandarkar further advised filmmakers to pursue women-centric cinema, adding that it is a work in progress. He said, "Everybody will keep giving free advice, but you should do what you like. Chandni Bar was trashed by critics; they called it depressing. During Fashion, people said it was better to watch a fashion show than this film. These things shouldn't bog us down. Today, Laapataa Ladies is being talked about globally because its content was strong. Chandni Bar had to compete with Gadar, Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham, Lagaan, etc, but it still got nominated at all awards show."

"Women-centric films are not backed completely. Even today if I go with a subject to anyone, they will give a budget



of Rs 20-22 crores. Then that producer will only propose to have the story male-led and will be willing to give a budget of Rs 50-60 crores. That gender and pay disparity still exist, so yes, it's still a work in progress," the filmmaker added.Madhur Bhandrakar also recalled how he faced problems casting male actors in his films. "I have faced a problem casting heroes for my films. They didn't want to do it because the focus was on women. I have an image that if I make a film, it would revolve around women only. Then we have to cast newcomers. In the past, Rishi Kapoor has done movies in which women had a bigger role, for example, Nagina. That time actor's would do this, but now there is an entire facade where actors want to know how many scenes they have, etc. Now they want to just do solo hero/heroine films."On a concluding note, Bhandarkar stated, "I am not the flag bearer of women-centric cinema. Bimal Roy, Kamaal Amrohiji, Guru Duttji, Shyam Benegal, Raj Kapoor sahab also made such films. In the 80s came the wave of masala potboiler films, in which women-centric cinema got lost somewhere. Chandni Bar was the first film that released alongside big films and broke that mould about women-centric cinema. The percentage for women-centric films is still less because people have the tendency to ask who is the hero; nobody ever asks who is the heroine. That mindset needs to change. Actresses should get as big an opening at the box office as the heroes; they will be paid well then. Today actresses are scared that if they do a female-led film and it doesn't work, it will affect their image. That is why

#### they are okay to do a few scenes in a big film led by a hero." **Keerthy Suresh-Antony Thattil white wedding pictures:** Couple starts its happily ever after with a kiss





The National Award-winning actor Keerthy Suresh married her longtime boyfriend and entrepreneur Antony Thattil on December 12 in a traditional South Indian style in Goa. On December 15, the couple said their vows in a white wedding, and also shared the pictures online.

The National Award-winning actor Keerthy Suresh married her longtime boyfriend and entrepreneur Antony Thattil on December 12 in a traditional South Indian style in Goa. On December 15, the couple said their vows in a white wedding, and also shared the pictures online. The happy bride shared the photo with a special hashtag, "#ForTheLoveOfNyke". This cute hashtag is the amalgamation of Antony's last two letters, and Keerthy's first two letters. Keerthy Suresh's beloved dog's name is also Nyke who was very much a part of her big day. In the pictures, Keerthy Suresh and Antony Thattil were all smiles as they exchange vows for the second time. The couple also sealed their love with a passionate kiss. Keerthy is seen walking down the aisle with her father while her pet dog, Nyke, was

also clicked the the couple during their Christian wedding. The couple was also seen hitting the dance floor post the wedding ceremony. Keerthy Suresh's Baby John co-star Varun Dhawan reacted to the photos in the comment section and wrote, "So beautiful." Keerthy Suresh earlier shared glimpses of her traditional South Indian wedding. Their intimate wedding ceremony was also attended by celebrities including Thalapathy Vijay, Trisha Krishnan, Kalyani Priyadarshan, Atlee and among others. Keerthy Suresh's husband Antony Thattil is a Dubai-based entrepreneur. The duo tied the knot after being in a relationship of over 15 years. The relationship came as a surprise to many of her fans as Keerthy never spoke about her private life. It was just last month that she made it official on social media.

# The Saudi prince and his financial calculations fuelling the 2034 Football World Cup dreams



GNS News Agency, Dec 18

Mohammed Bin Salman — MBS for his devout—once splurged half a billion dollars on a yacht party for his friends. The Saudi Arabia crown prince, the man behind bringing the 2034 FIFA World Cup, gifted Rolls Royce to his country's team that defeated Argentina in the Qatar World Cup. He reportedly purchased, with a proxy, a French château worth \$300 million in Versailles; coughed up \$450.3 million to fetch Leonardo da Vinci's Salvator Mundi.But he is austere and stern with his words. He speaks straight and blunt, with no regal flourishes, no hollow diplomatic fervour.

Rather, he speaks like a businessman fuelled by vaulting ambition, as he did when the Fox News' anchor sought his opinion on "sport washing" allegations. "If sport washing is going to increase my GDP by way of 1%, then I will continue doing sport washing. I don't care ... I'm aiming for another 1.5%. Call it whatever you want, we're going to get that 1.5%," he replied, with cold eyes and still fingers in an unwavering tone. The 38-year-old, considered the de facto ruler of the kingdom, officially ruled by his 88-year-old father, has dressed simply for the interview in a plain white thobe, red-and-white-checkered headdress held in place with a black cord and wore black sandals. He then explains Saudi's colossal investment in sports in the last eight years (an estimated \$51 billion): "When you want to diversify an economy you have to work in all sectors: mining, infrastructure, manufacturing, transportation, logistics all this. Part of it is tourism and if you want to develop tourism, part of it is culture, part of it is your sport sector, because you need to create a calen-

The biggest reason the country is on a spending spree, not only in sport but also in other streams, is because it is dizzyingly rich. It sits on a treasure chest of \$925 billion. But it spends because it knows that the resources at their disposal, oil, natural gas and minerals, are not imperishable, that they need to expand the wealth, that they can't afford the youth, 63 percent are under the age of 30, to laze in the comforts of their home. Already, the country is reaping rewards —in 2023, the country's Public Investment Fund reported \$36.8 billion in profits, according to a study by Carlton University.Behind the sporting forays of Saudi, thus, is not princely indulgence or a wanton gamble, or the pursuit of bunking its image

as a regressive nation, or to acquire soft or hard power. It already is one of the most powerful nations in the world. At the heart of it is Saudi's resolve to multiply their wealth. The PIF is not the only funding domain either. It has constituted a new company SRJ Sporting Investments, which would "invest in acquiring and creating new sports events IP [intellectual property], commercial rights of popular and prominent sports competitions and hosting major global events in Saudi Arabia". Another PIF subdivision, Sanabil, specialises in investing in venture capital and private equity funds.

Unlike the Thanis of Qatar, MBS had no inclination to football or any sport. In his early teenage years, as Ben Hubbard writes in MBS: The Rise to Power of Mohammed bin Salman, he was pampered like any other prince in the country. Hubbard writes: "During the lessons, MBS would take a walkie-talkie from one of the guards to make "cheeky remarks" about his instructor and joke with the guards on the other end of the line to regale his siblings."But soon after he turned 15, a cousin told him that his father Salman bin Abdulaziz, then one of the 36 challengers for the throne, is not as wealthy as he thinks and owed millions to businessmen, MBS suddenly became serious. "It was the first shock and challenge that I faced in my life," he would later say. Abdulaziz was handsome and flamboyant, sported a goatee and wore Armani suits.MBS was determined to make himself some money. He then started selling gold coins and luxury watches which he received as gifts from relatives. He briefly invested in stocks, and by the time he became 16, he had made a profit of nearly \$100,000. Then he told his father that he wanted to open a trash collection business. Though he first laughed it off, he granted his son's wish. He jumped into the real estate business, where stories abound of his ruthlessness. A story goes that he once sent a bullet in a cover to a land official who declined to give him the title to a plot he demanded, according to the book Blood and Oil, by Bradley Hope and Justin Scheck. His clout swelled when his father, now Salman of Saudi, was made the king in 2015. He became the minster of defence, and within days of assuming charge, he ordered the bombing in Civil War-ridden Yemen, Hubbard writes. Salman's favourite son (he had 12 sons and a daughter) was MBS, not simply because he spotted leadership traits in him but because he was aloof from the influences of western culture. He didn't study abroad, had a way with the locals and solved problems, and in Hubbard's words: "He would stop at nothing to make Saudi Arabia great again, on his terms."Sport and football were just incidental vehicles to his ultimate dream of making Saudi great. The investments, especially in football, came at a time when recession and conservatism had clutched the sporting world after the pandemic, when the world's wealth became increasingly concentrated in fewer hands. Therein lies the sporting success of Saudi too, that it is not driven by a love for sports, but by the blinding purpose to become richer. Whether it involves sport washing or human rights risk, it would hardly shake the empire of Mohammed Bin

### Jason Gillespie slams Pakistan Cricket Board, says he was left 'completely and utterly blindsided'

GNS News Agency, Dec 18

Jason Gillespie gives his first interview after resigning, says he didn't feel valued as a coach (Cricket Australia) Jason Gillespie gives his first interview after resigning, says he didn't feel valued as a coach

In his first interview after stepping down as the Test coach of Pakistan, Jason Gillespie said the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) did not want him as a coach. He cited a lack of communication with the board and the sacking of highperformance coach Tim Nielsen as the reasons for his resignation. "The straw that broke the camel's back, I suppose, was, as a head coach, you like to have clear communication with your employer. "Tim Nielsen was told that his services were no longer required and I had absolutely zero communication from anyone about that, and I just thought after a number of other things that had gone on in the previous few months, that was probably the moment where I thought, 'Well, I'm not really sure if they actually really want me to do this job or not." What irritated Gillespie the most was that both him and Tim Nielsen received positive feedback from the PCB, and felt that they were moving in the right direction. He was getting along well with Test captain Shan Masood as well as they developed a strong coach-player relation.

"All the feedback that I'd got or the feedback the PCB got was just how effective, you know, Tim had been in his



role as well and the players were getting a lot out of him."The former Australian bowler became Pakistan's coach for Tests in April, and even guided the side to a 2-1 win against England in October, after losing the first match by an innings and 47 runs. But after the loss, Gillespie mentioned that the text group he was part of put up a message that there would be a new selection panel, which the coach was not a part of.He felt his role as a coach kept reducing, as he would receive communication about the players of the squad just a day before the match. "You want to be able to have clear communication with all stakeholders, with selectors, for instance, knowing what the team is as head coach well before the game, or before at least the day before the game."

### Michael Vaughan takes a sly dig at Yashasvi Jaiswal's dismissal: 'In practice it was perfect'



GNS News Agency, Dec 18

Jaiswal falls to Starc after similar wamr-up shot that sent the ball into the Australian Huddle (Reuters)Jaiswal falls to Starc after similar wamr-up shot that sent the ball into the Australian Huddle During the warm-up, while facing a few throw downs before the start of the innings, Yashasvi Jaiswal flicked one straight towards the Australian team huddle on Day 3 of the third Test on Monday. Little did he know it would be that very shot that would cause his dismissal. During the warm-up, one of the Indian coaching staff was helping Jaiswal with the routine throw downs, Jaiswal flicked it elegantly and the ball went straight towards the Australian huddle, who were preparing to enter the field at the sidelines. The ball hit the Cricket Australia's cameraman on his legs, leaving the hosts a little riled up, but the Jaiswal quickly to apologised.

"That's one way of getting ahead of the game... he's just trying to take out Mitchell Starc before the game starts,"

Michael Vaughan said. The first ball of the innings saw Jaiswal catch an edge off Mitchell Starc's fuller length delivery that swung away from the batsman, but the ball raced towards the boundary going through the middle of fourth slip and gully. The very next ball was pitched slightly shorter than the previous one, and the 22-year-old Jaiswal flicked the ball in a similar manner that we saw in the warm up, but this time the ball took an aerial route straight to Mitchell Marsh who was ready at short mid-wicket and completed a comfortable catch. "Five minutes before Jaiswal got out, this is the shot he practiced that whip through mid-wicket, wonderful shot and good balance," said Michael Vaughan. "And then you go into the match and it's the same shot but he goes aerial, just flicks it. It was the pressure of the game, in practice it's perfect." "Can you imagine the catch would be there? The man just in front of square, acres of space on the on side and Jaiswal hits it straight to the fielder," Ravi Shastri said in disbelief, as India's first wicket fell on just the second ball of the innings, with Starc getting the better of Jaiswal yet again. Sunil Gavaskar on ABC Sport, said: "It's not the best of shots. If you are facing 445 runs then I think it's important for you to get your eye in. It wasn't even a half volley and you try to flick that ball away. And it's a simple catch. Very good field placing. Very good captaincy by Pat Cummins for sure. But that's not the best of shots that you expect from an opening bat. Literally when your opposition has got 445. Your job for that one hour was to try and stay at the crease. Jaiswal was very very disappointing. Gone for 4.It's all very well to be positive. But you also gotta be practical. When the ball is new, it's the first over, you can't be looking to score 25 runs off the first over. Wasn't even a half volley.

# Are there similarities between Sachin Tendulkar's 2011 tour of Australia and Virat Kohli's current struggles in 2024?



GNS News Agency, Dec 18

Where do we start about the few minutes of madness when Indians drove themselves crazy? Perhaps best to start with Virat Kohli, who should have known better. But first a word about the simplest possible bowling plan deployed against them by the Australians. Three slips, two gullies, a mid-off – men packed behind the stumps and large vacant spaces under the gaze of the batsmen. And the line of bowling well outside off stump. Surely, this can't work, Indians aren't that bad? Remarkably, India were 22 for 3 by lunch.

Was it their desire to show intent? Was it just the ego? Was it mental laxness? On social media, former batsman Sanjay Manjrekar would tweet about the role of the batting coach in the team. That's a fair point in itself in the larger scheme of things with this batting unit, but one doesn't need a coach to tell anyone, least of all Kohli, to go chasing wide deliveries. Or Shubman Gill for that matter.It's also been said that this 2024 series has a whiff of 2011 about it, in terms of how that Australian tour 13 years ago showed the decline of the aging legends like Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, VVS Laxman and Virender Sehwag. Unlike them, Kohli has hit a hundred on this tour, but even his ardent fans wouldn't be cuing up its highlights and term it as one of special hundreds as it came against a tired attack looking to defend run-flood with spread-out field. Kohli India's Virat Kohli plays a shot during the day one of the second cricket test match between Australia and India at the Adelaide Oval in Adelaide, Australia, Friday, Dec. 6, 2024. (AP Photo/

There is one other difference in relation to that 2011 tour — Kohli's travails here can't be compared with Tendulkar's then. That one was a rather strange tour for Tendulkar who kept looking like a million bucks until the moment of error that would get him out. In contrast, Kohli hasn't looked good, be it in Perth's first innings or at Adelaide. It would remain a puzzle why Tendulkar kept getting out after looking good on that tour — unlike Dravid, say, who was sorted out by Ben Hilfenhaus and VVS Laxman. With Kohli, there is no puzzle to why he has been getting out.

The puzzle is how he has been doing it again and again. Off his first delivery, he went chasing and was lucky not to

edge. So did Steve Smith, off his second ball, but he began correcting those mistakes – the lunge-and-chase stopped, then the flailing hands stopped. Not with Kohli. There was a brute of a delivery from Mitchell Starc that leapt almost from a length and went past Kohli's gloves; there was no shame in getting out to that ball as there was no shame in Smith getting beaten by good deliveries in the first innings, particularly by Akash Deep.

Self-destructive streakBut Kohli kept chasing like a man with a self-destructive streak. Perhaps the batting coach can genuinely question about what he was thinking to understand the headspace: was it a desire to show intent, was it to prove a point, was it a weird wish to counterattack tamely, was it somehow wishful thinking that a couple of fours, if he connected, would force Australians to change the field or line of attack? Or is it a case of nerves and selfdoubt masked by a pretence of confidence? Those are valid questions to understand for course-correction is needed.India's Virat Kohli celebrates his century on the third day of the first cricket test between Australia and India in Perth, Australia. (AP) India's Virat Kohli celebrates his century on the third day of the first cricket test between Australia and India in Perth, Australia. (AP)It's not as if he hasn't been working hard at the nets. That he has. Rather intensely at that. Just like Steve Smith made a tweak by opening up his stance, Kohli was trying a different tact. He was pushing back furiously before pressing forward to play at the Brisbane nets. But time and again, he would be late on that forward movement, caught on the walk, almost. At the end of the nets, he would bang his bat with his second bat he was holding. On Monday, he had further tinkered with that tweak: the back movement wasn't as back into the crease as it was at nets, and subsequently he didn't have to strain as much to get forward. A little back, and then the opening of the left foot - but there was a visible stutter on that front foot, a slight jar of the balance that was discernible. A batting coach can, if he has the stature, aid in this perhaps. Not that Smith took any coach's help; at this stage in career, he was doing his own thing, trying to find a way out. So did Kohli perhaps. But the set-up is one thing, but the decision to chase a wide ball is another. Of course, the setup does affect the success rate of that chase - but why chase this kind of a ball in the first place? He also does another curious thing when he goes for the balls on the 6-7th stump. It seems there is an effort to play it through mid-off, perhaps to try to offer a full-bat face, but it's a curious choice of shot. Not many, if any, can drive a ball from that wide through the V. Usually, the choice is to go squarer, like a Younis Khan or Nasser Hussain or the plethora of lefthanders who do that. See the replay of his first ball or the one he got out, or a few dismissals in the past, Kohli makes

# How Ruben Amorim's tactics and Amad Diallo's grit concocted recipe for latest Manchester City meltdown

When Kyle Walker crumpled to the ground after a face-off with Rasmus Højlund in an embarrassing attempt to get the Manchester United youngster sent off, you could feel Manchester City's desperation, something their fans aren't really accustomed to in Pep Guardiola's age. It was very strange to witness a City player trying these tactics when they were already 1-0 up with United looking toothless but it did speak volumes of how far the confidence of a once all conquering juggernaut had fallen.

After the full-time whistle, captain Walker and his City team were laid out on the ground again, having lost 8 of their last 11 games in all competitions, the latest defeat coming courtesy of a one-two knockout punch by United's 22-year-old sensation Amad Diallo. The Ivorian has been a vital part of United's system under manager Ruben Amorim due to his desire to chase down anything and everything under the sun. This quality has paid dividends multiple times this season and on Sunday, Diallo's relentless pressing handed Amorim his second win against City in one month's time, first as the Sporting CP coach, when he tore apart Pep Guardiola's side 1-4 in the Champions League and now, as the United gaffer.

A few weeks ago, Amorim had said that United players needed to 'run like mad dogs' in order to win the Premier League and on Sunday, Diallo ran City ragged, becoming the main architect of pushing Guardiola's side closer to the abyss. 3 minutes was all it took for the winger to turn the game on his head as United went from 1-0 down to 1-2 up as City's gamble to play Matheus Nunes in a defensive role flopped hard.Ruben Amorim Manchester Manchester United's head coach Ruben Amorim talks to his players at the end of the English Premier League soccer match between Ar-

senal and Manchester

United at Emirates stadium



in London, Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2024. (AP Photo/ Kirsty Wigglesworth)

Kirsty Wigglesworth) The Portuguese was caught out due to Diallo's relentless pressing, losing the ball in a dangerous area and in trying to rectify his mistake fouled the winger in the penalty box, a spot kick which Bruno Fernandes duly converted. For the second goal. Nunes did not have the legs to catch up to Diallo who again latched on to a long ball by Lisandro Martinez and lobbed it over goalie Ederson with the first touch and stunned the home fans with a clever finish which Josko Gvardiol failed to clear. After constantly getting ignored by previous manager Erik Ten Hag for reasons unknown, Diallo has exploded to life under Amorim, scoring 4 goals this season. If his decision making and shooting improves, the sky's the limit for the winger who has a boatload of untapped poten-

It's a huge credit for Amorim as well as he stuck to his guns, even excluding scorers Marcus Rashford and Alejandro Garnacho from the squad against City, sending a message that he would not be walked over by anyone. Even with a lack of attackers, the 39-year-old could see how porous the City defence was and struck when the time was right.Playing Martinez, Matthijs de Ligt and Harry Maguire in his favoured back three, he ensured that United were solid in defence even at the cost of not making much progression while having possession. With the three defenders staying put, City could not press United higher up the pitch. With that sorted, Amorim turned to Noussair Mazraoui and Diogo Dalot, the wingbacks to penetrate a shaky City backline with the midfield of Fernandes and Kobbie Mainoo in support. Even when City

looked to find a foothold in the attacking third, United would switch to a defensive structure of 5-4-1, not giving enough space to the likes of Kevin de Bruvne and Phil Foden to get a proper shot on goal, almost always stifling their attempts. The only strike they let in was unsurprisingly from a corner, their Achilles heel this season, with United having conceded 42% of their goals in the Premier League this season from pieces. Even though United still look more of a work in progress, their primary focus going forward will likely be to become a much more assertive side while defending set pieces while ensuring Amorim's tactics are imprinted on the team before the coach can bring in players more suited to his style. Until then, United just have to survive and strike at the opportune time, just like they did on the cold December

# Heavy showers stop play again, India struggle at 27/3

GNS News Agency, Dec 18

Brisbane: Heavy showers interrupted the proceedings in the second session of the third day's play in the third Test between India and Australia here on Monday.India were struggling at 27 for three when the

covers came on and the players headed back to the dressing room. Earlier, just as Josh Hazlewood induced a nick from Virat Kohli to account for the veteran batter for the second time this series, the heavens opened up leading to an interruption and forcing an early lunch.

Earlier, India had bowled out Australia for 445 in their first innings. The start of play on day three and India's innings were also slightly delayed due to rain. Rain had marred the opening day as well with less than 15 overs of play possible. The five-match series is locked at 1-1.

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