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5-year-old boy tested for Zika virus in Andhra's Nellore, sample sent to NIV Pune

Nellore: A five-year-old boy from Venkatapuram village in Nellore district has been tested for Zika virus, with his blood sample sent to the National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune for confirmation. Nellore District Collector O Anand stated that the child was transferred to Chennai for advanced treatment after a local laboratory suspected a Zika virus infection. "We have a suspected case, but it is not yet confirmed. We collected the sample and sent it to the laboratory (NIV, Pune). Once we receive the confirmation, we will have a clearer understanding," Anand said. In response to the suspicion, health measures have been implemented, including a health camp, additional sample collection near the child's residence, and sanitation efforts, the collector said.

Former Maharashtra Governor Ch Vidyasagar Rao meets President Draupadi Murmu, gifts autobiography 'Unika'



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Hyderabad: Former Governor of Maharashtra and a senior BJP leader from Telangana State, Ch Vidyasagar Rao, paid a courtesy call on President of India, Draupadi Murmu at Rashtrapathi Bhavan in Bollaram. He met the President along with his family on Wednesday and presented his autobiography titled "Unika" to her.

AP govt. fully prepared for Amaravati development, says CM Chandrababu



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu announced that the state government is fully prepared to advance with the development of Amaravati as the new capital of Andhra Pradesh. Speaking to officials, he revealed that a significant budget of Rs 31,000 crores has been set aside for the capital's construction, ensuring all necessary arrangements are in place to initiate the projects swiftly. Naidu emphasized the importance of Amaravati, stating it will play a pivotal role in enhancing the state's tourism and business sectors on a national level. He outlined the government's ambition for Amaravati to achieve international recognition, reflecting its strategic significance for Andhra Pradesh. Currently, the government is reviewing various financial permissions, land acquisition processes, and construction agreements to ensure a smooth implementation of the capital project. The Chief Minister assured that work will proceed without interruptions, with continuous monitoring of progress across different areas. The ambitious plan includes transforming Amaravati into an integrated city equipped with modern facilities, designed as a multi-dimensional hub. Naidu reiterated that with the allocation of Rs. 31,000 crores, there are no anticipated financial hurdles for the project's successful execution. In the recent update from officials, it was noted that Rs 15,000 crores have been sanctioned from the World Bank, along with Rs 16,000 crores from HUDCO. Officials are optimistic that the World Bank will finalize its approval today, paving the way for construction that is projected to be completed within three years. Minister Nandendla Manohar emphasized the need for appropriate precautions regarding the assembly construction. Following his directive, the Chief Minister instructed officials to assess the design and layout of the assembly buildings thoroughly. Construction work for the capital is slated to commence within the next 30 days, marking a significant milestone in the establishment of Amaravati as the new heartbeat of Andhra Pradesh.

Tensions erupt as HYDRAA demolishes shops in Manikonda despite residents' protests

GNS News Agency, Sept 21

Hyderabad: Amidst heavy police presence, authorities of Hyderabad Disaster Response and Asset Protection Agency (HYDRAA) descended on Anuhar Raaga Apartments in Alkapuri colony, Manikonda on Thursday to demolish commercial establishments within the apartment complex.

The arrival of the demolition vehicles and senior officials from HYDRAA along with police, sparked tension as residents of Anuhar Apartments protested, claiming that they have obtained necessary permissions from the local revenue authorities. The apartment complex residents complained about the high-handed behavior of the HYDRAA officials, as they refused to even listen to them and went ahead to demolish the structure.

CM announces probe into ORR tender irregularities; Opposition insists on cancelling tenders first

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Hyderabad: Even as Opposition parties demanded the government to cancel the Outer Ring Road toll contract, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy announced that a Special Investigation Team (SIT) would be constituted to probe into the alleged irregularities. The Chief Minister made this announcement during the short dis-



ussion on "Outstanding Liabilities of the State" in the Assembly on Thursday. As

government's false claims on loans raised by the BRS government and cornering the ruling party, the Chief Minister intervened and made the announcement.

As per the request of opposition parties, a SIT will be constituted to probe into the irregularities in the ORR toll contract," Revanth Reddy said. In reply, Harish Rao insisted that the State government first cancel the ORR tenders and then order a probe.

Houses adjourn amid uproar over Shah's Ambedkar remarks; Treasury, Oppn. Benches in RS trade blame on MPs being pushed

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Proceedings in both Houses were adjourned for the day on Thursday (December 19, 2024) amid continuous uproar by Treasury and Opposition Benches over Home Minister Amit Shah's alleged derogatory remarks against B.R. Ambedkar.

In the Upper House, BJP members demanded an apology from Lok Sabha Opposition leader Rahul Gandhi for allegedly attacking BJP MPs, including a woman member from Rajya Sabha, S. Phangnon Konyak. Ms. Konyak alleged in the Upper House that Mr. Gandhi came in very close proximity of her and started shouting at her, making her uncomfortable. Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar tried to bring order to the House, saying he was looking into the BJP's complaint. Meanwhile, DMK member Tiruchi Siva said the BJP complaint mentioned only one version even though Mr. Gandhi alleged that MPs belonging to the ruling party pushed him. Amid sloganeering from both the Treasury and Opposition benches, the Chair adjourned the proceedings for the day till Friday morning. Earlier in the day, the Chairman said he had received four adjournment notices, including three for discussion on the remarks made by Mr. Shah. As the Chair did not approve the notices under Rule 267, several Opposition members protested. The notices were given by AAP MP Sanjay Singh, Congress MP Randeep Surjewala and CPI(M) MP John Brittas. One of the Congress MPs was heard saying that Ambedkar was never insulted "like this". Several Opposition members were on their feet and raised slogans "We cannot allow the country to be plunged in anarchy," Mr. Dhankhar said before adjourning the proceedings till 2 p.m. Lok Sabha Similarly in the Lower House, proceedings were adjourned following noisy protests by the Opposition seeking an apology from the Home Minister.

Earlier in the day, as soon as the House met, Opposition members were on their feet raising their voices and staging protests. Speaker Om Birla tried to pacify them and

Tempers run high in Telangana Assembly during discussion on State's liabilities



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Hyderabad: Tempers ran high in the Assembly on Thursday during a short discussion on "Outstanding liabilities of the State" with members from the BRS, BJP and AIMIM questioning the failure to follow the business finalised for the day. After a tea break, the House proceedings commenced at 2 pm with Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka listing out the government's welfare and development programmes. After a few minutes, AIMIM Floor Leader Akbaruddin Owaisi intervened and sought to know about with Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar about the business. As per the business finalised for the day, it was question hour, papers to be laid, government bills and followed by short discussion. But in contrast, the short discussion was being taken up, sidelining the Bills and papers, he said.

"We have discussed the State finances and loans about eight times. If the House is being run like this, one can imagine how the State administration is being run," Owaisi said. The Speaker has the authority to decide the business of the House. But, Members have to be informed about the business so that they prepare, he stressed, adding that "It is a Parliamentary practice and let us follow it. Speaker should come to the rescue of Members."

Echoing a similar opinion, BRS MLA and former Min-

TOMCOM organises program to train, recruit qualified nurses in Japan

Hyderabad: Telangana Overseas Manpower Company Limited (TOMCOM), a registered recruitment agency under the Department of Labour, Employment, Training and Factories, Government of Telangana, is conducting interviews to select candidates for batches to train qualified candidates to work as nurses in Japan. The TOMCOM is organizing special program to train and recruit qualified nursing staff for working in Japan under specified skilled workers (SSW) scheme of the Government of Japan. So far, the recruitment agency has successfully placed 32 nurses, who were trained in first and second batches while the third batch is set to join prestigious hospitals in Japan upon completion of their visa processing.

SSC board exams tentative time table is out



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Hyderabad: The SSC (Secondary School Certificate) Public Examinations, March-2025, will be held in Telangana between March 21, 2025 and April 4, 2025, according to the tentative time table released by Board of Secondary Education, Telangana on Thursday.

The tentative time table is : First Language (March 21, 2025), Second Language (March 22, 2025), Third Language English (March 24, 2025), Mathematics (March 26, 2025), Science Part-I Physical Science (March 28, 2025), Science Part-II Biological Science (March 29, 2025), Social Studies (April 2, 2025), OSSC Main Language Paper-I (Sanskrit and Arabic) and SSC Vocational Course (Theory) on April 3, OSSC Main Language Paper-II (Sanskrit and Arabic) on April 4, 2024. All the examinations will be held between 9.30 am and 12.30 pm.

Parents of students stage protest seeking location change for Peddapur Gurukul



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Jagtial: Parents of students studying in the Peddapur Gurukul have taken to the streets after frequent snakebites in the school, with several of them squatting on the Nizamabad-Jagtial national highway near Maruthinagar demanding that the school be shifted from the current premises and also action against officials whose negligence resulted in the mishaps, which saw two children being hospitalised after being bitten by snakes within the last 24 hours. Meanwhile, officials have said that the students were bitten by 'poisonous insects' and refused to confirm the snakebite angle. Two Class 8 students, Omkar Akhil and Yashvanth, were hospitalised on Wednesday and Thursday. While Akhil fell sick on Wednesday morning, Yashvanth was hospitalised on Thursday. Both of them are undergoing treatment in a private hospital in Korutla. Following the incidents, parents gathered at the Gurukul in large numbers and grilled the officials over the frequent incidents. Later, they headed to the Nizamabad-Jagtial national highway, where they were staging a dharna near Maruthinagar even when reports last came in.

The parents said though two students had died in the school a few months ago, one of them allegedly due to a snakebite, the school authorities had not changed their attitude and had not taken precautions for the safety of the students. Stating that similar incidents were frequently taking place in the school due to the negligence of the school staff, they demanded that the officials shift the school to another location. Meanwhile, following the two consecutive snakebite incidents, District Collector B Satya Prasad suspended school principal Madhavilatha on charges of negligence and for not responding properly to Akhil's incident. Based on enquiry reports submitted by the Metpalli RDO, the Collector issued orders placing the principal under suspension. Instead of immediately shifting the boy to the hospital by calling the 108 service ambulance, she had informed his parents asking them to take their child along with them, leading to late admission of the boy in hospital.

ACB Registers Case Against KTR in Formula E Car Race Matter

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Hyderabad: The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has filed a case against Telangana IT Minister K. T. Rama Rao (KTR) in connection with the Formula E car race issue. The case also includes Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer Arvind Kumar and HMDA Chief Engineer B. L. N. Reddy. KTR has been named as the prime accused (A1), Arvind Kumar as the second accused (A2), and B. L. N. Reddy as the third accused (A3). The case comes amid ongoing investigations related to the Formula E race event held in Hyderabad.

KTR condemns Amit Shah's remarks on BR Ambedkar

GNS News Agency, Sept 21

Hyderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao condemned the insensitive remarks of Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Bharat Ratna Dr BR Ambedkar, terming them shameful. He asserted that notwithstanding what the people in power opine, it is the power of people that really matters.

"Dr Ambedkar will remain one of the greatest leaders and intellectuals of who preached Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. He will always be remembered and respected by Indians for many generations, (sic)" he said.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Celebratory firing

THE dangerous practice of celebratory firing has once again turned joyous occasions into tragedies, claiming lives and leaving families shattered. Over the past month, three harrowing incidents in Punjab and Haryana highlight the grave consequences of this reckless tradition. In Charkhi Dabri, Haryana, a 13-year-old girl tragically lost her life while her mother sustained injuries during a wedding procession. In Punjab's Ferozepur, a bride was critically injured when her brother accidentally fired a pistol during the vidai ceremony. An incident in Amritsar left a woman with a bullet wound at a wedding resort.

These senseless tragedies underline the urgent need for decisive action, and the Sarv Jatiya Ahtgama Khap Panchayat's recent decision to ban celebratory firing is a welcome step. The ban, imposed after the teenage girl's death in, reflects the khap's commitment to eliminating social evils. Its resolution includes reporting offenders to the police, imposing fines and even enforcing social boycotts, signalling zero tolerance for this dangerous practice. Crucially, the khap has also announced plans for awareness campaigns about the risks of celebratory firing. Such initiatives are vital for changing public attitudes and dismantling the normalisation of gun use at weddings. Communities across Punjab and Haryana must follow the khap's example, showing a collective resolve to end this deadly custom.

While grassroots efforts are crucial, the responsibility also lies with authorities. The Supreme Court has repeatedly emphasised the illegality and dangers of celebratory firing, calling it a "reckless endangerment of lives" and ruling that such acts should attract charges of culpable homicide. Gun regulations must be strictly enforced and violators should face swift legal action. Additionally, gun licensing norms should mandate education on safety protocols to prevent misuse.

A prominent face among Haryana's backward classes, Ranbir Gangwa wants to improve infrastructure in villages



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

In the past couple of years, Ranbir Gangwa, 60, has emerged as a prominent face of the backward classes in Haryana's ruling BJP. Recently elected to the state Assembly from Barwala constituency in Hisar district, Gangwa has been given the Public Health Engineering and Public Works (Building and Roads) in the Nayab Singh Saini Cabinet.

Gangwa says that his caste Kumhar, which falls in the list of Backward Classes (BC-A) in Haryana, is among the most backward castes in the region. Jangras (Khati) and Sain Samaj (Nai) are the other BC-A communities in the state. Gangwa is known to raise his voice for these communities. As the Public Health Engineering minister, Gangwa says his focus is on improved implementation of the Haryana Swarn Jayanti Mahagram Yojana (SMAGY) under which drinking water and sewerage facilities will be provided in villages in the pattern of towns. "This scheme is meant for villages with a population of 10,000 or more. The government has already identified 144 villages to be covered under this scheme. Work has already been completed in 16 villages, and in five more it will be over by year-end," Gangwa told The Indian Express. "We have laid infrastructure in these villages keeping in view future requirements. Streetlights will also be installed at important places."

Speaking about Haryana's road network, the minister said he will try to ensure its upkeep in the best possible manner. What Gangwa wants is a swift mechanism to resolve people's grievances. "I have asked officers to resolve people's complaints within seven days. We will improve the image of the Public Health Engineering Department and the PWD. We will not tolerate corruption. Ranbir Gangwa: From Hisar Zila Parishad to the Haryana Assembly Ranbir Gangwa joined politics in 2000 when he was elected to the Hisar Zila Parishad. In 2005, he was re-elected and became its vice-chairman. Four years later, former chief minister Om Prakash Chautala fielded him from Nalwa Assembly constituency on an Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) ticket. However, Congress candidate and former minister Sampat Singh won the election in which former chief minister Bhajan Lal's wife Jasma Devi was also in the fray for the Haryana Janhit Congress. Later, Gangwa was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 2010 on an INLD ticket. In 2014, the party fielded him again from the Nalwa Assembly seat and he defeated Sampat Singh and former deputy chief minister Chander Mohan of the Haryana Janhit Congress. After the INLD split in 2018, Gangwa joined the BJP ahead of the 2019 polls. He was elected from Nalwa and subsequently became the deputy speaker in the Assembly. Earlier this year, he was re-elected to the state legislature from Barwala constituency.

Elgaar Parishad case: Mumbai court rejects accused Rona Wilson's interim bail plea to attend niece's wedding

A special court in Mumbai rejected an application filed by activist Rona Wilson, arrested in the Elgaar Parishad case, seeking interim bail to attend his niece's wedding. Wilson, who has been behind bars since 2018, sought temporary bail to attend the wedding ceremony of his cousin's daughter. Wilson sought interim bail from January 6 to January 20. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) had opposed the plea.

Student group to screen banned BBC documentary on PM Modi despite JNU warning



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Despite an official advisory from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) cautioning students against screening the banned BBC documentary 'India: The Modi Question', the event will proceed as planned on the campus on Tuesday night. All India Students' Federation (AISF) has confirmed. On Monday, JNU issued a formal warning, describing the film's screening planned at Ganga Dhaba at 9 pm as "unauthorized and unwarranted" and raising concerns that it could "disturb communal harmony and the peaceful environment" on the campus. The advisory stated: "It has come to the notice that a group of students has released a pamphlet for screening a banned documentary scheduled for tomorrow at 9:00 p.m. at Ganga Dhaba. No prior per-

mission for this event has been taken from the IHA. This is to emphasise that such an unauthorized activity may disturb communal harmony and the peaceful environment of the University Campus." The advisory further warned: "The concerned students/individuals are firmly advised to desist from all such activities failing which strict action will be taken as per University rules. The stakeholders are also advised not to get provoked by this pamphlet, which is unauthorised and unwarranted."

Nevertheless, AISF vice president Santosh Kumar dismissed the university's caution, stating the warning was vague and lacking specificity. "Neither has the name of the film been mentioned in it nor the student group's name," Kumar told He added, "All of India has already seen this film. So, I don't think there is anything wrong with screening it. The screening will go on as scheduled tonight." The BBC documentary has been at the centre of intense debate, given its critical examination of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. Its airing has raised tensions across political divides, with the Indian government blocking its full release. The AISF's decision to screen the film comes in the context of political and social unrest, as the screening is reportedly meant to commemorate the alleged assault on students at Jamia Millia Islamia by Delhi Police during protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in 2019. In January 2023, student protests erupted at JNU and Delhi University for attempting to screen the documentary on campuses.

Sunil Pal, Mushtaq Khan abduction cases: UP Police announce reward of Rs 25,000 for information on main accused

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

The Meerut police in Uttar Pradesh have announced a reward of Rs 25,000 for information on fugitive Lavi Pal, the main accused in the alleged abductions of actor Mushtaq Khan and comedian Sunil Pal on November 20 and December 2, respectively. The development comes even as an undertrial in Meerut jail claimed that he too was abducted by the same gang from Meerut on October 1 last year and released in Bijnor a day later after he paid a ransom of Rs 10 lakh. The inmate claimed he had filed a complaint with the Meerut police after his release but no action was taken on it. "We have received a letter from Vivek Saini, an inmate from the district jail. He has claimed the same gang kidnapped him. He identified the voice which he heard in the audio tape released by kidnapers after they abducted Sunil Pal. I have forwarded the letter to the Kotwali police station and directed them to give their report within three days. Saini has been jailed since last year for smuggling illicit liquor and extorting money by giving false promises of employment to people," Ayush Vikram Singh, Superintendent of Police (SP), Meerut, said.

Saini has also attached his wife Aarti's complaint to the Meerut police to support his claim that he was abducted, the police said. Meanwhile, the police are conducting raids to nab Lavi Pal and four others. "Lavi Pal will face the Gangster Act after being arrested and his property will also be attached. Investigation is underway to find out how he got the money to purchase a new Scorpio car (worth Rs 15-19



lakh) when there is no known source of income," Vipin Tada, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Meerut, said. Sources said that Lavi Pal has reportedly moved an application for anticipatory bail in the Allahabad High Court and the police are trying to ascertain who his lawyers are. Five members of the gang have been arrested so far - Arjun Karnwal, former councillor Sarthak Chaudhary, Azim, Sabiuddin and Shashank. Karnwal was hit by a police bullet allegedly after he tried to escape from custody while being taken for his medical examination on Sunday and has been admitted to the district hospital, SP Singh said. The Bijnor and Meerut police have recovered around Rs 3 lakh from the accused. The mobile phone used in both cases and the car in which the celebrities were taken to Bijnor after being abducted have also been seized.

Great musician, extraordinary human being and biryani lover: How Pune remembers the genius of Zakir Hussain



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

On December 4, tabla legend Ustad Zakir Hussain was to perform with santoor maestro Rahul Sharma at Ganesh Kala Krida Manch in Pune. This was a part of a concert series, organised by Pune-based classical music organisation Savani Events, which brought Hussain and another musician together on a stage and created a pairing that has not happened before, at least not in Pune. It will never happen now. Hussain has played with doyens such as Ustad Rashid Khan, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Pt Shiv Kumar Sharma and Pt Hariprasad Chaurasia, at these concerts over three decades. People waited for the performances, and anticipation was high for the latest edition as well. But, the show did not happen due to Hussain's ill health. The great percussionist promised his disappointed fans in Pune that he would be back and the concert would take place on February 15, 2025. Throughout Monday, as news of Hussain's death was confirmed, music lovers shared their memories of watching him play. Almost everybody, who has ever "met" Hussain through his music, had an anecdote to share. Surendra Mohite, a tabla player and founder of Savani Events, who had known Hussain for more than 40 years, attests to the pull that the legend exercised over the musical firmament in the country and overseas - and how he reciprocated the love.

"Though I was the organiser of the Savani concerts, Zakir bhai was behind the concept and every decision. He enjoyed the musical environment of Pune and sought to enrich it," says Mohite. He talks passionately about the maestro's love for the tabla and his "greatness even in personal life". "Few people know that Zakir bhai was a foodie and eager to try out different kinds of dishes in the cities where he travelled. From 2017, due to his health, he has become careful about what he ate. He didn't eat a lot but ensured that what was on his plate was delicious," says Mohite. Biryani was a favourite of Hussain and, in October, Mohite had to carry the flavorful dish from a Pune establishment to the musician in Mumbai. Then, there was Hussain's attitude to money. "He used to help people financially without even counting the money. I have seen him give money to liftemen and, sometimes, this would be Rs 2,000 and, sometimes, Rs 10,000. He never asked an

organiser for the amount he was going to get," says Mohite.

Pt Suresh Talwalkar, who had first watched Hussain play when the latter was five and he, himself, was eight, says the music world and even people who are not musicians are plunged in mourning. "He had permeated the imaginations of the general people. His art had become so powerful that he benefited other tabla players and tabla karigars as well. Today, even a child who plays the tabla wants to become another Zakir Hussain," he says. Pt Talwalkar has followed Hussain's career and last heard him perform in July and says that there was no change in his urja or energy. "He was a great maharathi of tabla but was among the most humble human beings. There was no sense of competition, envy or ego in him. He was very simple. His greatness was in the kind of person he was - that is why it is difficult to forget the impact of his music," says Pt Talwalkar. Vocalist Rahul Deshpande, who is travelling, received the news with shock. "I am heartbroken. It feels like a profound personal loss, as well as an immense loss to the world and the music community. His departure so early was entirely unexpected. He was not only an extraordinary artist but also an inspiring human being. The way he lived his life and approached his art serves as a powerful lesson for me as an artist. My heartfelt condolences," says Deshpande.

Drugs Control Authority raids quack's clinic, seizes drugs

Hyderabad: The Drugs Control Administration, Telangana, raided a clinic of a quack, Bathula Ramulu, and seized drugs worth Rs 1.5 lakh that were illegally stocked for sale at Jangamaipally Village, Peddamandadi Mandal, Wanaparthy District. During raids, the DCA teams seized nearly 42 varieties of medicines including analgesics, antibiotics including Cefpodoxime, Cefixime, Amoxicillin, steroids, anti-cancer drugs that were stored illegally for sale. The DCA officials also found steroids including Prednisolone, Dexamethasone at the quack's clinic. The DCA Telangana issues drug licences for the stocking and selling of medicines in accordance with the provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act. Stocking drugs for sale without a drug licence is punishable under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, with imprisonment for up to five years. The public may report any suspected manufacturing activity related to drugs, including narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, in residential, commercial, or industrial areas, as well as any other complaints regarding illegal activities concerning medicines, through the Drugs Control Administration, Telangana Toll-Free Number 1800-599-6969, which is operational from 10:30 am to 5 pm pm on all working days, DG, TSDCA, V B Kamalsan Reddy said.

Mumbai wakes to yet another cold morning as mercury drops to 15 degree Celsius



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Data from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) showed its Santacruz station registered 15 degree Celsius, and the Colaba coastal observatory recorded 20 degree Celsius - a degree below normal. Data from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) showed its Santacruz station registered 15 degree Celsius, and the Colaba coastal observatory recorded 20 degree Celsius - a degree below normal. For the second consecutive day, Mumbai woke up to a nip in the air as the minimum temperature remained three degrees below the normal with the city's Santacruz observatory recording 15 degree Celsius on Tuesday morning. Data from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) showed its Santacruz station registered 15 degree Celsius, and the Colaba coastal observatory recorded 20 degree Celsius - a degree below normal. This came a day after the city logged its second coldest day of the season on Monday, at 14 degree Celsius. It was also the city's second coldest day in nine years, when Mumbai recorded 11.4 degree in 2015. Despite cool nights, Mumbai is grappling with above-normal temperatures during the day. On Monday, Mumbai sweltered during the day at nearly 35 degree Celsius - a gap of up to 20 degrees from the night-time temperature - making it the hottest city across Maharashtra. The suburban station at Santacruz recorded a temperature of 34.8 degree Celsius Monday.

Sunil Kamble, Director, IMD Mumbai, told The Indian Express that the city experiences changes in wind patterns thrice within a 24-hour cycle. "Currently, during the afternoons, the westerly winds are setting in late. This results in the spike of day time temperatures. Meanwhile, due to the change in winds, during nights, we are receiving strong northerly winds that lead to fall in temperatures. Owing this time, there is a significant variation in the maximum and minimum temperatures," said Kamble. Kamble added that Mumbai is likely to witness a spike in its minimum temperature after December 19 (Thursday). In its forecast bulletin, IMD Mumbai said Mumbai's minimum temperature is likely to be over 24 degree Celsius by Thursday, marking a significant rise from the ongoing cool spell. The maximum temperature is also likely to hover around 34-35 degrees Celsius until Friday, following which another dip in temperatures is on the cards for Mumbai.

9 years after arrest for supplying explosives to Indian Mujahideen, homoeopathic doctor convicted for being part of terror group

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

A special court for terrorism cases in Bengaluru Monday convicted a homoeopathy doctor, who was arrested in 2015 after being identified as a key supplier of explosives for the Indian Mujahideen, on charges of being part of a terrorist group. Dr Syed Ismail Afaque, now 43, a homoeopathic doctor from Bhatkal, was arrested by the Bengaluru police's Central Crime Branch on January 8, 2015, after being identified by security agencies as the source of supply of ammonium nitrate to Indian Mujahideen. The Indian Mujahideen carried out a series of bomb blasts across India killing over 200 people between 2006 and 2013.

Afaque, a former leader of the Popular Front of India in Bhatkal, was convicted under sections 13 (unlawful activities) and 20 (being part of a terrorist group) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act of 1967, for criminal conspiracy under the Indian Penal Code, and under the Explosives Substances Act, 1908. "Hence, acting under Section 235(2) of the Cr.P.C., Accused No. 1 is convicted for the offences punishable under Sections 120B and 121A of the IPC, Sections 13, 20, 23, and 38 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, and Sections 4 and 5 of the Explosive Substances Act," the special court ruled Monday. Two associates who helped Dr Afaque procure and store explosives for the supply to IM - Abdul Suboor, now 33, and Saddam Hussain, now 45, both from Bhatkal - were convicted for unlawful activities and under the Explosives Act. The three men were, however, acquitted of charges of committing a terrorist act under Section 16 of the UAPA on account of not being directly involved in any blasts. A fourth accused Riyaz Ahmed Sayeedi, now 41, who was accused of being a conduit between IM leaders and the explosives supply group has been acquitted of all charges. The court has posted the case for hearing the sentences for the accused on December 18. The homoeopathic doctor and his associates were arrested after security agencies stepped up the tracking of IM operatives in 2013 following the Dilsukhnagar blast in Hyderabad in which 17 people were killed. This led to the arrest of Yasin Bhatkal, a key accused in the blasts, on the Nepal border and the identification of the explosive supply chain in Bhatkal. As per the chargesheet in the explosives supply case, Pakistan- and Dubai-based IM leaders Riyaz Shahbandari and Iqbal Shahbandari instructed Afaque in 2009 to build an explosives supply chain for the IM, after a police crackdown in the wake of multiple blasts in 2008 forced its top leaders to flee the country. Investigations by the Bengaluru police and other agencies after the arrest of Afaque, Hussain and Suboor revealed that Afaque procured and supplied explosives through his associates to the Indian Mujahideen for the July 13, 2011, blasts in Mumbai, August 1, 2012, blast in Pune and the February 21, 2013, blast at Dilsukhnagar in Hyderabad. "This is the missing link in some of the blasts carried out by the IM where the source of supply was indicated as coastal Karnataka. Many IM men who were arrested stated that they received ammonium nitrate from unidentified persons in the Udipi-Mangalore region but the real identity of the supplier was not known," a police officer said after the January 8, 2015, arrests. An associate of Dr Afaque, Zainulabideen alias Zahid Sheikh, was deported from the UAE in 2015 after he was identified as the person who delivered the explosives for the July 13, 2011, Zaveri Bazaar serial blasts in Mumbai which killed 23 people. He is an accused in the 2011 Mumbai case.

Delhi's air quality in 'severe' category, minimum temp 5.9 degrees Celsius



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

The air quality in the national capital was in the 'severe' category on Tuesday morning with an AQI of 427 while the minimum temperature was 5.9 degrees Celsius, two notches below normal. Out of 35 monitoring stations, 28 recorded air quality in the 'severe' category while some breached the 450 mark, classified as 'severe plus.' The remaining seven stations recorded air quality in the 'very poor' category, according to the Sameer app, which provides hourly data from the Central Pollution Control Board. An AQI of 400 or higher is deemed 'severe' and it can have an adverse effect on both healthy individuals and people with medical conditions. The weather department said, "Mainly calm winds prevailed over Delhi during the past 24 hours,

bringing down visibility from 800 meters in shallow fog at Palam on Monday to 350 meters in moderate fog at Safdarjung on Tuesday morning." It added that moderate fog conditions (visibility between 200m and 500m) are likely to persist in Delhi over the next two days due to the expected prevalence of calm or easterly surface winds.

The maximum and minimum temperatures are expected to settle at 24 degrees Celsius and 5 degrees Celsius, respectively. The Centre's air quality panel for Delhi-NCR on Monday imposed the strictest Stage 4 curbs under the winter air pollution control plan, including a ban on all construction activities, as the region's air quality deteriorated to 'severe' due to unfavourable weather conditions. Stage 4 curbs under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) for winters also include a ban on the entry of polluting trucks carrying non-essential goods into Delhi and mandatory shifting of school classes, except those for X and XII, to hybrid mode. The decision to impose Stage 4 curbs came just hours after the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) implemented restrictive measures under GRAP Stage 3, following Delhi's AQI breaching the 350 mark in the afternoon. During winters, Delhi enforces restrictions under GRAP, which categorises air quality into four stages — Stage I (Poor, AQI 201-300), Stage II (Very Poor, AQI 301-400), Stage III (Severe, AQI 401-450), and Stage IV (Severe Plus, AQI above 450).

'Repealed farm laws in just another form': Punjab rejects draft agri marketing policy

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

The Aam Admi Party government and the Opposition Congress in Punjab found themselves on the same page as they rejected the Centre's 'National Policy Framework on Agricultural Marketing', terming the draft "anti-farmer" and "anti-Punjab". While Punjab Agriculture Minister Gurmeet Singh Khuddian said it could have "serious implications" for the state and its farmers, Leader of the Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa found the draft policy seeking to reintroduce clauses from "the three controversial farm laws" that triggered a year-long farmers' agitation on Delhi's borders in 2020-21. The minister, however, sought consultations with farmers and other stakeholders within a week to analyse the draft policy before replying to the Centre.

Khuddian said, "The procurement system in Punjab is robust. I do not understand the idea behind handing it over to private companies. This will lead to the exploitation of farmers. Earlier an attempt was made to exploit farmers by making three farm laws. They had to be repealed due to the farmers' opposition. They are now bringing those farm laws from back doors." "We will write to the Centre about the rejection after holding meetings with other stakeholders and farmers," Khuddian said after meeting officials of Punjab Agriculture University, Punjab State Farmers Commission and Agriculture Department. "The draft policy is clear the Centre is moving towards privatisation. If implemented, the policy will ruin the existing procurement system in Punjab which has a robust infrastructure of mandis, yards and road network worth hundreds of crores of rupee," Khuddian said.

The minister, however, said the state government would take time to prepare the rejection letter to be sent to the Centre. "We will talk to all stakeholders and farmer leaders. I have called an urgent meeting of farmer leaders on December 19. All farmer organisations are being invited. We will record their statements and send them to the Centre. Since it is a serious issue, we have sought three weeks from the Centre to send our reaction," Khuddian said, adding officials have been asked to give their views on each point of the draft. Khuddian said, "A provision has been made to impose a single tax across the country on the goods sold in mandis, for which a committee of agriculture ministers will be formed on the lines of GST council. But the GST experience is in front of us. The states have suffered huge losses due to this. The Centre used to say that they would give us incentives, but what did we get? The states plead before the central government to get their own money." He said, "It is important to study the draft policy carefully and



consult all stakeholders. If not done so, it can have a serious impact on Punjab and its farmers. The Department of Agriculture has already sent a letter to Dr SK Singh, Deputy Agricultural Marketing Advisor and Convener of the Drafting Committee, Government of India, to give at least three weeks to send our comments on the draft policy."

Noting that "Punjab will suffer the most", the minister said, "We have such a systematic way of procurement. How can we let it go?"

Additional Chief Secretary (Agriculture and Farmers Welfare) Anurag Verma, Chairman of Punjab State Farmers and Farm Laborers Commission Dr Sukhpal Singh and Secretary of Punjab Mandi Board Ramveer were also present in the meeting. In a statement, Bajwa said, "At a time when farmers are already fighting to secure the legalisation of Minimum Support Price (MSP), the BJP government is devising policies that could prove disastrous for agricultural marketing. With this policy, the government appears determined to undermine Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMCs) and pave the way for big corporations in agricultural marketing. Once APMC are weakened, farmers will be left at the mercy of private players and forced to sell their produce at distressed prices. Instead of guaranteeing MSP, the BJP government is pushing a regressive agenda that endangers farmers and agriculture." Bajwa also criticised the Punjab government for its "delayed" response to the draft policy and alleged that the Punjab government waited nearly 20 days before deciding to consult farmers and other stakeholders. "Today, the Punjab agriculture minister convened a meeting on this critical issue. Where was the urgency earlier? This delay reflects the AAP government's lack of sincerity towards farmers' welfare," he added.

SGPC chief Dhama tenders apology over remarks on Jagir Kaur; Punjab' women panel says 'not enough'



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) president Harjinder Singh Dhama Monday appeared before the Punjab State Commission for Women and tendered apology over his alleged derogatory remarks against Bibi Jagir Kaur, his predecessor. Commission's chairperson Raj Lali Gill, however, said she was contemplating further action against the SGPC chief. "He has given a written apology. He has also stated that he will apologise personally to Bibi Jagir Kaur. I told him that abusing someone and then apologising does not mean anything. I have also spoken to Bibi Jagir Kaur. She is very upset with Dhama for the explosives that he used against her. I told him that his remarks were not just against Bibi Jagir Kaur but also against the entire womankind," Gill said. "I told him it is unpardonable. Now, I will call Bibi Jagir Kaur and decide on the next course of action. I will meet her. As I said she is very upset, I will decide on further action against Dhama," she added. Gill had taken suo motu cognisance of the remarks under Section 12 of the Punjab State Women's Commission Act, 2001. She issued a notice to Dhama on Saturday asking him to appear before the Commission on or before December 17 with a written explanation for his comments. Calling for Dhama's removal as SGPC president, Gill had said the Commission was committed to protecting the rights, dignity, and honour of women in Punjab. Gill had also warned that if Dhama failed to appear before the Commission within the stipulated time frame, appropriate legal action would be recommended. Gill had played an audio clip of Dhama's alleged remarks, which has been circulating on social media, during a press briefing. She claimed that Dhama had

made "highly offensive and demeaning" comments about Bibi Jagir Kaur during a telephonic conversation with a journalist. "These remarks were not only defamatory but also disrespectful to women in general," she had said.

After 12 found dead in Georgia restaurant, Punjab Congress MP says all were from state



GNS News Agency, Sept 21

Among the 12 people who were found dead due to suspected carbon monoxide poisoning at a restaurant in Georgia, 11 were Indian nationals. In a press release Monday, the Embassy of India in Tbilisi said 11 Indian nationals died in Gudauri, Georgia.

The bodies were discovered on the second floor of a building housing an Indian food restaurant at a ski resort, according to reports. However, Gurjeet Singh Aujla, Congress MP from Amritsar, said the 12 people who died in Georgia were all from Punjab. "12 Punjabi's have tragically died from suspected carbon monoxide poisoning at ski resort in Gudauri, Georgia. I urge CM @BhagwantMann & @KuldeepSinghAAP NRI Minister to take immediate steps to bring back bodies & support grieving families," Aujla said in a post on X Monday. The Indian Embassy in Tbilisi extended its condolences to the families of those who died.

Cops release sketches of duo who robbed jewellery shop at gunpoint



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

As per the FIR, Oswal and his son operate the Arihant Jewellers located at Borate Wasti on the B T Kawade Road in Mundhwa. On December 8, they opened the shop around 10 am. As per the FIR, Oswal and his son operate the Arihant Jewellers located at Borate Wasti on the B T Kawade Road in Mundhwa. On December 8, they opened the shop around 10 am. Pune city police have released the sketches of two suspects who allegedly robbed a jewellery shop on B T Kawade Road by pointing a gun and spraying pepper spray into the eyes of its 77-year-old owner on December 8. The shop owner, Walchand Ahaldasji Oswal, a resident of New Nana Peth, Pune Camp, had lodged an FIR in this

connection at Mundhwa police station. As per the FIR, Oswal and his son operate the Arihant Jewellers located at Borate Wasti on the B T Kawade Road in Mundhwa. On December 8, they opened the shop around 10 am. After doing business for the whole day, they started winding up their work at the shop. At around 9.30 pm, when Oswal's son went out for a cup of tea and he was busy going through the accounts register book, two persons entered the shop and pulled the shutter down.

One of them pointed a gun at Oswal and sprayed pepper spray into his eyes. The robbers then looted about 35 grams of gold jewellery estimated at Rs 2.45 lakh. As Oswal shouted for help, people in the neighbouring shops rushed to the spot, but the robbers escaped towards B T Kawade Road, the FIR stated. Police have booked the unidentified robbers under Section 309 (6), 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and various sections of the Indian Arms Act. Based on clues obtained from the videos captured by multiple CCTV cameras installed at different locations and the description given by Oswal, police have prepared the sketch of two robbers.

Police released the sketches today and have appealed to the people to contact the Mundhwa police station on 020-29807118 or senior police inspector Neelkant Jagtap at 8007066300, if there is any information about the suspects who are about 25 years of age.

'Putting women on duty — tell all to vote for AAP...': Ex-CM Arvind Kejriwal at Delhi padyatra

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Hundreds of phones went up in the crowded Hari Nagar market as AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal took the stage Monday evening. In the houses above shops, men, women and children leaned out of balconies to hear what the former Delhi Chief Minister said. But his message during the padyatra in the Badarpur constituency was mostly for the women. "I am putting all the women here on duty to tell all the women to vote for AAP. They should tell their men too. I always say women are smarter than men... The men vote for BJP sometimes," he said. AAP, as it announced the scheme to give women Rs 1,000 a month, is aware that women have been among its biggest supporters. A survey conducted by Lokniti-CSDS, on the eve of the 2020 Delhi Assembly polls, showed women were 11 percentage points more likely to have voted for AAP in the Assembly polls than men — 60% as opposed to 49%. Speaking about the scheme, Kejriwal said, "Registration for month-hly transfers of Rs 1,000 to women's bank accounts will start in a few days. After elections, the amount will increase to Rs 2,100 a month... If you vote for BJP, the money will stop."

Badarpur, where Hari Nagar is located, was won by BJP's Ramvir Singh Bidhuri in 2020 by a margin of 3,719 votes. Kejriwal said this difference also determined the work done in the constituency. "I have installed sewer lines in all of Delhi. But Badarpur remains because you voted for BJP last time," Kejriwal said. Bidhuri, who was the Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly, resigned in June after being elected from the South Delhi Lok Sabha seat. AAP has now fielded Ram Singh Netaji, who joined the party in 2020, from the constituency. A two-time independent MLA, Netaji was



a member of the BSP before he joined AAP. In 2015, the AAP won the seat. Its MLA, Narayan Dutt Sharma, secured 27.93% of the vote share or 47,583 votes. For several who came out to hear Kejriwal speak, AAP's free power and water as well as the pitch about better education and healthcare still holds ground. Khushnama, 32, a resident, said she was a beneficiary of the AAP's policies. "We don't have to pay bills for water and electricity because of Kejriwal. He has also made bus travel free for us," she said, adding that her children study in a government school and her family gets free medicines from the mohalla clinic in the area. Shanti Yadav (50), meanwhile, is skeptical of the promise of getting Rs 1,000 per month. "I will only believe it when I see the money in my account," she said. Her biggest grouse is the clogged sewer line near her house. "We have to pay Rs. 100 every week to get the sewer lines cleaned because the government does nothing," she said.

Delhi Assembly polls: BJP to seek party workers' suggestions on candidates today, one list likely by December

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

The Delhi BJP, which is trailing behind the AAP and Congress in naming its candidates for the 70 Assembly constituencies in the Capital, will gather suggestions from its cadre on potential picks Tuesday, it is learnt. This comes as the party's national leadership, which is still in the process of assessing candidates, is likely to take "some time" to declare the names, sources said. As per sources, the 'Rayshu-mari' exercise, or consultation, was initially supposed to feature the seven Delhi MPs "prominently", but will now be presided over by those chosen by the BJP's national leadership after the whip issued by it to all its Lok Sabha MPs to be present in Parliament where the 'One Nation, One Election' Bill is scheduled to be tabled.

"The consultation will take place at each of the 70 Assembly constituencies in the city; a number of party members, from district incharges and office-bearers to others who are part of the organisational set up, will cast their ballots for up to three candidates of their choice," a senior party leader said. "After gathering all these suggestions, they will be conveyed to the national leadership, which will, based on its own assessment of candidates, choose the final names. At least one list of candidates may be issued by the end of December," another leader said. Meanwhile, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said more than 2,000 applications have been received from party workers, while around 500 had come from "esteemed individuals across



different sections of society" seeking a party ticket. Each of the central observers assigned to one of the 14 districts, which the party divides the city into, will hold discussions and gather suggestions for five assembly constituencies, he added. "The overall preference for an individual — no matter whether they are the first, second or third choice — is the key element of the exercise. As long as the name of a potential candidate figures on the chits being deposited in the ballot boxes, whether it is the first or last choice of the voter is immaterial," a source said. "Significant bodies such as the State Election Committee and the Core Committee are expected to be constituted after the conclusion of the Parliament session after which lists of candidates will be announced," the source added.

Solid waste generation data not furnished yet, SC warns Delhi govt of contempt of court action

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

The Supreme Court Monday pulled up the Delhi government for failing to comply with its directions to furnish data on solid waste generation, and warned it of contempt of court action. A bench of Justices A S Oka and A G Masih, while dealing with the issue of Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016, had on November 11 directed "the Chief Secretary of the Delhi government to call a meeting of all stakeholders, including the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, to discuss the issue." It said that "all stakeholders must come together and file a common report before this Court, laying down the timelines for reporting compliance with provisions of the 2016 Rules. This exercise of holding a meeting and coming out with a common response shall be completed by December 13, 2024." Stressing the need for implementation, the court had also asked the Delhi government to "come out with figures for daily generation of solid waste in the city while submitting the report." On Monday, the bench noted that the data had not been furnished yet. "Notwithstanding specific directions given to the Chief Secretary of the Delhi government, compliance has not been reported. Even basic data such as generation of solid waste every day is not placed on record. This aspect will be considered on December 19," the bench said. It further directed the Chief Secretary to remain present before it through video



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conferencing. "He owes an explanation to the court for non-compliance." The bench cautioned that "if by December, the affidavit reporting compliance with the order dated November 11, 2024, is not filed, the court will initiate action under the Contempt of Courts Act against officials concerned of the Delhi government."

'Poora saal waste ho jayega': Delhi teen struggles with drug-resistant TB as key medicines out of stock



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Sixteen-year-old Harshita Singh is worried about her Class XII board exams. A student of Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya in Jahangirpuri, she hasn't attended school for the past three months and missed her pre-boards after she was diagnosed with multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR TB) in July. Sitting on a bed in the family's one-bedroom apartment in Jahangirpuri's D block, Harshita, bundled up in a green jacket and a quilt, and donning a black surgical mask, is on a call with her school teacher. She sobs that her college plans will be affected. "Ek saal poora waste ho jayega... school fees, tuition fees. Sab waste ho gaya (My entire year will go to waste. School and tuition fees have gone down the drain)," she says. MDR TB is caused by germs that are resistant to two or more of the main tuberculosis drugs — isoniazid and rifampin. Medicines are procured by the state programme officer and then distributed to hospital pharmacies and dispensaries, where patients can get them for free.

But this hasn't been the case on the ground for a while now. A government dispensary five minutes from Harshita's home only provides TB medicine once in five days — if they have stock. On Saturday at 9.30 am, her mother Jyoti Singh visited the dispensary but came back empty-handed. "They said the medicines are out of stock. I will ask my husband's brother to buy them from a private pharmacy despite the high price. We have to ensure Harshita's treatment continues," says Jyoti. On Monday, she went to Babu Jagjivan Ram Hospital and got nothing. She then went back to the dispensary and managed to get tablets that would last five days.

delhi tuberculosis teen A government dispensary five minutes from Harshita's home only provides TB medicine once in five days — if they have stock. (Photo by Farhan Sayeed Masoodi) Jyoti adds that in these five months, she got the medicines — Linezolid and Cycloserine — from the dispensary only for a single month. A strip of six tablets of Cycloserine costs Rs 350; Harshita needs to have them twice a day. There has been a shortage in the supply of key TB drugs since 2023, The Indian Express reported on December 6. The key factors behind the shortfall: the nodal procurement agency cancelled nine of its 26 tenders to purchase these drugs due to "administrative reasons"; and, three suppliers were blacklisted for violations ranging from forged bank guarantees to faulty pricing. The Centre has now directed states to procure them locally for three months,

with no restrictions on size or formulation. With help from her math teacher, Harshita moved the Delhi High Court through advocate Sachin Jain on December 9 to explain her ordeal; following this, the court directed the state government to provide her medication. The court also told the Delhi government to expedite the processing of a sputum culture test report, conducted on July 19 this year; if it indicates the necessity of any additional medication for Harshita, the court said it must be provided without undue delay. "Saved up money for college... now it's gone. The family's finances are in bad shape. Their sole breadwinner is Harshita's uncle — her father's elder brother — who is a tailor in Jahangirpuri and earns around Rs 15,000. Jyoti is a homemaker. Her husband, Akhilesh Singh Chandel, who also suffers from TB, used to work in a garment shop but had to stop in 2017 due to his health. The couple has two more daughters, aged 13 and 5 months. "All the money we saved up for Harshita's college is going into her treatment and purchasing expensive medicines," says Chandel. He adds that Harshita wanted to take up a job and pursue college simultaneously to reduce the financial burden on the family. A few weeks ago, the family panicked after she complained of severe pain. Jyoti says, "My daughter developed neurological issues. Doctors at IHBAS said it's a side effect of the medicines." Linezolid was then discontinued. tuberculosis delhi case A few weeks ago, the family panicked after she complained of severe pain. (Photo by Farhan Sayeed Masoodi) At the dispensary, meanwhile, the pharmacist expresses helplessness. "We got the stock in December but it's unavailable again."

She says currently, 12 MDR TB and around 100 TB patients visit the dispensary regularly. "We give them what we have and ask them to purchase the rest outside," she says. "Upar se hi nahi aa raha hai to hum kya karen? (We are not getting stock so what can we do?)" Amid the family's struggles, help has come from Dildeep Singh, Harshita's teacher who helped file the petition. He assisted the family in preparing a chart of medicines received from the dispensary and the hospital since July and the number of times they had to buy it on their own. "I used to teach Harshita... When the Covid pandemic happened, I stayed in touch with some children from the school and tried to help in whatever way possible. However, in this case, more such patients (like Harshita) are suffering which is why I decided to file a case in the court," says Dildeep. Apart from the medication, MDR TB patients get Rs 1,000 after diagnosis and 500 per month from the state government. But Harshita has not been receiving it, claims her family. When contacted for comment about the status of the medication as well as the funds, Director General of Health Services Dr Vandana Bagga and the Delhi government spokesperson did not respond. Sources in the state health department said the availability of TB medicines has been a struggle since the pandemic. "There are not many makers of TB medicines as these are manufactured under strict WHO guidelines. However, since Covid supply has remained erratic," said a source. Back at the family's home, Jyoti gets up to finish her chores. It's been a tough journey, with both her husband and daughter suffering from TB. "I have to take care of them, cook, clean the house... I also get their medicines and take them to the hospital for regular consultations and checkups," she says.

Delhi BJP MP Ramvir Bidhuri urges govt to implement land-pooling, GDA policies

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

land pooling The GDA policy, approved by DDA in 2021, gives a framework for the development of land in green belts and low-density residential areas under the Master Plan of Delhi-2021. Raising concerns over the delay in rolling out the policies, BJP South Delhi MP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri Monday in the Lok Sabha demanded that the government implement the Land Pooling Policy and the Green Development Area (GDA) policy. Speaking during Zero Hour in the House, the BJP MP said the two policies, to be implemented by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), were in the interest of Delhi and its farmers. "I demand that the two long-pending policies, land pooling and GDA... should be implemented. These policies will prevent Delhi from becoming a slum," he said. While the DDA notified the land-pooling policy in 2018, amendments to the DDA Act that would facilitate the implementation of the policy have been pending with the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs since 2022. The policy allows landowners in villages and other areas identified to pool their land for the development and planning of infrastructure.

The GDA policy, approved by DDA in 2021, gives a framework for the development of land in green belts and



low-density residential areas under the Master Plan of Delhi-2021. "It was my duty to raise this issue; it is of immense importance to the residents not only of my constituency but all those who live in Delhi's villages," Bidhuri told The Indian Express. He said he had consistently raised issues related to urban development and the city's countryside when he was Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Assembly prior to being elected as Lok Sabha MP from South Delhi. "Both these issues have the potential of saving Delhi from becoming a slum on the one hand and benefitting development of its villages as well as ensuring that their residents get the rightful price for their land. How and when the government irons out these problems is under its jurisdiction; all I've done is bringing their voice to Parliament," he added.

Allahabad High Court sets aside teacher's suspension: 'DM has no role in schools' supervision'

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Allahabad HC sets aside teacher's suspension: 'DM has no role in schools' supervision The court fixed the next date of hearing on January 7, 2025, and added that all affidavits shall be submitted and a report regarding status of pleadings made by the office by then. THE ALLAHABAD High Court has set aside a teacher's suspension order issued by the District Basic Education Officer, Sambhal. The court observed that the District Magistrate (DM), primarily a Revenue Officer, has no authority to supervise schools established by the Board of Basic Education. The suspension order was issued on the basis of a joint report submitted by the Deputy Collector and the Block Education Officer, following an inspection conducted under the DM's directions.

The court directive came while hearing a petition filed by the teacher, Santosh Kumari, against the suspension order issued on October 25 this year. The court has also directed the Sambhal DM to file a personal affidavit showing cause why he interfered in the functioning and supervision of a basic school established by the Basic Education Board leading to the impugned order on October 25, 2024. The court directed the Basic Siksha Adhikari, Sambhal, to show cause why she permitted the DM to "intermeddle in the management and supervision of a basic school under her control in the district."

The court said in its order passed on December 12, "Until further orders of this court, operation of the impugned order dated 25.10.2024 passed by the District Basic Education Officer, Sambhal, shall remain suspended and the petitioner shall be permitted to discharge her duties and paid salary regularly. Let this order be communicated to the Dis-



The court has also directed the Sambhal DM to file a personal affidavit showing cause why he interfered in the functioning and supervision of a basic school established by the Basic Education Board leading to the impugned order on October 25, 2024.

trict Magistrate, Sambhal and the Basic Siksha Adhikari, Sambhal through the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Sambhal by the Registrar (Compliance) within 24 hours. "The court fixed the next date of hearing on January 7, 2025, and added that all affidavits shall be submitted and a report regarding status of pleadings made by the office by then. The court further stated that "prima facie, the impugned order dated 25.10.2024 is grossly illegal for more than one reason. The foremost is that the inspection of the school was conducted at the dictate and command or rather the officious intervention of the District Magistrate, Sambhal through a Deputy Collector in his establishment, who has no business to inspect basic schools established by the Basic Shiksha Parishad."

After backing Hakim, TMC slams him for his 'Muslim majority' talk



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

In less than 24 hours of backing its senior party leader Firdah Hakim, the TMC on Monday distanced itself from his remarks on "majority Muslims" and said that such statements will be met with 'strict measures'. In a post on X, the Trinamool Congress said: "The All India Trinamool Congress firmly disassociates itself from and strongly condemns the statement made by Firdah Hakim, Minister Independent Charge, at an event." "These comments do not reflect the party's position or ideology. Our commitment to peace, unity, and communal harmony remains unwavering. Any remarks that threaten the social fabric of West Bengal will be met with strict measures," the post read. On Saturday, a video went viral on social media in which the senior TMC leader is allegedly heard speaking: "We are from a community that accounts for 33 per cent of West

Bengal's population. In India, however, we account for 17 per cent (of the total population) and are called a minority community. But we don't think of ourselves as a minority. We believe that if Allah's grace is with us, we can become a bigger majority than the majority one day. "It will be Allah's grace and we will achieve this with our strength. Whenever something happens, our community holds a candlelight march, saying, 'we want justice'. Holding marches for justice won't help, raise your stature to the point where you can deliver justice instead of demanding it," the four-time MLA and KMC Mayor said at an event organised by "Firdah 30" that prepares students for competitive exams.

Hakim's remarks led to wide scale criticisms, especially from the BJP. Opposition BJP leaders termed Hakim's remarks "dangerous" and a bid to convert West Bengal into Bangladesh. Soon after, Hakim, while speaking to mediapersons, asserted that he has a strong belief in strong and patriotic values. Speaking on the sidelines of an event in Kolkata, Hakim said: "I am a diehard secular and patriotic Indian. No one can question my secular values and love for my country. Period." Defending Hakim, TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said the minister's comments were deliberately misinterpreted and twisted. "What he meant was the uplift of a large number of minority community members so they can join mainstream society and contribute to nation-building. Certain elements are trying to give a different spin to his views," Ghosh said. He further asserted that Hakim's secular and liberal values are well-known and actively participates in various religious festivals while promoting communal harmony.

'Maha Kumbh a cultural experience, a melting pot of cultures... one should visit'

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

The theme of the discussion was "Maha Kumbh: A confluence of culture and modern infrastructure", and was presented by the Uttar Pradesh Tourism. Taking part in the discussion, actor Sujoy Prasad Chatterjee said though he is not a believer of God and finds more divinity in Rabindra Tagore's writings, Kumbh mela is important. "There is a cultural inclusion that the Kumbh mela brings. The mela is not only about the yatra now, it is also a tourist attraction. Like Durga Puja in Bengal, the Kumbh mela is highly commercialised now... The mela is a huge opportunity to showcase local artisans, and the respective government needs to understand this." GM Kapur of Kolkata Chapter INTACH said: "The Kumbh Mela is a symbol of unity, inclusion. Pilgrims from diverse backgrounds come together for shared spirituality. The Kumbh Mela is a platform of social and philosophical exchange." Reshmi Chatterjee, a museologist, spoke about the ways the youth could be connected or drawn to the Kumbh Mela. "Kumbh is a pot of Amrit and the youth is very aware of the preservation of the environment or river conservation. We are going back to our roots and it is a platform for bonding. To connect the youths, the schools can hold excursions as it is a wonderful place to learn," Chatterjee added.



Professor and poet Dr Somrita Ganguly said she wants to visit the Kumbh Mela this year. "If not now, then when? As a Bengali, I immediately thought of Durga Puja. How people of all caste, creed, and religion visit pandals and no one is there to check the identity cards. Kumbh is also such a cultural experience. The mela is a melting pot of culture." Sanjay Kothari, founder Just Holidays, spoke on the tourism aspect of the Kumbh Mela. "India is a place of pilgrimage and people who have money are ready to spend it for comfort. This year the Maha Kumbh will witness more tourists."

Sambhal atmosphere worsened due to Friday prayer speeches, says Yogi

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Defending the survey at Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday said in the state Assembly that the atmosphere deteriorated after two days of the court-ordered exercise due to the nature of speeches given during Friday prayers. Adityanath said that Baburama, memoirs of the founder of the Mughal Empire Babur, also mentions that the structure was built by demolishing the Harihar temple. Four people were killed after violence erupted in Sambhal on November 24 during protests against the survey of the mosque which was ordered by a court after a petition claimed that it was the site of the Harihar temple and sought permission to worship there.

"They (Opposition) are trying to cover up the truth, but no one can hide the Sun, moon and truth for long. The truth will soon come out," Adityanath said while responding to the demand of Leader of Opposition (LoP) Mata Prasad Pandey and other Samajwadi Party (SP) members for a discussion on the recent violence in Sambhal and Bahraich along with similar incidents. The CM's remarks came as the Sambhal violence issue rocked the opening day of the winter session, with the Opposition alleging a "conspiracy" by the administration behind the violence. However, Adityanath claimed that since 1947, 209 persons belonging to a particular community had been killed in different incidents of communal violence in Sambhal. Demanding a debate over the issue, Samajwadi Party legislators entered the well of the house raising slogans against the government as soon as the proceedings began. The entire Question Hour was washed out as the House was adjourned for nearly an hour following these protests.

The day began with Samajwadi Party MLAs first protesting outside the Assembly with pla-cards, alleging a conspiracy by the BJP government in the state behind Sambhal violence, apart from highlighting other issues. As soon as the proceedings began, LoP Pandey as well as Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Aradhana Mishra requested that other proceedings be stopped and a discussion should first take place on the recent violence in Sambhal as well as Bahraich. As speaker Satish Mahana turned down the request by pointing out that due time would be given to them after the question hour, SP MLAs entered the well of the House. Despite repeated requests by Mahana, as SP legislators refused to budge and the House was adjourned for one hour, till 12:20 pm. As soon as the house met again, SP MLAs again raised the issue of discussion on Sambhal and Bahraich violence. Sambhal MLA Iqbal Mahmood spoke first and alleged that the November 24 violence was incited as slogans of "Jai Shri Ram" were raised after completion of the survey. Adityanath later rejected the MLA's allegations.

Mahmood, a 7-time MLA, also alleged that youth were killed in police firing and demanded that a vidhan sabbha committee be formed to look into the incident. He also alleged that "new officials" were posted in Sambhal around the time of the incident and that the violence was "orchestrated" to divert attention from the "manipulation of votes" in the Kundarki Assembly constituency. It may be mentioned that Kundarki was a sitting seat of the SP, which lost it to the BJP as the results were announced on November 23. Replying to the allegations, Adityanath said that NCRB data shows that there has been a 99 per cent decrease in



incidents of communal violence in Uttar Pradesh since 2017. He claimed that between 2012 and 2017, there were 815 riots in which 192 people were killed. Alleging that the Opposition was "hiding facts to mislead", the CM said that the survey was done on the basis of a court directive. Emphasising that action is taken based on proof and no innocent person would bear the brunt, Adityanath warned that those involved in stone pelting would be dealt with strictly. He urged the Opposition leaders to read the original Constitution, claiming that they would not find words such as "Dharma Nirpekshita, Pantha Nirpekshita or Samajwad" in it. The CM added that be it the Sambhal incident or the (BJP's) victory in Kundarki, the public has "seen the truth behind the false claims of the Opposition."

Security vulnerabilities hinder AI adoption in India, reveals Deloitte report

New Delhi: As many as 92 per cent of Indian executives view security vulnerabilities as the foremost challenge to responsible AI adoption, highlighting a pressing need for robust governance frameworks to foster trust and mitigate risks in an increasingly AI-driven landscape, according to a recent report by Deloitte. The 'AI at a crossroads: Building trust as the path to scale' report by Deloitte Asia Pacific, which surveyed 900 senior leaders across 13 markets revealed that while enthusiasm for AI is high, significant barriers remain.

"...about 92 per cent of Indian executives identify security vulnerabilities, including hacking and cyber threats, as a primary concern in AI adoption, while 91 per cent express significant concern about the privacy risks related to sensitive data in AI usage. Additionally, 89 per cent highlight complexities resulting from regulatory uncertainties, citing evolving compliance requirements as a challenge towards AI integration," it said. The urgency for effective AI governance is further underscored by the alarming statistic that over half of technology workers do not believe their workplaces are equipped to address AI-related risks. "For Indian organisations, the imperative must be to integrate AI seamlessly into existing systems, addressing both technical and knowledge gaps to ensure sustainable adoption... the journey requires continuous upskilling and cross-functional collaboration."

Judge rejects Trump's bid to dismiss hush money conviction because of Supreme Court immunity ruling



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

A judge on Monday rejected President-elect Donald Trump's bid to have his hush money conviction dismissed because of the U.S. Supreme Court's recent ruling on presidential immunity. But the case's overall future remains unclear. Manhattan Judge Juan M. Merchan's decision eliminates one potential off-ramp from the case ahead of Trump's return to office next month, but his lawyers have raised other arguments for dismissal. Prosecutors have said there should be some accommodation for his upcoming presidency, but they insist the conviction should stand. A jury convicted Trump in May of 34 counts of falsifying business records

related to a \$130,000 hush money payment to porn actor Stormy Daniels in 2016. Trump denies wrongdoing.

The allegations involved a scheme to hide a hush money payment to porn actor Stormy Daniels during the final days of Trump's 2016 presidential campaign to silence her claims that they'd had sex years earlier, which he denies. A month after the verdict, the Supreme Court ruled that ex-presidents can't be prosecuted for official acts — things they did in the course of running the country — and that prosecutors can't cite those actions to bolster a case centered on purely personal, unofficial conduct. In Monday's ruling, Merchan denied the bulk of Trump's claims that some of prosecutors' evidence related to official acts, and so implicated immunity protections. The judge said that even if he found that some evidence related to official conduct, he'd still find that prosecutors' decision to use "these acts as evidence of the decidedly personal acts of falsifying business records poses no danger of intrusion on the authority and function of the Executive Branch." Trump's lawyers cited the ruling to argue that the hush money jury got some improper evidence, such as Trump's presidential financial disclosure form, testimony from some White House aides and social media posts made while he was in office. Prosecutors disagreed and said the evidence in question was only "a sliver" of their case.

China executes former official Li Jianping involved in corruption case

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

China executed Li Jianping, a former official in the north Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, who was convicted in the largest-ever corruption case in the country totalling to more than \$421 million. The death sentence of Li, former secretary of the ruling Communist Party working committee of the Hohhot economic and technological development zone, was initially issued in September 2022 and upheld on appeal in August 2024. Tuesday's (December 17, 2024) execution followed the approval of the Supreme People's Court and was carried out by a court in Inner Mongolia, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. "Li (64) was found guilty by an intermediate court earlier of embezzling a staggering three billion yuan (more than \$421 million) in illegal gains — the largest sum involved in a single corruption case in China's history," according to earlier reports in the Chinese official media.

Since he came to power in 2012, Chinese President Xi Jinping made the anti-corruption campaign the main plank of his governance model. Official media accounts say that more than a million party officials, including two Defence Ministers and dozens of military officials, were punished and prosecuted in the campaign. In his speech delivered at the plenary session of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) in January this year, contents of which were released for the first time on Sunday (December 15, 2024) by party theoretical magazine Qiushi, 71-year-



old Xi has called on cadres to confront corruption head-on so that interest groups cannot prey on the ruling Communist Party. Mr. Xi said all party members must deeply promote the party's self-revolution referring mainly to the fight against corruption. Significantly, the number of high-ranking officials undergoing punishments for corruption is on the increase despite the relentless campaign. Last year, the CCDI announced that it had launched investigations into a record number of 45 "tigers" or high-ranking cadres, but this year the total has already reached 54, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported on Monday (December 16, 2024). Mr. Xi's anti-graft campaign in the military has drawn global attention, which his critics say enabled him to consolidate his hold on power.

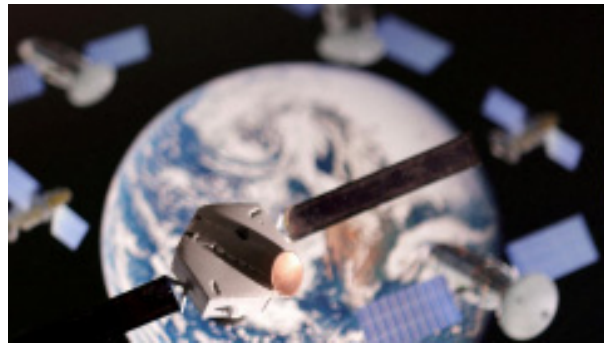
Japan, India startups to study laser-equipped satellite to tackle space debris

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Space startups in Japan and India said that they had agreed to jointly study using laser-equipped satellites to remove debris from orbit, an experimental approach to the increasingly imminent problem of orbital congestion. Tokyo-based Orbital Lasers and Indian robotics company Inspecity said they would study business opportunities for in-space services such as de-orbiting a defunct satellite and extending a spacecraft's life.

Carved out from Japanese satellite giant SKY Perfect JSAT this year, Orbital Lasers is building a system that will use laser energy to stop the rotation of space junk by vaporising small parts of its surface, making it easier for a servicing spacecraft to rendezvous. Orbital Lasers plans to demonstrate the system in space and supply it to operators after 2027, said Aditya Baraskar, the company's global business lead. It can be mounted on Inspecity satellites if the companies clear regulatory requirements in India and Japan, Baraskar added. The companies said they had signed a preliminary agreement to initiate the collaboration. Inspecity was founded in 2022 and raised \$1.5 million last year, while Orbital Lasers has raised 900 million yen (\$5.8 million) since it was established in January.

A United Nations panel on space traffic coordination in late October said that urgent action was necessary to track and manage objects in low Earth orbit because of the rapid increase in satellites and space junk. "There are already more than 100 companies in the space servicing market as satellite constellations expand," Nobu Okada,



chief executive of Japanese debris mitigation pioneer Astroscale, said earlier this year. The project is the latest example of collaboration between Japan and India, whose governments are working together on the joint Lunar Polar Exploration (LUPEX) mission, which could launch as early as 2026. Indian rocket maker Skyroot and satellite builder HEX20 are also working with Japanese moon exploration firm Inspecity on a future lunar orbiter mission. "The two countries' commercial space tie-ups have been driven by Japanese satellite data solutions for India's disaster management and agriculture, and can expand to more fields such as manufacturing," said Masayasu Ishida, chief executive of Tokyo-based nonprofit SPACETIDE, which has hosted space business conferences since 2015. "The key is finding where and how to build complementary relationships that align with national policies such as Make in India, which aims to boost local production," Mr. Ishida said.

Bomb kills Russia's top nuclear protection General Igor Kirillov

GNS News Agency, Sept 21

A bomb hidden in an electric scooter killed a senior Russian general in charge of nuclear protection forces in Moscow on Tuesday, Russia's investigative committee said. The head of Russia's Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Protection Troops, Lieutenant General Igor Kirillov, was murdered outside an apartment block on Ryazansky Prospekt, according to information in a Reuters report. "Igor Kirillov, the head of the radiation, chemical and biological protection forces of the armed forces of the Russian Federation, and his assistant were killed," the report quoted the investigative committee. Kirillov was sentenced in absentia by a Ukrainian court Monday for the use of banned chemical weapons during Russia's military operation in Ukraine that started in Feb. 2022. Russia-Ukraine conflict During the almost 3-year operation, Russia has made small-but-steady territorial gains to the nearly one-fifth of Ukraine it already controls. In other news, US President-elect Donald Trump stated that Ukraine must come to an agreement to terminate the Russian invasion and minimise the worth of captured area, in the latest indication that he would push for a solution that codifies Russian territorial gains.

"He should be prepared to make a deal, that's all," Trump said of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, while speaking on Monday at Mar-a-Lago, his Florida club. "Got to be a deal. Too many people being killed." Trump dismissed Ukrainian chances of regaining captured land and said it would take a century to restore Ukrainian cities de-

stroyed by the Russian assault. He once more attacked the use of US weaponry to hit targets farther into Russian territory, a strategy that was approved by the present White House. If conflict persists, he is certain to object to expanding that power. "It's nice to say they want their land back, but the cities are largely destroyed," he said. "You look at some of those cities, and not one building standing. So you know, when you say, 'Take over the country,' take over what? Take over what? That's a 110-year rebuild." The remarks are the most recent indication that US aid to Ukraine will be drastically reduced, if not discontinued, following Trump's election. Trump criticised President Joe Biden's administration for allowing Ukraine to use Army Tactical Missile Systems, or ATACMS, to strike back deeper into Russian territory, saying multiple times on Monday that he believes Russian leader Vladimir Putin would not have invaded if he were still in power. The range of the missiles is around 300 kilometres, or 190 miles. The Biden administration reaffirmed that Zelenskiy is ultimately responsible for determining when and how he is willing to participate in negotiations, as reported by The Business Standard.

Also read: Ukrainian court jails woman who wrote pro-Moscow reports to 14 years in jail "Nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine. We're not going to have talks about them without them involved. We're not going to force their hand in terms of what their next steps might be," John Kirby, a spokesman for Biden's National Security Council, said Monday.

Drone detectors in New Jersey have found 'little or no evidence' of wrongdoing, governor says



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Drone-detecting devices deployed in New Jersey in the past week have found "little to no evidence" of anything nefarious or threatening, Governor Phil Murphy said Monday (December 16, 2024) as calls grew for action to address the mysterious nighttime sightings of suspected unmanned flights across the northeastern U.S. Mr. Murphy told reporters in Trenton that there were 12 sightings of suspected drones in the state on Saturday (December 14, 2024) and one on Sunday (December 15, 2024). He declined to go into detail about the detection equipment but said it was powerful enough to disable the drones, although he added that is not legal on U.S. soil.

Mr. Murphy, a Democrat, echoed calls by state officials elsewhere for Congress to allow them to deal with drones. Nearly all the power now rests with the federal government. "It is extraordinary to me that, that a nation as great as ours and as powerful as ours has the deficiencies that we have now seen in living color as it relates to drone incursions," Mr. Murphy said. Federal officials, including Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, have repeatedly said there are no signs that any drone operators have shown bad intent, nor is there evidence of foreign involvement. "There's no question that people are seeing drones," Mayorkas told ABC's George Stephanopoulos on Sunday (December 15, 2024). "But I want to assure the American public that we are on it. We are working in close coordination with state and local authorities." But that hasn't reassured everyone. Conspiracy theories about foreign actors, the U.S. government and the "deep state," abound online, while elected officials concerned about threats to military bases, airports and other locations have increased their calls for federal officials to act.

The skeptics include President-elect Donald Trump, who suggested Monday (December 16, 2024) that "the government knows what is happening." "Our military knows and our president knows and for some reason, they want to keep people in suspense," Mr. Trump said. He refused to say whether he had been briefed on the drone sightings. New Jersey Senator Andy Kim, a Democrat, told The Associated Press that officials could do a better job helping the public to understand what is going on, especially when people wrongly conclude they are seeing unmanned aircraft. "What the public could use is like walking through that rather than just, you know, as a statement that says nothing, nothing to be concerned about," he said. "I think it's reached a level of just public attention that some greater level of depth is necessary." Mr. Kim said he had heard no supporting evidence for the president-elect's statement Monday (December 16, 2024) that information is being withheld and that a lack of faith in institutions is playing a key part in the saga.

"Nothing that I'm seeing, nothing that I've engaged in

gives me any impression of that nature. But like, I get it, some people won't believe me, right? Because that's the level of distrust that we face." Over the past two days, New York and Pennsylvania officials have also requested drone-detecting equipment from federal officials. "It is imperative our communities in Pennsylvania are protected and questions on the presence of these drones are answered," U.S. Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, a Pennsylvania Republican, wrote in a letter to Mayorkas on Monday (December 16, 2024). "State-of-the-art radar systems will provide insights into where these drones are deploying from and what the motives for their flights may be." After reports of drones in Connecticut, state police said they were monitoring drone activity and state officials said analysts were comparing reported sightings with federal flight data. "One of the drone sightings had the word Frontier on the back, that was an airline," Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont, a Democrat, said Monday (December 16, 2024). "But some of them are big and unexplained and we're going to get to the bottom of this. Right now, what we do is we make sure that our security and airports are secure."

At a media briefing on Monday (December 16, 2024), the Pentagon's press secretary, Air Force Major General Pat Ryder, said defence officials have seen no indication that the drones flying over multiple locations in the U.S. are being controlled by a foreign country. According to the Federal Aviation Administration, he said, there are approximately 1 million registered drones in the U.S. and about 8,000 are flying any given day. Mr. Ryder said that while military bases overseas can use surveillance methods that quickly address the origin of drones, that power is limited in U.S. airspace because of domestic surveillance laws. He said most drones are operated through either radio frequency transmissions or satellite-guided GPS navigation, which can provide information about the operators. If they're not controlled by those methods, that's another clue, he said.

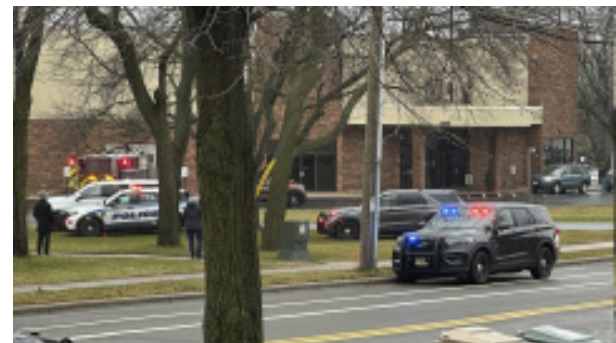
"So I'm kind of talking around it because I don't necessarily want to get into talking classified capabilities, but the bottom line is that all of that gives us an idea that, hey, these are not foreign origin," Mr. Ryder said. Christopher Stadulis, a retired New York City firefighter and drone hobbyist, said he's seen clusters of drones near his home in Clinton Township, New Jersey. He said the lights he has seen at night are different from those used by commercial airlines, and the drones he has seen are very large. "When you look at what I'm seeing with the naked eye, you can see it's not a normal aircraft," he said in a recent interview. "This and we don't have this much traffic, you know, usually on any given night in this area. So it seems like definitely some of them are aircraft that we can't explain what they are." More suspected drone sightings over the weekend led to a temporary airspace shutdown at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, Ohio, for about four hours late Friday (December 13, 2024) into Saturday (December 14, 2024), and the arrests of two men in Boston accused of flying a drone "dangerously close" to Logan International Airport. U.S. Representative Josh Gottheimer, a New Jersey Democrat, said Monday (December 16, 2024) that he is introducing legislation calling on federal officials to provide public briefings on what they know about the drones and calling for a drone air traffic control system similar to those used for planes. He also wants law enforcement to be given access to drone detectors and the authority to "take out drones that shouldn't be in the air." "I believe the people I represent and, as I've been saying for some time now, the people in New Jersey and around the country deserve answers," he said in a statement. "They deserve transparency from their government."

Three dead, several injured in shooting at Christian school in Wisconsin

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

A student opened fire at a private Christian school on Monday morning in Wisconsin, killing two people in the final week before Christmas break. The shooter also died, police said. Madison Police Chief Shon Barnes offered no details about the victims but said other people were wounded at Abundant Life Christian School, a K-12 school with about 390 students. Police previously said a total of five people had died but corrected the statement. "I'm feeling a little dismayed now, so close to Christmas," he said. "Every child, every person in that building is a victim and will be a victim forever. ... We need to figure out and try to piece together what exactly happened." Barnes said police were alerted shortly before 11 a.m. and did not fire their weapons when they rushed into the building. Investigators believe the shooter used a 9mm pistol, a law enforcement official told The Associated Press. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to discuss the ongoing investigation. "I'm not aware that the school had metal detectors nor should schools have metal detectors. It's a safe space," Barnes said. Police blocked off roads around the school. Federal agents were at the scene to assist local law enforcement.

"We are praying for the kids, educators, and entire Abundant Life school community as we await more information and are grateful for the first responders who are working quickly to respond," Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers said in a statement. In a statement, the White House said President Joe Biden has been briefed on the shooting and officials were in touch with local authorities to provide support. Abundant Life Christian School, which is nonde-



nominal, asked for prayers in a brief Facebook post. Bethany Highman, the mother of a student, rushed to the school after hearing about the shooting and learned over FaceTime that her daughter was OK. "As soon as it happened, your world stops for a minute. Nothing else matters," Highman said. "There's nobody around you. You just bolt for the door and try to do everything you can as a parent to be with your kids." It was the latest among dozens of school shootings across the U.S. in recent years, including especially deadly ones in Newtown, Connecticut; Parkland, Florida; and Uvalde, Texas. The shootings have set off fervent debates about gun control and frayed the nerves of parents whose children are growing up accustomed to doing active shooter drills in their classrooms. But school shootings have done little to move the needle on national gun laws. Firearms were the leading cause of death among children in 2020 and 2021, according to KFF, a nonprofit that researches health care issues.

Bomb kills Russia's top nuclear protection General Igor Kirillov

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

A bomb hidden in an electric scooter killed a senior Russian general in charge of nuclear protection forces in Moscow on Tuesday, Russia's investigative committee said. The head of Russia's Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Protection Troops, Lieutenant General Igor Kirillov, was murdered outside an apartment block on Ryazansky Prospekt, according to information in a Reuters report. "Igor Kirillov, the head of the radiation, chemical and biological protection forces of the armed forces of the Russian Federation, and his assistant were killed," the report quoted the investigative committee. During the almost 3-year operation, Russia has made small-but-steady territorial gains to the nearly one-fifth of Ukraine it already controls. In other news, US President-elect Donald Trump stated that Ukraine must come to an agreement to terminate the Russian invasion and minimise the worth of captured area, in the latest indication that he would push for a solution that codifies Russian territorial gains. "He should be prepared to make a deal, that's all," Trump said of Ukrainian President Volodymyr

Zelenskiy, while speaking on Monday at Mar-a-Lago, his Florida club. "Got to be a deal. Too many people being killed." Trump dismissed Ukrainian chances of regaining captured land and said it would take a century to restore Ukrainian cities destroyed by the Russian assault. He once more attacked the use of US weaponry to hit targets farther into Russian territory, a strategy that was approved by the present White House. If conflict persists, he is certain to object to expanding that power. "It's nice to say they want their land back, but the cities are largely destroyed," he said. "You look at some of those cities, and not one building standing. So you know, when you say, 'Take over the country,' take over what? Take over what? That's a 110-year rebuild." The remarks are the most recent indication that US aid to Ukraine will be drastically reduced, if not discontinued, following Trump's election. Trump criticised President Joe Biden's administration for allowing Ukraine to use Army Tactical Missile Systems, or ATACMS, to strike back deeper into Russian territory, saying multiple times on Monday that he believes Russian leader Vladimir Putin would not have invaded if he were still in power.

Iron and steel imports fall 28% in Nov amid MSME concerns over port blockades



GNS News Agency, Dec 19

India's iron and steel imports fell sharply by 28 per cent in November, amid concerns from Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) over access to cheaper imported steel due to delays in the issuance of No Objection Certificates (NOCs) by the Steel Ministry for steel consignments at ports, official data released on Monday showed. Iron and steel imports fell to \$1.7 billion in November this year, compared to \$2.4 billion last year, as large steel companies ramped up lobbying efforts to restrict the entry of imported steel by seeking the imposition of safeguard duties. However, MSMEs have warned that such measures would have a detrimental impact on small businesses and exports.

"There is a request from the Steel Ministry to impose safeguard duties on steel. However, an investigation by the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) is underway. When DGTR investigates, they examine the entire value chain. We are considering not only Hot Rolled (HR) and Cold Rolled (CR) steel imports but also the requirements of downstream industries," Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said at a press briefing on Monday. Another official, seeking anonymity, said that the conflict between MSMEs and large steel producers was resolved last time around when the producers agreed to provide steel to the MSMEs at fair price. "A similar arrangement can be worked at. But the producers did not adhere to the arrangement last time around," the official said.

The Ministry of Steel had issued a Quality Control Order (QCO), mandating that only quality steel conforming to relevant Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) norms, as notified under the QCO, is permitted, while sub-standard steel products are barred. However, some steel grades not covered under BIS standards can be imported with a No

Objection Certificate (NOC) from the Ministry of Steel. But NOCs have not been issued for the past few months as the Quality Control (QC) Committee, which typically meets twice a month, has not convened recently. Meanwhile, Union Minister of Heavy Industries, H.D. Kumaraswamy, in response to a Lok Sabha question, said steel imports from China had surged by 80 per cent to 16.1 lakh tonnes between January and July this year, compared to 9 lakh tonnes during the same period last year. Citing Joint Plant Committee (JPC) data, the minister highlighted that imports have been rising over the past three years. Imports of finished steel increased from 4.67 million tonnes in 2021-22 to 8.32 million tonnes in 2023-24, the data showed. Kumaraswamy further noted that while India remains the world's second-largest crude steel producer, with 144.3 million tonnes of crude steel produced in FY24, the country was a net importer of finished steel during 2023-24, exporting 7.49 million tonnes while importing 8.32 million tonnes.

The government's Steel Import Monitoring System (SIMS) requires detailed declarations before goods arrive, while QCOs mandate that specific steel products be registered with the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), said Ajay Srivastava, founder of the think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI). "However, customs authorities have applied these requirements indiscriminately, demanding BIS NOCs even for items outside the scope of QCOs. This has caused confusion, delays, and increased costs, as BIS rarely issues NOCs promptly. Furthermore, technical glitches in the Steel Ministry's SIMS registration system have exacerbated clearance delays," GTRI stated.

The think tank added that while policies aimed at protecting domestic steelmakers, such as import restrictions and quality controls, are well-intentioned, they have placed a significant burden on industries reliant on imported steel. Hand Tool Association Chairman S C Ralhan told PTI that the MSME engineering exporters are already facing problems on the liquidity front and high prices of steel in the domestic market. "Increasing prices of steel by domestic steel makers are hurting us and now we have seen in the media reports that the government is planning to impose a 25 per cent safeguard duty. This will severely impact MSME exporters," Ralhan said. Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) Director General Ajay Sahai said that if the government imposes additional duty, they should ensure that the domestic steel companies do not increase the prices of the inputs. "Increase in input prices will impact exports of value-added steel products," Sahai told.

Loan write-offs help banks to show lower NPAs

A massive loan write-off of Rs 9.9 lakh crore in the last five financial years has helped banks to show a big decline in non-performing assets (NPAs). Aided by this write-off, banks reported a 12-year low NPA ratio of 2.8 per cent of advances by March 2024. Total recoveries from write-offs were only 18.70 per cent at Rs 1,85,241 crore in the last five years, according to the Reserve Bank of India data. This means banks were not able to recover 81.30 per cent, or over Rs 8 lakh crore of the loan written off in five years, despite adopting various recovery measures.

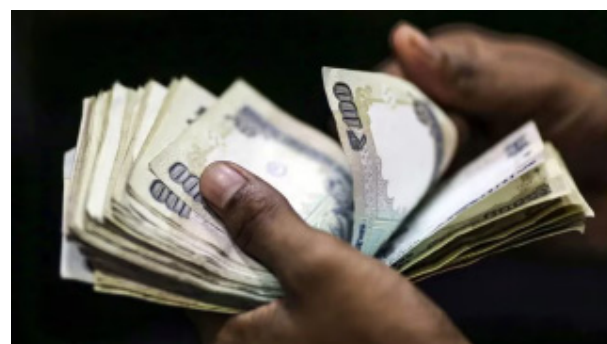
These loan accounts were mostly wilful defaults with promoters and directors of some of the companies even fleeing the country. As gross NPAs reported by commercial banks were Rs 4.80 lakh crore as of March 2024, the total NPAs would be over Rs 12.80 lakh crore including the loans written off. The Finance Ministry last week said that the gross NPA ratio for scheduled commercial banks witnessed a significant reduction to 2.67 per cent in June 2024 from 11.18 per cent in March 2018. It was 11.5 per cent in March 2018 and 9.3 per cent (Rs 9.4 lakh crore) in March 2019. Banks were able to recover to recover Rs 46,036 crore in 2023-24 from loans written off earlier as against Rs 45,551 crore last year. Total loan write-off was Rs 1.70 lakh crore in FY24, Rs 2.08 lakh crore in FY23, Rs 1.74 lakh crore in FY22, Rs 2.02 lakh crore in FY21 and Rs 2.34 lakh crore in FY20, RBI data from an RTI reply shows. "Comprehensive steps have been taken by the Government and the RBI to recover and reduce NPAs from defaulters, which has enabled an aggregate recovery of Rs 6,82,286 crore by SCBs during the last five financial years," Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said in the Lok Sabha. "Such write-off does not result in waiver of liabilities of borrowers and therefore, it does not benefit the borrower. The borrowers continue to be liable for repayment and banks continue to pursue recovery actions initiated in these accounts through various recovery mechanisms available to them," Chaudhary said. Once a loan is written off by a bank, it goes out from the asset book of the bank. The bank writes off a loan after the borrower has defaulted on the loan repayment and there is a very low chance of recovery. The lender then moves the defaulted loan, or NPA, out of the assets side and reports the amount as loss. "After write-off, banks are supposed to continue their efforts to recover the loan using various options. They have to make provisioning also. The tax liability will also come down as the written off amount is reduced from the profit," said a banking source.

A loan becomes an NPA when the principal or interest payment remains overdue for 90 days. Public sector banks accounted for nearly 63 per cent of the write-off exercise. "A

Sebi board may overhaul norms on SME IPOs, insider trading

Sebi board may overhaul norms on SME IPOs, insider trading. The regulator may allow an SME company to float an IPO only if the issue size is over Rs 10 crore and the operating profit is Rs 3 crore for at least any 2 out of 3 financial years preceding the IPO application. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), in its board meeting scheduled on December 18, is likely to discuss and approve various norms, including those relating to initial public offer (IPO) by small and medium enterprises (SME), unpublished price sensitive information (UPSI) and regulatory framework for angel funds. The market regulator may raise the minimum application size for an SME IPO to Rs 2-4 lakh from the present Rs 1 lakh. The higher size will limit the participation of retail investors, who have been increasingly applying for such IPOs. The SME IPOs have witnessed a surge in recent years particularly from 2022-23 onwards. Since the establishment of SME platforms, FY 2023-24 witnessed the highest number of SME public issues and highest SME fund raising with 196 IPOs tapping the market to mobilize more than Rs 6,000 crore. In FY2024-25 (till October 15, 2024), more than Rs 5,700 crore has been raised through 159 SME IPOs.

With an increase in the number of SME issues, the rise in investor participation in such offerings have also seen



major portion of this write-offs is due to technical/prudential/ advances under collection. The banks retain the right to recover from the borrowers in all such cases," the RBI said in an RTI reply earlier this year. The nature and purpose of write-offs by banks is governed by several considerations. Once an account becomes NPA, prudential norms require the creation of provisions and on the basis of the aging of the NPA as well as the realisable value of security, these provisions get augmented and reach a stage where the provisions equal the outstanding in the account.

"So, once these accounts become fully provided, the bank is carrying an asset on one side and an equal provision on the other side. So, as a part of balance sheet management and for tax efficiency, the banks as per their Board approved policy resort to what is called technical write-off," the RBI said in the RTI reply. "Write-offs by banks is purely an accounting entry where an on-balance sheet item moves into off-balance sheet items and they are parked in typically what is known as 'Advances Under Collection' and there are specialised teams which follow-up for the recovery thereafter," it said. The borrower's liability to repay or the bank's right to recover is not diminished in any manner, the RBI said. According to the RBI, this is purely a balance sheet management. "Banks and regulators focus on such accounts that are parked in a special account to ensure higher recoveries because such recoveries go into aiding the P&L account and then contribute to the financial wellbeing of the bank," it said. "The percentage of recovery has to be seen in the context of the age of NPA and the availability or absence of security thereof. Bank management is expected to have approved policies for write-off and follow-up aimed at maximising recovery," it said. "The recovery process can take years. It's spread over many years," said an official of a nationalised bank. While many big and small defaulted loans were written off by banks over the years, the identity of these borrowers was never revealed by banks.

a jump, causing concerns for SEBI. The applicant-to-allotted investor ratio has surged from 4 times in FY22 to 46 times in FY23 and 245 times in FY24. Sebi may increase the requirement of minimum allottees for an SME IPO to 200 for such public issue to be successful, from the present 50 allottees. In order to ensure that a promoter of an SME company continues to have certain skin in the game, SEBI may increase the lock-in on minimum promoter contribution (MPC) in SME IPO to 5 years from the existing three years. The regulator may allow an SME company to float an IPO only if the issue size is over Rs 10 crore and the operating profit is Rs 3 crore for at least any 2 out of 3 financial years preceding the IPO application. Sebi board may also review the definition of Unpublished Price Sensitive Information (UPSI) to bring about regulatory clarity, certainty and uniformity in compliance for the listed companies. UPSI refers to any information, relating to a company or its securities, directly or indirectly, that is not generally available. On becoming generally available, UPSI is likely to materially affect the price of the securities. The regulator may include restructuring/one-time settlement in relation to loans, initiation of forensic audit, action initiated by any enforcement authority against the listed company or senior management.

Diabetics, lets find out if you should have paneer ka dodda



Is there any truth to this claim?

Paneer dodda or paneer ke phool, also called Indian rennet or Withania Somnifera, is a traditional herbal remedy used in Ayurvedic medicine for managing diabetes. "From a doctor's perspective, these remedies may offer some benefits for diabetics, but they should be approached with caution," said Dr Haricharan G, senior consultant physician, HoD, internal medicine, Gleneagles Hospitals, Lakdi Ka Pul, Hyderabad. Elaborating on the connection, he added: "Paneer dodda is believed to help regulate blood sugar levels by enhancing insulin sensitivity and reducing glucose absorption in the intestines. It also possesses antioxidant properties, which may help mitigate oxidative stress, a factor contributing to diabetes complications. Traditionally, paneer dodda is soaked in water overnight, and the infused water is consumed in the morning," said Dr Haricharan. Unlike Baluwat, Dr Haricharan said that while paneer ke phool is known for its adaptogenic properties, helping to reduce stress, which is a common factor for blood sugar spikes, "scientific evidence supporting this is limited". While these remedies have been traditionally used, they should not replace prescribed diabetes medications or a healthy diet, urged Dr Haricharan. "The efficacy and safety of these herbs are not fully established in clinical studies. Therefore, it's essential for diabetics to consult with their healthcare provider before using these remedies to ensure they do not interfere with existing treatments or cause adverse effects," said Dr Haricharan.

There are various dos and don'ts when it comes to a diabetes-friendly diet. After all, diabetics need to eat foods that do not cause a spike in their blood sugar levels. As such, when Ayurveda practitioner Jitendra Singh Baluwat claimed that paneer dodda, or paneer ke phool, can help manage diabetes, and may in fact even curb it, we wanted to verify it. According to Baluwat's Instagram post, in Ayurveda, the plant is known as rishyaganda and can help against Type 2 diabetes by regularising urine and controlling blood sugar levels.

How to use it?

Baluwat shared: Soak 10-15 paneer dodda overnight in a glass of water. Filter the water and drink it on an empty stomach. Do not eat or drink anything for one hour.

'There was so much music in him... changed the game': Fellow musicians recall Ustad Zakir Hussain

Describing the demise of tabla maestro Ustad Zakir Hussain as a big loss to the world of music, flautist and Grammy winner Rakesh Chaurasia, nephew of the legendary Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia, said, "there was so much music in him". Hussain passed away at 73 in San Francisco Monday due to complications from idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, according to his family.

Chaurasia, who collaborated with the virtuoso, said Hussain became his mentor. "I used to call him Ustad, and he would ask me to call him Zakir bhai because he would say, 'I'm not so old and the more we get closer, the more we will feel like friends, and the more the chemistry between us will become clear, the more it would be musically good on stage. There will be no barrier between us,'" he said. Hussain was instrumental in trying to get people from India to collaborate with those from the West, and helped Chaurasia meet American musicians Béla Fleck and Edgar Meyer (with whom Chaurasia and Hussain won two Grammy awards for their 2023 album 'As We Speak'). Hailing him as one of the greatest tabla players and a global ambassador, Hussain's long-time collaborator and table player Bickram Ghosh remembered, "When I was a kid, we lived in the same house in San Rafael, America, and he would babysit me. Throughout my life, he gave me advice, when I needed it, and whenever we met, there was beautiful banter and fun."

Ghosh noted that it was nothing short of phenomenal the quality that Hussain brought to playing the instrument in his very early years and which he sustained right until the end. "He changed the game, so to say. In the generations who came after him, nobody can claim they do not have a Zakir Hussain influence. In the subject, he was a god. He was like my elder brother," he said. "He went so early," said Ghosh, adding, "he had so much left to give to the world... His passing marks the end of a great era. He put tabla on the global map and did it with such élan." Khushroo N Suntook, Chairman, National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA), Mumbai, said that in the demise of Hussain, "we have lost a universal musician and a fine human being."



"Not only did the renowned tabla maestro's musicianship in the Hindustani classical tradition reign supreme, he was also a composer and collaborator par excellence, spanning the genres of Western classical, jazz and world music. Whether through Shakti, the celebrated band, or his recitals where he made the tabla sing, his language of music spoke to the world," he said. Tributes pour in for zakir hussain Ustad Zakir Hussain and flautist Rakesh Chaurasia. Hussain accompanied his father Ustad Alla Rakha to the NCPA since it was founded in 1969, he said. In July 2015, Hussain became an honoured member of the NCPA Council, turning mentor and inspiration to future musicians, he said. "He upheld the true spirit of the gurusshishya tradition by sharing the stage with talented young artists year after year at the Aadi Anant Festival of Indian Music. He wrote inspiring compositions with a profound message of peace, harmony and universal brotherhood for the Symphony Orchestra of India with which he toured the UK," said Suntook. Senior musician and musicologist Dr Suvarnalata Rao, head of NCPA's Indian Music, said Hussain was a true legend whose contributions to the art of tabla will resonate through history. A versatile maestro whose mastery elevated the craft to great heights, Dr Rao said, adding, "beyond his unparalleled skills, Zakirji's charisma and kindness left an indelible mark on all who had the privilege of working with him."

Brides and grooms, here's your ultimate wedding outfit guide inspired by popular Bollywood couples



Discover expert tips from celebrity stylist Rishi Raj on how grooms can complement their bride's attire for a picture-perfect wedding. Discover expert tips from celebrity stylist Rishi Raj on how grooms can complement their bride's attire for a picture-perfect wedding. A wedding isn't just an event—it's a spectacle where every detail, from vows to visuals, comes together to tell the couple's unique story. For grooms, matching or complementing their bride's attire is not just about coordination; it's about creating a symphony. Celebrity stylist Rishi Raj dives into the art of groom styling, offering imaginative ways to ensure you look picture-perfect together. If you've locked the colour of your lehenga, be it red like Aditi Rao Hydari or pink like Kiara Advani, here's what Raj suggests doing.

What's your vibe?

First, ask yourself if you're more of a Sabyasachi bride or a Gaurav Gupta muse. This exercise is not to pick the designer you'll buy from but more about your personality and the overall wedding aesthetic you'd want: Sabyasachi Brides: Known for their opulent embroidery and classic silhouettes, these brides call for a groom's look steeped in tradition. Opt for rich fabrics, intricate embellishments, and heritage-inspired accessories. Gaurav Gupta Brides: If her lehenga feels like a sculpture coming to life, your ensemble



needs to mirror this avant-garde energy. Think experimental cuts, textured fabrics, and bold, modern colour palettes. Think beyond just the outfits—matching aesthetics involves shared elements. If the bride is dripping in florals, ensure the groom's pocket square or turban incorporates subtle floral motifs. If the wedding theme leans toward marigolds and earthy tones, let your attire echo the décor through colour or texture. As Raj beautifully puts it, "You can only revisit this day through pictures and videos, so you need to make sure you make good memories." For the classic bride in red The quintessential red lehenga is a canvas of tradition and grandeur. From Priyanka Chopra to Aditi Rao Hydari, many celebs chose crimson for their big day. How can the groom match this iconic hue while standing out? Regal Jewel Tones: Deep emerald green or midnight navy sherwanis echo timeless elegance, creating a captivating contrast with the bride's vibrant red, said Raj. Imagine walking down the aisle together, a vision of royalty with colours that mirror gemstones. Metallic Magic: Avoid traditional ivory and opt for metallics like antique gold or brushed copper. These shades shimmer softly in the light, reflecting tradition and a modern twist. Personal Panache: Let the ensemble carry a whisper of your individuality—whether through unique embroidery or a subtle accessory like a vintage brooch or patterned safa.

‘Akshay Kumar admitted the tide has turned against him, rejected my film offer’: Mukesh Khanna shares details of private meeting



Actor Mukesh Khanna has taken pot-shots at several major stars over the years; he recently earned a strongly-worded reply from Sonakshi Sinha, whose upbringing he criticised in a new interview. In the same interview, he also criticised Ranveer Singh, Tiger Shroff, Shah Rukh Khan, Ajay Devgn, and several other actors, for a variety of reasons. Among them was Akshay Kumar, whom he accused of laziness. He said that he met Akshay recently and took the opportunity to give him some professional advice; Khanna also claimed that he offered a project to Akshay, who admitted that the stars aren't shining on him currently.

Akshay is going through a particularly difficult period professionally, having delivered over half-a-dozen flops in

the post-pandemic era. In 2024 alone, he has starred in the big-budget bombs Bade Miyan Chote Miyan and Sarfira. Khanna told Siddharth Kannan in an interview that Akshay should return to rugged action roles, as he's most suited to them. He said, "It was his fault as an actor that he couldn't do justice to the film Samrat Prithviraj. Even the director admitted in an interview with me that they cut corners. I suggested to Akshay that he should choose roles that suit his image. He should play fighters on screen."

He said that he has worked with Akshay in six films, and understands his strengths as an actor. "He's one of our most athletic performers. He's a very dedicated actor. In fact, I wanted to sign him for a film, so I went to meet him. I wanted to make the film myself. I met him in his van at Mehboob Studios recently. I narrated the story to him, and he ultimately didn't agree to it. I complimented him, but he said, 'No, sir, I'm not... Kismat nahi...' I told him that he's at least being more choosy about his projects; earlier, he'd say yes to everything." Khanna said that he told Akshay to play 'fighters' on screen. "In some film, somebody insulted him, and he looked on meekly. That's not what the audience wants to see. This was my only suggestion to him as a fellow actor. We didn't speak again," Khanna said. In an interview with Galatta Plus earlier this year, Akshay spoke about the criticism that he receives for doing too many films. "A lot of people have problems as to why am I doing four films a year. I don't understand this. For the first time in my life, I have heard somebody saying, 'Why are you working so much? Is this a bad thing? I do four films a year and people have a problem with that,' he said.

‘Ranveer Singh told me privately that he was duped into doing nude photoshoot, but backtracked in public’: Mukesh Khanna

Actor Mukesh Khanna said that he doesn't see Ranveer Singh in the role of Shaktimaan, which he originated on television several decades ago. Khanna said that even after two meetings during which Ranveer tried to convince him that he'd be perfect in a big screen reboot of the property, he remained unconvinced. A part of the reason behind Khanna's hesitation, he said, was a nude photoshoot that Ranveer did for a magazine. He claimed that Ranveer told him he was duped into doing it, but later said publicly that he wasn't ashamed of it.

In an interview with Siddharth Kannan, Khanna said, "He tried to tell me that he didn't know what was happening because he was shuttling between shoots, and that he was duped and betrayed. I felt sympathy for him, but some time later, he went and told the press that he wasn't ashamed of the shoot. Now that you've brought this topic up, let's address it properly. He said that he was comfortable with it, and I reacted in a video, saying that he might be comfortable, but we aren't." Khanna wondered why Ranveer didn't take legal action if he was duped. "I would've. He told me that he was contractually bound to not have any say about the photos. I wasn't convinced, because only months ago, he said that he was comfortable with it. And then he claimed to have been betrayed. Even his wife supported him," he said.

A Mumbai-based NGO filed a police complaint against the actor shortly after the photos were published online. In an accompanying interview, he told Paper magazine, "It's so easy for me to be physically naked, but in some of my performances I've been d**n f**king naked. You can see



my f**king soul. How naked is that? That's being actually naked. I can be naked in front of a thousand people, I don't give a s**t. It's just that they get uncomfortable." Photographer Ashish Shah, who captured the photos, told ETimes that Ranveer was very comfortable. "Ranveer was not shy or conscious. He performed very well. There was big and healthy mutual respect for each other," he said. Kshitij Kankaria, the shoot's creative director, told Brut that the photos were never sent over email for fear of leaks. "So, we would never send emails and send these images on the internet. It was always with the pen drive, very secretly taken to a printing lab, developing lab and then you have to delete everything from there and take it back. Something like this can really go wrong so we were really, really careful," he said.

Raj Kundra claims Shilpa Shetty being used as clickbait: ‘Unfair to drag her name into a controversy that's mine’



Actor Shilpa Shetty's husband and businessman Raj Kundra has addressed his ongoing legal troubles and how the media has influenced public perception of him and his family. Kundra, who was arrested in 2021 by Mumbai Police over allegations linked to the production and distribution of adult content, has consistently denied all charges, asserting that his business ventures were legitimate. Kundra took umbrage about the media using his wife, Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty, with the controversies. "Shilpa Shetty has earned such a big name for herself here; she has worked so hard. It is so unfair that the controversy is mine, and you are involving my wife's name. Why? Because you get clickbait? You are spoiling her reputation for views. She has nothing to do with this, so why involve her? Just because I am her husband?" said Kundra.

Kundra emphasised that the public should refrain from dragging his family into his personal challenges. "I have been here for 15 years, from an IPL team owner to a businessman who has made many investments in India. I don't think I am not well-known. It is wrong to spoil someone's reputation like this. You can say anything about me, but don't involve my family unnecessarily," he said. The controversy surrounding Kundra intensified after he was implicated in a case of money laundering linked to adult content production, with the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) summoning him for further questioning. The investigation has focused on potential financial misconduct and the laundering of funds from the illicit industry. Kundra also expressed frustration over what he termed "trial by media." "I wasn't as hurt by the legal cases or the process of going through the legal system as much as I was by the trial by media. I know the media is doing its job; they're reporting, but there are some in the media who create news without fact-checking. Certain segments have done this. As far as the media is concerned, we will always have a love-hate relationship. We can't live without each other, but facts should be checked," he said. Kundra also expressed his gratitude for the support he received from his wife, Shilpa Shetty, and

his family. "My wife has been very supportive; she knows what I can and cannot do. My entire family has been very supportive," he said. Despite his legal challenges, Kundra stressed that he leads a simple life, with a small friend circle, and prefers to focus on his family rather than the distractions of public life. He also called for a more responsible approach from the media in reporting sensitive matters. "Don't bring in things that are not true. Talk to my PR team if you have any doubts, but check the facts before writing anything," he said.

Telangana's hidden gem: Meet Adhyaa Hanuman, the voice behind actor Sai Pallavi



Hyderabad: Adhyaa Hanuman, a talented dubbing artiste from Mahbubnagar district in Telangana, has made a name for himself in southern cinema. Interestingly, he's also a qualified psychiatrist, having completed his MBBS. Born and raised in Telangana, Adhyaa pursued his education in Bengaluru, Karnataka. With his versatile voice, Adhyaa has dubbed for numerous stars but he came into the limelight recently when it was revealed that he was the voice behind actor Sai Pallavi. The interview(s) which went viral made him a celebrity in his own right overnight. His success, Adhyaa believes, is rooted in his parents' unwavering encouragement. The doctor-turned-dubbing artiste's remarkable journey showcases his passion, dedication, and the importance of family support. Despite encountering struggles initially, he proved that one can excel in multiple fields with hard work and determination.

Mahira Khan thought her ‘career is over’ after photos with Ranbir Kapoor went viral, she was banned: ‘I was crying daily’



Mahira Khan Ranbir Kapoor Mahira Khan spoke about viral photos with Ranbir Kapoor and how it affected her mental health. Mahira Khan has faced numerous challenges in both her career and personal life, but she has always managed to bounce back. In a recent conversation, the Raees actor opened up about navigating complexities as a divorced single mother and the difficulties she encountered when, alongside other Pakistani artists, she was banned from performing in films in India. She also shared the emotional toll of the viral photos of her smoking with Bollywood actor Ranbir Kapoor, which had a significant impact on her mental health, leaving her in tears for days.

Speaking with the BBC Asian Network, Mahira re-

flected on the tumultuous times in her life, "It's been a crazy ride. My audience has travelled this journey with me. The divorce, having a baby and my baby being along in this journey with me, being single for so long, those photos coming out, a ban somewhere else in another country... it has just been insane. Those were tough times and amazing times but there also have been moments that have been tougher but I have chosen not to share them." Mahira admitted that when her photos with Ranbir went viral, she had thought that her career was over. "When the photos came out there was an article called 'The Little White Dress' that was published in BBC and I failed to see the brilliance of that article at that time. In fact, I think I may have. I remember reading it and thinking, 'Is my career over?' In that article, it was written that 'here is a woman who has achieved this kind of success that no one in Pakistan has achieved, all the endorsements and all that, and now it is all gone. What is going to happen to her?' I read it and I was like 'Damn.' But I told myself, 'Are you mad? This is going to end,' maybe it was the 14-year-old Mahira that told me. But I won't lie that that time was very tough. I wouldn't get out of the bed, I was crying daily, it affected my professional and personal life. Lots happened on my personal side," she said.

Despite the heavy emotional burden, Mahira stayed resilient. "I did the right thing personally. I made some personal choices that were right for me and my child. Professionally, I kept quiet because I knew at that point I couldn't say anything. All the brands called me and said we are with you," she said. In 2017, Mahira and Ranbir made headlines when their photos went viral. The two were seen casually strolling the streets of New York with cigarettes in hand. The pictures sparked widespread speculation among fans, with many wondering whether the two were romantically involved.

Chinmayi Sripaada condemns Kapil Sharma for making fun of Atlee's appearance: ‘Will they never stop these crass, racist jibes?’

Comedian-turned-actor Kapil Sharma recently got embroiled in a scandal after a clip from his latest episode from The Great Indian Kapil Show went viral. The season finale that featured Baby John cast Atlee, Varun Dhawan, Wamiqa Gabbi, and Keerthy Suresh involved a scene where Kapil made fun of Atlee's appearance. While the Baby John director Atlee schooled Kapil for it, social media users pointed out that both Atlee and Varun looked offended by the statement made by Kapil Sharma. Now, singer Chinmayi Sripaada has also come in support of Atlee and slammed Kapil for his 'crass and racist jibe'.

Chinmayi reshared a video where Kapil subtly insulted Atlee and wrote on X, "Will they never stop these crass and racist jibes at his skin color in the name of 'comedy'? Someone with the amount of influence and clout like Kapil Sharma saying something like this is disappointing and unfortunately, not surprising." Lots of users on social media also expressed disappointment over Kapil's remark, others defended it saying it was all done in good spirits. One of the users wrote, "They would have choreographed it. That's how these shows work. It was a promotional event for a movie that Atlee has produced. Surely, they won't insult the one sponsoring the show!" Another commented, "His comedy is all about ridiculing, body shaming, racist, misogynistic, aukat-worshipping, and full of juvenile potty jokes. No wonder he is making millions." Many also wrote that Kapil should issue



a public apology to Atlee for the same. In the recently released episode, Kapil is seen asking Atlee, "You are so young and have become such a big producer-director, but has there been an instance where you have gone to meet a star and they couldn't believe that you are Atlee." Responding to this, Atlee said, "In a way, I understood your question, I am very thankful to AR Murugadoss sir, he produced my first film. He asked for the script and didn't see how I was looking, or whether I was capable or not, he loved my narration. The world should see that and not judge by appearance, you should see a person's heart."

Sobhita Dhulipala-Naga Chaitanya first spoke a year after Samantha divorce; he proposed in Goa: ‘I'm the fluttering kite, he's the anchor’

Actors Naga Chaitanya and Sobhita Dhulipala tied the knot in December, in an 'intimate' ceremony with 300 guests at the family-owned Annapurma Studios in Hyderabad. In a new interview, the spoke about their courtship, which began with a chance encounter and blossomed into something special. They had an actual conversation for the first time a year after Chaitanya's divorce from Samantha Ruth Prabhu. Their first meeting, however, took place at his father Nagarjuna's house over lunch. Nagarjuna had admired her performance in a film, and had invited her over for a casual get-together.

Some months later, she followed him back on Instagram, and responded to a story that he'd posted about a Japanese restaurant he owns. "I'm not a fan of texting," Chaitanya said in an interview with the New York Times. "I'm not a fan of communicating on social media." And so, he took a flight out of Hyderabad to Mumbai, only to have lunch with her at a cafe. "That was the charming part," she said. "It was so old school in a way."

Naga Chaitanya-Sobhita Dhulipala wedding photos Sobhita was seen holding Naga Chaitanya's face during the wedding rituals. A week later, they met again at an Amazon Prime



Some months later, she followed him back on Instagram, and responded to a story that he'd posted about a Japanese restaurant he owns. "I'm not a fan of texting," Chaitanya said in an interview with the New York Times. "I'm not a fan of communicating on social media." And so, he took a flight out of Hyderabad to Mumbai, only to have lunch with her at a cafe. "That was the charming part," she said. "It was so old school in a way."

Video event in Mumbai. "I was in a red dress, he was in a blue suit," she said. "And the rest is history." That summer, they went on their first trip together to Bandipur National Park, with Chaitanya's friends. On the trip, they played dress and drew art on each other's hands in henna. "He's a doer. I'm a be-er," she said, adding, "I'm the fluttering kite and he's the anchor. Our dissimilarities really kept us interested and

curious about each other." Naga Chaitanya-Sobhita Dhulipala wedding photos Naga Chaitanya and Sobhita Dhulipala at their wedding ceremony. Later that year, they went to London to attend a concert. She celebrated New Year's with his family. The following year, 2023, he met her family in Visakhapatnam. In August, he proposed during a trip to Goa. "There is alignment, there's chemistry, there's curiosity," she said, adding, "And it became obvious that our dissimilarities kept the tension alive in good ways and bad. We definitely wanted each other — that much was understood." She continued, "It was cute, and it was steady. It's not a case of two tender hearts falling in love. It was more like two metals being welded by the same wants from life, and we were able to speak about those things freely without inhibitions. That moved me."

Virat Kohli's batting average in Test is third lowest among players with 9,000 runs



Virat Kohli has seen a dip in his form over the past few years. Virat Kohli's Test average currently stands at 47.49, with 9,166 runs to his name. To put into perspective, Kohli's Test average in 2019 was constantly in the mid-fifties, the highest being 55.10, and was once the only batsman to have an average of 50 or above in all three formats. For eight years, Kohli's average has not gone below 47.5, and now, his batting average is third lowest amongst the players that have scored 9000 in Tests, and the only one of the fab four to have a Test average below 50.

His second innings in Perth gave glimpses of a potential comeback of the former Indian captain, as he always brings his A-game Down Under in the Border Gavaskar Trophy. But other than the innings that marked his 81st international century in Perth, he has produced rather disappointing scores, (5,7,11,3). Virat Kohli. Virat Kohli's struggles to deliveries outside the off-stump continued with his dismissal at Gabba on Monday. Kohli looked a little uncomfortable facing the deliveries in the first innings of the third test in Brisbane, as he fell to his nemesis, the outside off stump ball, bowled by Josh Hazlewood yet again. This dismissal brought his average down to the lowest it has been in eight years, after his test outing against England that put his average at a 47.50. Kohli reached the average of 50 after scoring a double century against England in 2016, and for six years, it did not go below that mark. His outing in the Bengaluru pink ball Test match against Sri Lanka in 2022 saw him drop below that mark, and has never recovered since. He scored 23 and 13 in his two innings, as Shreyas Iyer's 92 and 67 helped India win the match comfortably. There are a total of 19 players who boast the stat of having 9000 runs in Tests, and amongst those, Virat Kohli sits third lowest in terms of batting average. He is followed by Hashim Amla with 46.64 and Alastair Cook with 45.35.

'Looking forward to watching as a fan': Tim Southee gives an emotional retirement speech after New Zealand's win in Hamilton

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Tim Southee gives his retirement speech after New Zealand trump England in Hamilton Tim Southee gives his retirement speech after New Zealand trump England in Hamilton Tim Southee signs off from Test cricket with an emotional speech post New Zealand's stunning win 423 runs against England on Tuesday. England won the series 2-1. "Firstly, thank you Sir Richard [Hadlee, who gave a speech in tribute to Southee] for such kind words. Congratulations to England on a series win; as always it was played in a great spirit. I've really enjoyed playing against them over the years."

New Zealand's highest wicket taker in international cricket took the opportunity to thank the New Zealand cricket fraternity and his family who had helped him through the ups and downs of his career. "I'd like to thank a few people. Firstly New Zealand Cricket for everything you've done over the last 17 years; it's been much appreciated. Mum and Dad, Brya and the kids. They're the ones who are with you for the ride, they see the ups and downs and I appreciate everything they've done for me over the years. This group of guys (teammates) made the ride so much more enjoyable, as did all the other players I've played with. I've loved every minute. A number of the support staff as well." as his voice started to crack now. Shifting his gaze towards the stands of his home ground, as the cheers came on for him, he also showed his gratitude to the fans who always come to cheer the team on. "Finally I'd like to thank the fans. It's



always great to turn out in front of numbers and this week has been really special. Thank you. I look forward to watching on (as) a fan now, and all the best boys." In his post match speech, New Zealand captain Tom Latham showered praises for New Zealand's veteran fast bowler. "Timmy has been a massive member of this team for such a long time. The wickets, runs and sixes speak for themselves. But as much as we'll miss his attributes on the field, we'll really miss him around the dressing-room. He's a great team man and all the guys love playing with him. We're leaving one of the greats behind." Tim Southee finished his career with 391 wickets in 203 innings, and has also contributed with the bat over time. He has seven half centuries to his name, highest being 77*, and in his last match, equalled Chris Gayle in his tally of 98 sixes.

Cheteshwar Pujara explains why KL Rahul has been India's best batter in BGT

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Cheteshwar Pujara lauded KL Rahul's "approach and art of leaving" in the ongoing third Test between Australia and India at the Gabba. Rahul scored 84, his second half-century of the series and has mustered 231 runs in five innings so far. "Whenever he's defending or leaving the ball, he's in a very good position," said Pujara on Star Sports. "He knows where his off stump is. And even while defending, he allows the ball to come and hit his bat. He's not going for the ball. And if you look at the other dismissals, where most of the batters have gone towards the ball. And let's look at his leave. He's quite, he's very well balanced."



"He's covering his off stump. And he's looking to play the ball. But once he knows that it's outside the line, then he's keeping his bat close to his body. Cheteshwar Pujara on KL Rahul India vs Australia India's KL Rahul celebrates his fifty runs on the second day of the first cricket test between Australia and India in Perth, Australia, Saturday, Nov. 23, 2024. (AP Photo/Trevor Collens) And some balls did nip back in. And he kept his bat there and it edged and didn't carry. Happened in the previous Tests as well. He's allowing the ball to hit his bat. And he's defending with the softer hands, which is a

big, big positive there." Pujara also said that the 67-run stand between Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja has put India in a better position. "The partnership between KL and Jadeja was the standout partnership of this innings and now things are looking a lot better," he said. "And KL has showed that if you apply yourself, if you bat well, it's a good pitch where you can score runs. It's not a very difficult pitch where you can't survive or where you can't bat. So, yeah, I mean, it's just about seeing through that new ball and KL showed that today. And even an important contribution from Ravindra because he was picked as a batter and he showed that why he was picked."

Ben Stokes sidelined with hamstring injury as New Zealand drub England by 423 runs in the 3rd Test

GNS News Agency, Dec 19

Captain Ben Stokes was unable to bat because of a hamstring injury on Tuesday as England slumped to a 423-run loss to New Zealand before tea on the fourth day on the third cricket test. Stokes strained his left hamstring while bowling on the third day and could not take the field as England was bowled out for 234 as it chased an impossible target of 658 for victory. New Zealand's winning margin matched its largest test win by runs of a 423-run win over Sri Lanka in 2018 and prevented England from completing a series whitewash. England had an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series after winning the first test by eight wickets and the second by 323 runs.

"You can't fault any of the energies or efforts we put into this game, particularly in the field," Stokes said. "It's obviously not ideal to end the tour on this note but we've come here against a New Zealand team which is very strong and full of confidence after beating India in India 3-0. So to come here and lift that trophy at the end proves we played some very good cricket." England resumed its second innings Tuesday at 18-2 after losing the wickets of Ben Duckett and Zak Crawley late on day three after New Zealand, leading by 204 on the first innings, was dismissed for 453.

Joe Root made 54 and Jacob Bethell 76 in a 104-run partnership for the third wicket which briefly fanned England's hopes that it might somehow endure for two full days to

draw the match. But dogged perseverance is not a feature of England cricket in the "Bazball" quick-scoring era and instead it maintained a policy of all-out attack before the final wicket fell midway through the second session. After lunch Gus Atkinson blasted 43 from 41 balls with seven fours and a six and Ollie Pope made 17 but wickets fell steadily and the result became inevitable. "I think anytime you finish a series with a win when you've been behind is pleasing," New Zealand captain Tom Latham said. "We weren't at our best in those first two games but the way we came here on a wicket that was slightly different to the first couple and we adapted was very pleasing." New Zealand's win owed a great deal to the contribution of Mitchell Santner in the first innings who made 76 batting at No. 8 and worked with Matt Henry, Tim Southee and Will O'Rourke to add 116 runs for New Zealand's three wickets. That allowed New Zealand to reach 347 after losing the toss and being sent in.

Santner's last-wicket stand with O'Rourke which lasted 77 minutes at the end of the first day and the start of the second was a display of resilience which had been missing from New Zealand's performances in the first two tests. Santner then took 3-7 while New Zealand's presumptive new-ball pairing of Henry and O'Rourke shared seven wickets as England was bowled out for 143 in a session and a half in its first innings.

India's Rohit headache: Is it age or technique? Will there be a revival or terminal decline?



But he couldn't. The problem, unlike with Dravid of 2012 vintage, is much clearer.

The strengths in best years as Test opener is now slowly turning against him. He had transformed himself into a classical opener almost with two main traits of compactness and stillness. Minimal but precise movement of feet, and the hands that just move in line. The jarring-ness of the distant past had vanished. Back then, he would ground his bat, pick it up from a wide position/angle, the front feet would be planted across – and he would get squared-up to balls straightening outside off or potentially in trouble with nip-backers as he would have to quickly retreat that advanced feet and the pads out of the way. He figured out everything on his own. "I had to do it on my own," he told this newspaper once. Slowly, the individual parts of his batting was tweaked: the bat began to be held in the air, it would come down from a straighter angle, the initial front foot angle was curbed, the hands would ease towards the line, and not betray outside off. He had to change his grip, the way he held his bat. A sense of Jacques Kallis-ish compactness had descended on him.

Now that precise minimal movement now seems to have the opposite effect: that his forward stride isn't big enough; everything seems either a bit shorter or slower. Is that the age or is that the technique? At the forefront of the issue is that forward stride which is actually just a short step now. He seemed to have realised that as his main achilles heel. Prior to Adelaide, at nets, he had started to stand outside the crease, with his back leg touching the popping crease line. As if to say 'I can't take a big stride to meet the ball earlier, I shall cut down the distance by standing more ahead than usual'. It didn't work.

There was that dismissal against Cummins there when he lost the off stump. A sort of dismissal that happens more often with Rohit than other batsmen. Tim Southee has done it to him, and a few others. Because his stride isn't that lengthy enough, and more importantly, the way he moves his hands, the way he plays the initial line of the ball results in deviations taking out of the stump or ramming into the pad. That technique was very valuable for him as an opener in his best years as he would ensure he just pushes inside the line and not edge the away-shaper. It was part of a deliberately cultivated technique. Now, it's turning against him. When standing outside the crease didn't work in Adelaide, he hit the nets in Brisbane by standing more conventionally – back feet inside. Both at Adelaide and Brisbane, he had a support staff to check now and then where his feet stood and how his hands moved. It hasn't worked in the first innings here. The front foot froze after a short step and the hands kept moving ahead, and unsurprisingly the away-shaper took a slice of edge along with it. Rohit Sharma now has potentially 5 batting innings left on the tour to find out if his batting issues are of technical or age. What's the discovery that awaits him at the end: revival or terminal decline?

Of late, Rohit Sharma the batsman has had the demeanour of a mumbler in a loud bazaar. Tentative, hesitant, unsure. He seems to be prodding at something, something alive and dangerous that could explode on him. At his best, Rohit the cricketer came across as a guy who took what he was doing really seriously, but never took himself seriously. He had that wonderful nonchalance, yet intensity to set and dictate the tempo for his team. It can perhaps be seen as an overreach, even a cliché, but there does seem a wariness, if not weariness, in his visage these days. Definitely the former as a batsman, and the latter as a captain on field.

It's not the leadership but the batting that's his main worry. In the 2011-12 tour of Australia, a parallel of sorts was seen in Rahul Dravid. He had started well in the first Test, but slowly he kept getting bowled. There were a few murmurs then from a few experts about how it could be something to do with the back-leg movement but one couldn't discern anything. In the matches though Dravid would seem that one instant late in getting to where he wanted to be. The weight transfer just wouldn't happen as quickly as he might have preferred. The stumps kept clattering, particularly from Ben Hilfenhaus. When he returned from that tour, he had decided it was time to hang his batting gloves. Technical issues could be sorted out, not ageing. Rohit Sharma, Brisbane Weather, Gabba Test India's captain Rohit Sharma, center, and his batting partner KL Rahul leaves the field as rain stops play during play on day three of the third cricket test between India and Australia at the Gabba in Brisbane, Australia. (AP)

Rohit is in a vulnerable state now, trying to figure out if the issue is technical or of age. In theory, Australia should be kinder to him than India's next big tour of England in July, where the moving ball could really test out his footwork. His game isn't quite where it was; and hence Adelaide Pink ball was a write-off of sorts. He was never going to get going because there were too many challenges for him to overcome: his slow feet, the moving ball, the toughness in picking it off the hand, the conditions. He had a good chance in Brisbane on Tuesday to get himself going as a batsman, and resultantly as a captain too. There was no real venom in the pitch, the ball wasn't jaggling around.

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 Hojlund 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



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Manchester United Manchester United's head coach Ruben Amorim talks to his players at the end of the English Premier League soccer match between Arsenal and Manchester United at Emirates stadium in London, Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2024. (AP Photo/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 potential. It's a huge credit for Amorim as well as he stuck to his guns, even excluding top scorers Marcus Rashford and Alejandro Gamacho 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 Bruyne 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 set 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 night at the Etihad.