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Mega job mela to be organised at Madhapur on December 28

Hyderabad: A mega job mela is being organised on December 28 at Sree Sai Garden Function Hall, 100 feet road, Madhapur. In a press release, the organizer, Mannan Khan Engineer said many companies will be participating in the job mela and offering jobs in various positions in pharma, health, IT & ITes firms, education, banks and others. Work from Home options will also be provided by a few companies. Qualification of candidates should be above SSC and preliminary interviews will be conducted at the venue. The entry is free and those interested can contact on 8374315052.

Rachakonda police seize 281 star fish, 160 red eared slider tortoises from smugglers

Hyderabad: The Rachakonda police seized 281 star fish and 160 red eared slider tortoises from two persons at Medipally on Wednesday. Mohd Siraj Ahmed (39) of Old Malakpet and Shaik Jani (50) of Medipally, both aqua culturists, were smuggling the tortoises and star fish from Andhra Pradesh.

They bought these tortoise and fish from Vijay Kumar, a resident of Andhra Pradesh. Both the suspects were selling it to customers in the city at a higher price and earning illegal profits. Ahmed and Jani have aquaculture activity and have shops in the city.

Modi lays foundation stone of Ken-Betwa river linking project; hails Ambedkar's vision

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday (December 25, 2024) accused Congress of ignoring Dr B.R. Ambedkar's contribution to the development of water resources in the country as he laid the foundation stone of the Ken-Betwa river linking project in Madhya Pradesh. Speaking at the program at Khajuraho, Mr. Modi also said that in the 21st century, only the nations with adequate and well-managed water resources can advance. The PM's comments came amid the controversy over Union Home Minister Amit Shah's remarks about Ambedkar and the Opposition Congress's nationwide protests over the issue. Ambedkar's vision and farsightedness contributed significantly to the strengthening of the country's water resources, their management and dam construction, Mr. Modi said. Ambedkar played a crucial role in the development of major river valley projects and formation of the Central Water Commission, he added. However, the Congress party never paid heed to the country's growing need of water conservation, and never recognised Ambedkar's efforts as a water conservationist, Mr. Modi said. "The major challenge of the 21st century is water security. In the 21st century only those countries who have adequate water resources with proper management will move forward," he said.



Congress and governance do not go together, he said, adding that past Congress governments delayed projects for 35-40 years after laying their foundation stones. The Ken-Betwa river linking will open new doors of prosperity and happiness in the Bundelkhand region, said the PM. Nearly 44 lakh people in ten districts of Madhya Pradesh and 21 lakh in Uttar Pradesh will get drinking water under the project, which is estimated to cost ₹44,605 crore. Nearly 7.18 lakh agricultural families in 2,000 villages will benefit from the project, which will also generate 103 MW of hydropower and 27 MW of solar energy, officials said. Mr. Modi also released a commemorative stamp and a coin in the memory of former prime minister late Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his birth centenary on this occasion. The Vajpayee government had proposed river linking as a solution for the country's irrigation needs as well as for dealing with floods. PM Modi also performed 'bhumi puja' or ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of 1,153 Atal Gram Sewa Sadans costing ₹437 crore at the Khajuraho program.

The PM on this occasion also inaugurated the Omkareshwar Floating Solar Project in Khandwa district of the State virtually, and laid the foundation stone of the Daudhan Irrigation Project, part of the river-linking project. Union Water Resources Minister C.R. Patil and Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav handed over two kalash (urns) containing water from Betwa and Ken rivers, respectively, to Mr. Modi, who poured it over a model of the project to launch the river linking work.

Nation will always be grateful to Atalji for being the architect of India's transition into the 21st century: PM

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Today, 25th December is a very special day for all of us. Our nation marks the 100th Jayanti of our beloved former Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ji. He stands tall as a statesman who continues to inspire countless people. Our nation will always be grateful to Atal Ji for being the architect of India's transition into the 21st century. When he took oath as PM in 1998 our nation had passed through a period of political instability. In about 9 years, we had seen 4 Lok Sabha elections. The people of India were getting impatient and also sceptical about governments being able to deliver. It was Atal Ji who turned this tide by providing stable and effective governance. Coming from humble roots, he realised the struggles of the common citizen and the transformative power of effective governance.



sector, an initiative like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan highlights how Atal Ji dreamt of building an India where modern education is accessible to people across the nation, particularly for the poor and marginalised sections. At the same time, his government presided over many economic reforms which set the stage for India's economic surge after several decades of following an economic philosophy which encouraged cronyism and stagnation. A wonderful example of Vajpayee Ji's leadership can be seen in the summer of 1998. His Government had just assumed office and on 11th May, India conducted the Pokhran tests, known as Operation Shakti. These tests exemplified the prowess of India's scientific community. The world was stunned that India had done the tests and expressed their anger in no uncertain terms. Any ordinary leader would have buckled, but Atal Ji was made differently. And what happened? India stood firm and resolute with the government calling for another set of tests two days later, on 13th May! If the tests of the 11th showed scientific skill, the ones on 13th showed true leadership. It was a message to the world that gone were the days when India would buckle under threats or pressure.

One can see the long-term impact of Atal Ji's leadership in so many sectors around us. His era marked a gigantic leap in the world of Information Technology, telecom and communications. This was particularly important for a nation like ours, which is also blessed with a very dynamic Yuva Shakti. The NDA Government under Atal Ji made the first serious attempt to make technology accessible to the common citizens. At the same time, there was foresight in connecting India. Even today, most people recall the Golden Quadrilateral Project, which connected the length and breadth of India. Equally notable were the Vajpayee Government's efforts to enhance local connectivity as well through initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana. Similarly, his Government gave a push to metro connectivity by doing extensive work for the Delhi Metro, which stands out as a world-class infrastructure project. Thus, the Vajpayee Government not only boosted economic growth but also brought distant regions closer, fostering unity and integration. When it comes to the social

Delhi CM Atishi says strict action will be taken against officers disowning govt schemes

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Delhi Chief Minister Atishi said on Wednesday that strict administrative action will be taken against two officers who released public notices to disown the registration process started by her and former chief minister Arvind Kejriwal for two schemes announced by the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). The officers in question are a joint director of the Department of Woman and Child Development and the special secretary of the Health and Family Welfare Department. The public notices by the officers published in newspapers on Wednesday called the Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana, which aims to give Rs 2,100 to non-tax paying women, and Sanjeevani Yojana, a scheme to provide free treatment to those over the age of 60 in government as well as private hospitals, "fraudulent".



Addressing a press conference at the AAP headquarters, Atishi said, "The notices issued today in newspapers are completely false. The BJP has put pressure on these officers and issued a false public notice because they are shocked by the public's response. Strict administrative action will be taken against these officers."

Flagging a copy of the notification of the Cabinet approval to Mahila Samman Yojana, Atishi said, "This is the notification issued by the Cabinet after it passed the Rs 1,000 allowance to women under Mahila Samman Yojana. The notification clearly says Rs 1,000. So, strict action and a Delhi Police inquiry will be taken against these officers for issuing such false public notice." AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal,

also present in the press conference, said the BJP is fearful due to the positive public response to AAP's schemes and its door-to-door campaigns. He also mentioned that the BJP lacks a chief ministerial candidate, an agenda, or any accomplishments to present to the public ahead of the upcoming elections. "We know how the BJP conspired to obstruct the work in Delhi through the Lieutenant Governor, bureaucrats, and various schemes. However, we did not allow them to impede our efforts. As a result, they devised a plan and had all of us arrested. The BJP has nothing to showcase for their time in Delhi. Over the past ten years, they have had seven MPs but have failed to demonstrate any accomplishments. They lack a chief ministerial candidate and a clear agenda," he said. "The AAP is running a positive campaign."

Dalit, Tribal Christians will get major share of Indiramma houses: Revanth Reddy

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Medak: Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy said Dalit and Tribal Christians will get a good share of Indiramma houses. Addressing the gathering after offering prayers at Medak church on the occasion of Christmas on Wednesday, the Chief Minister said the poor Christians were also benefiting from the free 200 units of power supply. Appreciating the Christians for taking health and education as a priority in those days, Revanth said the Congress government launched fee reimbursement and Rajiv Arogya Sri drawing inspiration from christian missionaries' work. He said that he had promised to visit the church after becoming Chief Minister after offering prayers as PCC president last year. Congratulating the devotees as the church was celebrating centenary celebrations this year, Revanth said that the Congress government would release enough grants to the church to provide various facilities. The Chief Minister laid the foundations for various development works, which will be taken up with an outlay of Rs 29.18 crore, on the premises of the church. Earlier, he also offered prayers at



Sri Vana Durga Bhavani temple located at Edupayala. Revanth Reddy laid the foundation for Rs 35 crore worth of work on the premises of the temple. Ministers Damodara Rajanarasimha, Konda Surekha, Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, Pradesh Congress Committee President Mahesh Goud, Collector Rahul Raj and others were present.

Farmers must be involved in marketing their produce: V-P Jagdeep Dhankhar



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Medak: Vice-president Jagdeep Dhankhar opined that farmers must be involved in marketing their produce to help them benefit. Addressing the farmers at Krishi Vigyan Kendra located at Tuniki during a meeting with organic farmers on Wednesday, the Vice-President observed that farmers must market their own produce. Dhankhar said that the younger generation of the farming fraternity should be involved in agricultural and marketing activities. He called upon the Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR), other research institutes,

and universities to study how best the farmers could add value to their produce. He expressed his concern saying that agriculture was not transforming though there were agriculture research institutes and scientists in the country. He interacted with organic farmers after going through the products exhibited by them during the programme. Impressed by the organic agriculture practices being carried out by 655 strong farmer communities in Medak district, Dhankhar promised that he would soon host the farmers in New Delhi for three days. Saying that former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee declared December 23 as National Farmer's Day in 2001 honouring former Prime Minister Charan Singh, he said that the union government is going to celebrate the silver jubilee celebrations next year by involving 730 KVKs, 150 ICAR institutes, Universities, and other institutes. Dhankhar said that the officials must ensure the fruits of welfare schemes should reach the farmer's fraternity. He said that everyone should play a role in achieving the goals of Viksit Bharat-2047. Dhankhar said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi raised the vocal for local slogan inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's Swadeshi Movement. Stating that India will emerge as the third-biggest economy by overcoming Japan and Germany soon, he said the farming fraternity must also contribute to India's growth. Governor Jishnu Dev Varma, Minister Konda Surekha, and others were present.

Banjara Hills police serve notice to BRS MLA Kaushik Reddy to appear before them on Friday

GNS News Agency, Dec 25



Hyderabad: The Banjara Hills police served a notice to BRS MLA Kaushik Reddy directing him to appear before the police on Friday. The Banjara Hills police had registered a case against Kaushik Reddy early this month for allegedly obstructing the Banjara Hills Inspector KM Raghavendra. The MLA had gone to the Banjara Hills police station on December 4 to make a complaint alleging his phone was being tapped. When he entered into the police station compound, Kaushik Reddy observed the Banjara Hills Inspector was leaving the police station. He rushed towards the Inspector and asked him to accept the complaint from him. It led to heated arguments between Kaushik Reddy and the Banjara Hills Inspector.

After 3 days of hectic discussions with RSS top brass, BJP set to announce candidates for Delhi Assembly elections

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Delhi BJP Assembly Polls According to BJP sources, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and BJP national general secretary (organisation) B L Santhosh, over several hours on Sunday, vetted the list of the party's 70 candidates for as many Assembly constituencies in the capital. (Photo: X/BJP) After three days of deliberations between its national leadership and the top brass of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS), the BJP's picks for the upcoming Delhi Assembly elections are said to have been finalised and expected to be announced "anytime", sources said on Wednesday. According to BJP sources, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, BJP national general secretary (organisation) B L Santhosh, and BJP in-charge for Delhi Bajajant Panda, over several hours on Sunday, vetted the list of the party's 70 candidates for as many Assembly constituencies in the capital.

derlined by the fact that each of the candidates has been personally vetted by the party's national leadership, along with that of the RSS, over the last three days with minimal to no interface with our Delhi unit," a party insider said.

"Amit Shah has himself led the discussions, which went on for several hours on Sunday and Tuesday; the names (of potential picks) have been shared with the PM after the meeting between the home minister and Arun (Kumar) ji, and the PM will now take the final call," the insider added. According to party sources, the BJP's central election committee, led by PM Modi and making the final decision on potential candidates, will likely meet on Wednesday or Thursday.

"The central election committee also includes Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis, former Karnataka chief minister B S Yeddyurappa and former Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal and will convene when they, along with the PM, are available for the final vetting of candidates which is likely today (Wednesday) or tomorrow (Thursday), followed by the announcement of the list," a source said. The Delhi Assembly election for all 70 constituencies is scheduled to be held in or before February 2025. The last Assembly elections in Delhi took place in 2020.

This was followed on Tuesday by another discussion led by Shah and senior RSS leader Arun Kumar, after which the final list was said to have been submitted to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for consideration. "The significance of the Delhi elections from the point of view of the BJP is un-

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Detention revisited

THE Central Government's decision to scrap the no-detention policy in the schools it governs marks a significant shift in the approach to elementary education. Under the new framework, students of Central schools in classes V and VIII who fail their exams will now face re-examinations and, if necessary, be held back. The shift is geared towards promoting accountability and elevate learning results. Around 20 states and UTs have already scrapped the no-detention policy.

However, the policy change exposes a glaring gap: inadequate infrastructure to support detained students. Remedial programmes, personalised teaching approaches and extensive teacher training are essential. But they remain woefully underdeveloped. In their absence, detention risks punishing students for systemic failures rather than addressing their learning needs. This could exacerbate stigma, fear of failure and dropout rates, particularly among marginalised communities. Tamil Nadu's refusal to implement such measures serves as a cautionary tale of the policy's potential to undo progress made under the Right to Education framework.

At the same time, the implementation of the no-detention rule under the right to primary education has, over the academic sessions, faced criticism for diluting academic rigour and fostering complacency among students and educators alike. Year after year, various surveys and reports have highlighted alarming gaps in the basic literacy and numeracy outcomes of students. The fall in the academic standards expected of them does necessitate reform. But education reform must strike a balance between academic excellence and inclusivity. It is not enough to abandon old policies; we must also invest in a framework that enables every child to thrive. It should not come at the expense of a child's self-esteem or access to education.

How a Faridkot man turned farming into a Rs 2.5-crore success story

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

A decade ago, most of his peers made their way abroad to make a fortune by earning dollars, but Bohar Singh Gill preferred his homeland and took up his family's occupation — agriculture. Ten years down, the 34-year-old, popularly known as Yadveer Singh Gill, from Saideke village in Punjab's Faridkot district earns as much as his peers in dollars. Starting with his ancestral 37 acres, Bohar expanded to 250 acres by leasing additional land, opted for multiple crops, and installed a large-scale sprinkler irrigation system to conserve water and significantly improve the quality and quantity of his produce.

After completing his BSc in agriculture from Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), Ludhiana, Bohar returned to his village, which is strategically located between two canals — the Main Branch and Gang Canal. Starting with traditional wheat and paddy, he soon ventured into potato on two acres. Buoyed by the result, he expanded, growing potatoes for both table and seed purposes. To meet the growing demand, Bohar leased an additional 200 acres to cultivate sugar-free potato varieties like Diamond and LR. "I started with wheat and paddy in my land, then potatoes in a few acres. The result encouraged me to stop growing wheat and focus on potatoes. I also started leasing land to expand my farming. This year, I am cultivating potatoes in 250 acres, including 37 acres of my ancestral land," said Gill. "The demand for sugar-free potatoes is very high and I cannot meet the orders I get." His diverse crop portfolio now includes, apart from potatoes, maize, moong, paddy, and premium Basmati rice.

Recognising the challenges of water scarcity and the need for sustainable practices, he installed sprinkler irrigation systems two years ago, starting with 40 acres. "The results were outstanding. I've reduced water consumption in potato farming by over 50 per cent. This method also enriches the soil with nitrogen from the air, which comes down to soil with water pressure, reducing urea consumption by 40 per cent and improving crop quality and yields. As the system kept the soil soft, I expanded it over 150 acres. I plan to bring all my land under the sprinkler system," Bohar said. The results speak for themselves — 25 quintals increase in potato yield per acre and 10 quintals boost in maize production per acre, he said. "I use nano urea with the sprinkler system. I place fertiliser near the tubewell that powers the sprinklers and it spreads fertiliser all over fields through irrigation. With the sprinkler system, I can irrigate 100 acres in just one day, while the traditional trench flood irrigation system covers only 15-20 acres per day," he explained. "Sprinkler irrigation moistens the soil evenly, eliminating the need for flood irrigation as in the traditional method. Also, in maize farming, pests are less likely to thrive because if they do appear, they get washed away by sprinklers," he added.

Acknowledging the government support, he highlighted the substantial subsidies available for sprinkler irrigation: 80 per cent for male farmers and 90 per cent for females. "After subsidies, the cost is just Rs 15,000 per acre," he said encouraging farmers to take advantage of the scheme. Despite high input costs and an annual lease payment of Rs 70,000 per acre for 200 acres, the farmer's meticulous planning and innovative techniques yielded impressive results. With a net profit of Rs1 lakh per acre after meeting all expenses his annual earnings from 250 acres stand at Rs 2.5 crore. "This income matches or even surpasses what my friends earn in dollars abroad," he said proudly.

"I've never burned paddy residue. Instead, I incorporate the stubble into the soil, which has enriched it with organic matter and increased my yields," he said, adding, "I have all necessary machines to manage stubble effectively." In addition to adopting sustainable practices, he owns advanced farming machinery worth Rs 5 crore — all purchased with earnings from agriculture. He is creating employment opportunities, providing temporary jobs for 3-4 months each year to around 250 people and permanent employment to approximately 20 individuals. Faridkot Chief Agriculture Officer (CAO) Dr Amrik Singh, who has recently visited his farm, said, "This young farmer has shown through his inspiring story that staying rooted in one's homeland and investing in agriculture can lead to a fulfilling and prosperous life, rivaling the allure of foreign lands. The CAO emphasised the benefits of sprinkler irrigation. "With proper installation and pressure regulation, one can save a significant amount of water. Sprinklers keep the soil soft, unlike flood irrigation, which hardens the soil.

AAP dominates Jalandhar, Congress claims 20 wards in Phagwara



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

The AAP won 40 of the 85 seats in the Jalandhar Municipal Corporation elections, followed by the Congress, which secured 24 seats, and the BJP with 18 seats. The BSP won one seat, while two seats were won by Independents. Although AAP emerged as the single largest party, it fell short of the majority mark of 43 seats required to form the House independently. In a significant result outcome, former Congress Mayor Jagdish Raja, now with AAP, lost his election. His wife, Anita Raja, also faced defeat in the polls. Before this Jagdish Raja had won MC elections six times. With polling beginning at 7 am, 50.27% polling took place for Jalandhar Corporation elections but overall districts' poll percentage was 54.90%.

The elections, however, were not without controversy. Former MLA Sheetal Angural from Jalandhar West accused AAP leader and state minister Mohinder Bhagat of manipulating the electoral process. Angural alleged that Bhagat brought people from outside the city to influence the polling. In Ward 35, a heated argument broke out between AAP workers and Surendra Singh, the husband of Congress candidate Harsharan Kaur Happy, who was reportedly standing outside the polling station. Police were deployed to manage the situation, and Congress MLA and former Indian hockey team player Pargat Singh later arrived at the scene. Punjab aap Amritsar: An elderly woman being assisted inside a polling station during elections in Punjab for five municipal corporations and 44 municipal councils and nagar panchayats, in Amritsar, Saturday. At Ward 26's polling booth in Pratap Bagh, police had to intervene when a man allegedly urged voters to support the Congress. Following complaints, police removed the individual from the premises.

BJP makes gains in municipal polls, surprises with wins in semi-rural areas



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Party general secretary Vinod Tawde is in-charge for Bihar, with Deepak Prakash as co-in-charge for the state. Satish Poonia has been made party in-charge for Haryana, which will go to polls soon, while Surendra Singh Nagar will be co-in-charge for the state. BJP won several wards in Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Amritsar, Phagwara, and Patiala municipal corporations. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has made significant inroads in Punjab's municipal elections, securing victories across municipal corporations, councils, and nagar panchayats. In a notable win, BJP's Poonam Ratra defeated AAP MLA Ashok Prashar Pappi's wife, Meenu Prashar, by 574 votes in Ludhiana's Ward 77. Ratra, a veteran BJP member, continues the legacy of her late husband, Om Parkash Ratra, a former councillor.

BJP won several wards in Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Amritsar, Phagwara, and Patiala municipal corporations. It also marked its presence in nagar panchayats like Bhadson (Patiala), Bhikhi (Mansa), Dirba (Sangrur), Raja Sansi

AAP launches scholarship scheme for Dalit students who get admission in top foreign varsities; BJP hits out

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

AAP national convener and former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal Saturday announced the 'Dr Ambedkar Samman Scholarship Yojana', promising to cover fees as well as the cost of travel and stay for Dalit students from Delhi who secure admission for higher education at top international universities. After Kejriwal announced the scheme, which aims at extending such benefits to children of Dalits, terming it a 'powerful response to BJP's disrespect toward Babasaheb Ambedkar', the BJP accused him of having become a 'political weather scientist', alleging that the scheme was nothing but 'old wine in a new bottle'.

Kejriwal told mediapersons: "Three days ago, in Parliament, Union Home Minister and BJP leader Amit Shah insulted Babasaheb Ambedkar. The words he used were not only derogatory, but the tone in which he spoke was deeply mocking... This personally hurt me greatly as I consider myself a bhakt (devotee) of Babasaheb Ambedkar." Replying to the two-day debate in Rajya Sabha on the 'Glorious Journey of 75 Years of the Constitution of India', Shah Tuesday said: "Abhi ek fashion ho gaya hai — Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar... Itna naam agar Bhagwan ka lete toh saat janon tak swarg mil jata (There is a fashion these days — Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar... Had you chanted the name of God these many times, you would have been blessed with heaven in seven births)." "To honour Ambedkar, Kejriwal said he was making a significant announcement: "Inspired by Babasaheb's struggles and his commitment to education, I don't want any child from the Dalit community to be deprived of higher education because of the shortage of funds. That's why I am announcing the 'Dr Ambedkar Samman Scholarship' today." Under the scheme, Kejriwal said, any Dalit student who secures admission to any of the world's top universities can proceed with their admission without worrying about finances since the AAP government, if voted to power again, will cover all

It was later revealed that the man was a relative of the Congress candidate. However, he claimed he was merely waiting for his companion after casting his vote. Jalandhar Deputy Commissioner Himanshu Aggarwal said that elections were held for a total of 137 wards, including 85 wards of Municipal Corporation Jalandhar, 13 of Municipal Council Bhogpur, 13 of Municipal Council Goraya, 1 of Municipal Council Phillaur, 11 of Nagar Panchayat Bilga, 13 of Nagar Panchayat Shakhkot, and 1 ward of Nagar Panchayat Mehatpur. He added that in 2 wards (Ward No. 1 and 3) of Nagar Panchayat Bilga, unanimous decisions had already been made. Aggarwal said that in the district, 54.90 per cent approximately voting was conducted smoothly and peacefully. Of this, the voter turnout was 50.27 per cent in Municipal Corporation Jalandhar, 71.81 per cent in Municipal Council Bhogpur, 65.36 per cent in Municipal Council Goraya, 55.92 per cent in Municipal Council Phillaur, 66.54 per cent in Nagar Panchayat Bilga, 63.90 per cent in Nagar Panchayat Shakhkot, and 61.55 per cent in Nagar Panchayat Mehatpur. In the Phagwara Municipal Corporation, which falls under Kapurthala district, Congress secured the highest number of seats. Till the time of filing this report, Congress had won 22 seats, followed by AAP with 12 seats, the BJP with 5 seats, and the Akali Dal with 2 seats. Independents won 3 seats. In Kapurthala district, a total of 56.20% voting was recorded in the elections for the Municipal Corporation of Phagwara and the Municipal Panchayats of Bhulath, Begowal, Nadala, and Dhillwan.

For Phagwara Municipal Corporation, polling percentage was 55.21%. Similarly, in Dhillwan 60 per cent, in Bhulath Municipal Panchayat, 63.28 per cent, in Begowal Municipal Panchayat 59.60 per cent turnout, while in Nadala Municipal Panchayat polling was recorded at 64.52 per cent. AAP won 13 of the 50 wards in Phagwara while the Congress claimed 20 wards, followed by four each by BJP and SAD. SAD had contested from nine wards and the BJP had fielded its candidates in 37 wards. In Hoshiarpur municipal elections, polling was held for three wards of Hoshiarpur Municipal Corporation, one by-election each for the Haryana and Tanda wards, and the general election for Mahilpur Municipal Panchayat. Deputy Commissioner and District Election Officer Komal Mittal reported that the district saw a 61.10% voter turnout. She said that the voter turnout was 51.74% in the three wards of Hoshiarpur Municipal Corporation, 68.06% in Ward No. 11 of Haryana Municipal Council, 76.43% in Ward No. 8 of Tanda Municipal Council, and 68.22% in Mahilpur. In Hoshiarpur AAP won on all seats except five where three Congress and two Independents won.

(Amritsar), and Goraya (Jalandhar), as well as the Sangrur municipal council. In Ludhiana, BJP district president Rajnish Dhiman reported 18 wins out of the 90 wards contested. By contrast, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) managed only 2 victories out of 78 contested. BJP's Shobha Rani won Ward 23, where AAP cabinet minister Hardeep Singh Mundian resides, while Ishpreet Kaur claimed Ward 21.

In Phagwara's municipal corporation, AAP failed to secure a majority, winning only 13 of 50 wards. Congress led with 20 victories, while BJP and SAD won four each. Interestingly, SAD achieved its victories in four of the nine wards it contested, while BJP's four wins came from 37 candidates. Bhikhi Nagar Panchayat in Mansa saw Independents winning 7 of 13 wards, followed by AAP with 5 and BJP with 1. In Shakhkot (Jalandhar), Congress dominated with 9 of 13 wards, while AAP won 4 and BJP 1. Goraya's 13 wards saw AAP winning 10, Congress 2, and BJP 1.

In Jalandhar municipal corporation, BJP won 13 of 83 wards contested, while SAD managed three of 31. Amritsar's results showed BJP winning six of 84 contested wards and SAD securing five of 69. Patiala municipal corporation, where 53 of 60 wards went to polls, saw BJP win 4 of 25 contested seats, while SAD secured 2 of 26. In Bhadson Nagar Panchayat (Patiala district), BJP surprised with two wins in this semi-urban area. In Sangrur, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's home district, AAP failed to secure a majority in the municipal council elections. Of the 29 wards, Independents won 10, Congress 9, AAP 7, and BJP 3. SAD failed to win any seats in this area, a known farmers' protest hub. The results indicate BJP's growing influence in urban and semi-rural Punjab, even as AAP and SAD grappled with mixed performances.



their expenses, including tuition fees, travel, and other costs. The scheme, he added, will also be applicable to children of Dalit government employees. "I firmly believe even honest government servants often cannot afford to send their children abroad for education without a scholarship. This scheme ensures their children can also follow in the footsteps of Babasaheb Ambedkar and achieve their dreams." Kejriwal said. "Today, through this initiative, we are giving a strong response to the mockery made by the BJP and Amit Shah. This is our way of empowering the Dalit community and honoring Babasaheb's legacy," he added. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva termed Kejriwal a "political weather scientist skilled at repackaging old schemes under new names" according to the prevailing political climate. "The announcement is a classic case of old wine in a new bottle... Kejriwal had similarly announced a scheme for higher education scholarships for Scheduled Caste students before the 2020 polls; that scheme has remained stagnant ever since. Yet, Kejriwal has now reintroduced it with a new name," he alleged. In August 2019, the AAP Delhi Cabinet had approved a scholarship scheme to fund higher studies of 100 Dalit students overseas each year. Delhi BJP Secretary Harish Khurana, citing an RTI reply on the disbursement of funds under the scheme launched in 2020.

'Communal Muslim alliance' behind Rahul and Priyanka's Wayanad wins, says CPI(M) leader



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Rahul Gandhi, Communist Party of India (Marxist), A Vijayaraghavan, Communal Muslim alliance, Indian express news, current affairs A Vijayaraghavan alleged that a "communal Muslim alliance" was behind the victory of congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and his sister Priyanka Gandhi from Wayanad Lok Sabha seat. Communist Party of India (Marxist) politburo member A Vijayaraghavan Saturday alleged that a "communal Muslim alliance" was behind the victory of congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and his sister Priyanka Gandhi from Wayanad Lok Sabha seat.

Addressing the CPI(M) Wayanad district conference at Sulthan Bathery, Vijayaraghavan said: "Two persons have gone from Wayanad (Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi). With whose support? With the strong support of the communal Muslim alliance. Without their support, it was possible for Rahul Gandhi to reach Delhi. He is the Opposition leader. Who were in the front and back rows of the processions of Priyanka Gandhi? The worst extremist elements in the minorities were in them. They were with the Congress leadership. Without the support of the communal Muslim alliance, was it possible for Rahul Gandhi to reach Delhi," he said. Vijayaraghavan's attack on Congress linking the party with Muslim organisations goes with the line the party had adopted after the 2014 April Lok Sabha elections. CPI(M) had tried to woo the Muslim vote bank in Kerala by highlighting the Citizenship Amendment Act and Palestine issues during the Lok Sabha elections held this April, but the election outcome witnessed Hindu voters deserting the CPI (M) led LDF. This approach of the CPI(M) was evident in the recent by-elections held to assembly seats of Palakkad, Chelakkara and Lok Sabha seat of Wayanad, where CPI(M) attacked the Muslim political organisations. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had dubbed IUML's state president Sadiq Ali Shihab Thangal as an "activist of the Jamaat-e-Islami", saying Jamaat-e-Islami stood for the "Islamic regime" and that the "extremist section" was "trying to gain influence in the Indian Union Muslim League". The IUML is part of the Congress-led United Democratic Front in Kerala and a constituent of the INDIA bloc at the national level. Just before the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat last month, Vijayan had tried to link Jamaat-e-Islami with Congress, stating that its now MP Priyanka was contesting the polls with the support of Jamaat-e-Islami, which he said has an approach that is "not in favour of a democratic system".

At PM-UDAY camps, residents from Delhi's unauthorised colonies line up for 'pakka kaagaz'

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Girish Sharma, a 41-year-old autorickshaw driver from Karawal Nagar, is giddy with happiness. He just got his property registered, fulfilling his dream to finally own his house. Sharma is at a camp organised by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) in Mandawali under the PM-UDAY scheme, which aims to assist residents of unauthorised colonies secure ownership rights to their houses. The DDA is organising camps across the Capital's unauthorised colonies on the weekends throughout December.

The camp on Saturday saw several people about to finally get legal documents that prove they own the properties where they have resided for long, since generations in some cases. Following the registry or conferment of ownership rights, residents can sell their properties, avail loans against them, and also get plans approved if they want to make changes in the current building or construct structures in a vacant plot for which they have received ownership rights. Sharma explains why these documents are so important. "In a few years, I am going to get my daughter married and will need a loan for the wedding. If I didn't have registry papers for my house, the bank wouldn't have given me a loan against it." He is thankful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "Unki wajah se humare pakke kaagaz ban gaye (We have proper documentation due to him)."

Modi and L-G V K Saxena's faces adorn the banners of the PM-UDAY scheme. The L-G had directed DDA to expedite PM-UDAY applications in November after the scheme did not see a high number of property registrations for over four years. According to a reply given by the Union Housing Minister in Parliament in July, of the 1,22,729 applications, only 23,811 have been granted ownership rights under the scheme. The push to the scheme comes at a critical time, just ahead of the Delhi elections. The approximately 50 lakh residents in Delhi's 1,731 unauthorised colonies form about one-third of the Capital's electorate.

"This time, it seems government officials are under pressure to work," says Navratan Goel (64), who owns a general store. He is about to get his house registered at a camp in East Vinod Nagar. "Earlier, officials used to delay and postpone. Now, they are saying all problems will be resolved and the process will be over today." However, not everyone shares their optimism. Shankar Pandey (65), who installed dental chairs in clinics till 2016, is now retired. Residents of nearby Ganesh Nagar, he and his wife Sunita Pandey have a power of attorney dating back to 1981 for the house where they stay, but it was not accepted as proof of ownership at the Mandawali camp on Saturday. "DDA officials are saying that some papers are not stamped properly. How do I account for how documents were stamped back then?" Pandey asks as the couple make their second visit to such a camp in two weeks. Far from Mandawali, Manik Mukherjee (46), a financial broker, faces a similar fate at a camp in Bharat Vihar, Dwarka. In 2016, he had bought his flat that had come up in an unauthorised colony, but a 2021 policy change requires him to show proof of ownership which is from before 2015.

How Bengaluru policemen disguised as devotees nabbed acid attacker turned ‘sanyasi’



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

The IT capital Bengaluru hit the headlines in April 2022 when a woman faced an acid attack on her way to office. It took two weeks for the police and a manhunt across states to nab the attacker. With no concrete leads on the whereabouts of the attacker, a team of more than 200 police personnel branched out across states in South India. Eventually, a devotee's tip-off helped the police nab the accused who had become a 'sanyasi (monk)' Bengaluru. Bengaluru acid attack, Bengaluru acid attackers, Bengaluru police, Acid Attack, acid attacker turned sanyasi, Indian express news, current affairs A police officer said, "The victim had given the name and also the motive. We questioned her uncle who narrated the entire episode." On April 28, 2022, around 8.30 am, the victim was on her way to the office. When she was getting to the first floor of her office building, a man came from behind and threw concentrated sulphuric acid on her and ran away. She sustained severe burn injuries on her hand, chest, head, backside and legs. A police officer said, "We received the information about the attack soon and when we visited the hospital, despite being in pain, the victim gave us the name of the suspect - Nagesh Babu, who was her neighbour. She was a gritty woman." The woman, then 24, an MCom graduate from a middle-class family, was also preparing for banking examinations. She lived at her uncle's house in Bengaluru and was gearing up for her elder sister's marriage which was scheduled on May 8. Following the complaint, the police also got hold of CCTV footage. A police officer said, "The victim had given the name and also the motive. We questioned her uncle who narrated the entire episode." Nagesh Babu, then 27, the owner of a garment factory, was a tenant in the house of the woman's uncle for seven years and used to stalk her. He proposed to the woman on multiple occasions but his advances were spurned. However, the woman did not inform her family about Nagesh Babu. But on April 27, 2022, Nagesh Babu followed her and tried to forcibly marry her. This time, the woman informed her aunt and uncle about it. As the matter escalated, the woman's uncle asked Nagesh to vacate the house and also called the latter's elder brother to inform him about the incident. The next day, Nagesh Babu carried out the acid attack.

While it was not difficult to ascertain who the culprit was, it became a challenging task to track him down. A police officer said, "Usually, in crime cases, we get to know the motive after the arrest of the accused when we question him. But in this specific case, we knew the motive. But arresting him became a huge challenge." A police officer who

was part of the investigating team said they were under severe pressure to arrest the culprit as the case received national attention. At that time, Kamal Pant was the Bengaluru city police commissioner and he had deployed a huge number of police personnel for the manhunt. Home minister Araga Jnanendra was also collecting information from the top cops every day. Many civil groups staged protests demanding the arrest of Nagesh Babu. "We searched for possible leads and found out that Nagesh's mobile phone was last active in Hoskote under Bengaluru Rural, which is also close to the Tamil Nadu border. Nagesh had made the last phone call to his brother wherein he admitted to the crime. He disposed of the mobile phone before leaving Hoskote. Multiple teams visited several places in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala in search of Nagesh," the police officer said. However, after getting no leads, the Bengaluru city police on May 4 sought public help and released multiple photographs of Nagesh. "In every state, we released photographs of Nagesh Babu with text in multiple languages. However, we were unable to track him... there were no results for at least two weeks." "We had done every possible thing to track Nagesh Babu. We had picked up his sister and brother for questioning. We also tried checking his debit card usage but he had disposed of the card. He had also sold machinery from his garment factory before the incident," the police officer added.

On May 13, 2022, the Bengaluru police received a tip-off from Tamil Nadu's Tiruvannamalai district. A police officer said, "The local police had received information from a devotee that a sanyasi at an ashram resembled Nagesh Babu. The informant came across the photos of Nagesh Babu released by the police." Two Bengaluru policemen visited the ashram disguised as devotees and spent nearly an hour there to make sure that the person of interest was Nagesh Babu. He was dressed as a sanyasi and was helping the ashram authorities. Once the police confirmed his identity, they nabbed Nagesh Babu and returned to Bengaluru. On May 14, 2022, Kamal Pant in a press meet announced the arrest of Nagesh Babu. By then, Nagesh Babu who had tried to escape the police near Kengeri was shot in the leg by one inspector Prashanth. A police officer said that after the acid attack, Nagesh Babu had reached an ashram in Tamil Nadu and had expressed his desire to become a sanyasi to serve the people. Without conducting any verification, the ashram authorities provided him with food and shelter. He did not have any reason to come out of the ashram, helping him to remain in hiding.

After the incident, the state government bore the expenses of the victim's treatment as she had to undergo multiple surgeries. The state government also provided her with a job. On the other hand, in August 2022, the Bengaluru city police filed a 770-page chargesheet, which included the statements of 92 witnesses, before the additional chief metropolitan magistrate court. Though Nagesh Babu applied for bail, the court rejected his plea. Nagesh Babu had claimed that he was innocent and was suffering from gangrene but the court rejected the bail plea considering the seriousness of the offence. Nagesh Babu continues to be in judicial custody. On the other hand, the victim's uncle said she was under severe depression but the support of the media and the public helped her to bounce back. "She is doing well in her life now," he added.

Fadnavis retains Home, Ajit Finance, Shinde gets Urban, Works, and Housing



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

The BJP-led Mahayuti government in Maharashtra announced the portfolios of ministers Saturday, with Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis keeping Home, a ministry that Eknath Shinde, his predecessor and now Deputy CM, was keen to have. Fadnavis also kept Energy (excluding Renewable Energy); Law & Judiciary; General Administration Department; Information & Publicity; and Departments/ Sub-jets not allotted to any other minister.

Shiv Sena leader Shinde, who was eyeing Home, which Fadnavis had as Deputy CM in the previous government, got three portfolios: Urban Development; Housing; and Public Works (Public Enterprises). The other Deputy CM, NCP chief Ajit Pawar, will keep Finance & Planning, and also handle State Excise. The portfolio allocation came hours after the weeklong Winter Session of the state Assembly concluded here. And days after the Fadnavis Government included 39 ministers on December 15, although with a rider — their tenure will be for two-and-a-half years, and their continuance will depend on a review. Many in the ruling alliance feel while the review will fix accountability and put pressure on the ministers to perform after the impressive mandate in the recent Assembly elections, a mid-term change will also give hope to other MLAs who could not make the cut this time around. Along with CM Fadnavis and Deputy CMs Shinde and Pawar, the total strength of the council of ministers is currently 42, one short of the permissible limit. Of the 39 ministers who took oath on December 15, as many as 19 (16 Cabinet ministers and 3 MoS) were from BJP, followed by Shiv Sena's 11 (9 Cabinet and two MoS) and NCP's 9 (8 Cabinet and one MoS).

BJP Ministers Maharashtra BJP chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule will be the Revenue minister. The other portfolios allocated to BJP ministers are: Radhakrishna Vikhe-Patil (Water Resources- Krishna and Godavari Valley Development corporation); Girish Mahajan (Water Resources-Vidarbha , Tapi, Konkarn Development Corporation; and Disaster Management); Chandrakant Patil (Higher and Technical Education, Parliamentary affairs). Ganesh Naik has been given Forests; Mangal Prabhat Lodha (Skill Development, Employment, Entrepreneurship and Innovation); Jaykumar Raval (Marketing and Protocol); Pankaja Munde (Environment and Climate Change, Animal Husbandry); Atul Save (OBC Welfare, Dairy Development and Renew-

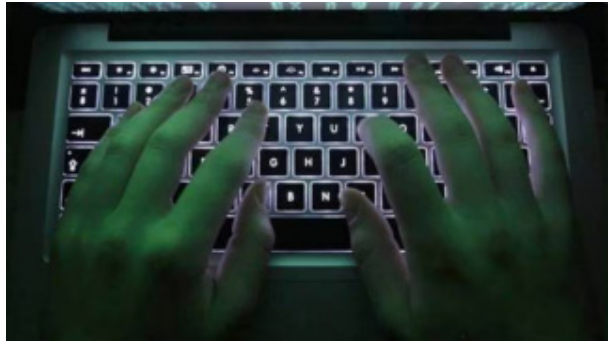
able Energy). B.J.P. Jaykumar Rawal is the new minister for Marketing and Protocol. Ashok Uike has got Tribal Development; Ashish Shelar Cultural Affairs and Information Technology; and Shivendrasinh Bhosale Public Works. Jaykumar Gore has been given Rural Development and Panchayati Raj; Sanjay Savkare Textiles, Nitesh Rane Fisheries and Ports; and Akash Fundkar Labour.

Shiv Sena Ministers Shiv Sena Minister Gulabrao Patil has got Water Supply and Sanitation, a portfolio he had in the previous Shinde government. His party colleague Dadaji Bhushe will be the new School Education Minister while Sanjay Rathod will keep Soil and Water conservation. The others are: Uday Samant (Industries and Marathi language); Shambhuj Desai (Tourism, Mining, Ex-servicemen Welfare); Sanjay Shirsat (Social Justice); Pratap Samaik (Transport); Bharat Gogawale (Employment Guarantee, Horticulture, Salt Pan Lands Development); and Prakash Abitkar Public Health and Family Welfare. NCP Ministers Senior NCP MLA Hasan Mushrif has kept his previous Medical Education department, while former Agriculture minister Dhanjay Munde has been given Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Protection, which was handled by Chhagan Bhujbal in the previous government. Bhujbal has been dropped from the present Cabinet. Babasaheb Patil was allocated Cooperation; Aditi Tatkar Women and Child Development; while Makarand Jadhav (Patil) is the new Relief & Rehabilitation Minister. The others are: Dattatrey Bhanne (Sports , Youth welfare and Minority Development and Aukaf); Manikrao Kokate (Agriculture); and Narhari Zirwal (Food and Drug Administration, Special assistance). Ministers of State Sena's Adv Ashish Jaiswal will handle Finance & Planning, Agriculture Relief & Rehabilitation, Law & Judiciary, Labour departments; while BJP's Madhuri Misal got Urban Development, Transport, Social Justice, Medical Education, Minorities Development & Aukaf. BJP's Pankaj Bhoysar will work with Home (Rural), Housing, School Education, Co-operation, Mining; while Meghna Sakore-Bordikar will handle Public Health & Family Welfare; Water Supply & Sanitation; Energy; Women & Child Development. NCP's Indranil Naik is MoS for Industries; Public Works; Higher & Technical Education; Tribal Development; Tourism; Soil & Water Conservation. Sena's Yogesh Kadam is MoS for Home (Urban); Revenue; Rural Development & Panchayati Raj; Food Civil Supplies & Consumer Protection; Food & Drug Administration.

Two arrested for posing as Delhi Jal Board officials, running phishing scam

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Two cyber fraudsters were arrested Saturday for allegedly orchestrating a phishing scam in which they impersonated officials from the Delhi Jal Board (DJB). Police said the accused, Deepak Kumar, 22, and Pappu Ray, 25, would exploit their victims by threatening to disconnect their water supply and tricking them into sharing their banking credentials. The investigation led to the recovery of Rs 4.6 lakh frozen in multiple bank accounts linked to the two men, said police. The case came to the police's attention after a complaint was filed by a 52-year-old woman on October 22. In her complaint, the victim recalled receiving a text message claiming her water connection would be disconnected unless she updated her account on the Jal Board website. This was followed by a WhatsApp message containing a link to download an APK file named 'Jal Jeevan'.



Police said the message also instructed her to pay a fee of Rs 9 to update her account. On following the instructions, for which she needed to enter her banking details, she saw quick back-to-back unauthorised withdrawals totalling Rs 4.73 lakh from her account. The cybercrime unit immediately launched a detailed investigation. "During the probe... relevant details of bank transactions were analysed at length and verified. Further, an analysis of the mobile number from which the WhatsApp text was received showed it originated from Jharkhand," said DCP (South) Ankit Chauhan. Police also tracked the money trail and pinpointed two accounts where the stolen money had been transferred. One of the accounts, police said, was found to be making transactions in different parts of Delhi. Police zeroed in on the suspects' locations and subsequently ar-

rested Deepak from his residence in Kirari Suleman Nagar, while Pappu was caught in Dumka in Jharkhand. During questioning, the duo allegedly admitted to committing multiple cybercrimes by using fake messages and malicious apps to deceive their victims. According to police, Ray impersonated a DJB official and communicated with the victims to create a sense of urgency. Deepak handled the financial aspect by withdrawing money using credit cards and transferring the funds to multiple accounts.

When police dug deeper, they found the duo was linked to another case in which a resident of Greater Kailash II was cheated out of Rs 13 lakh using the same modus operandi. Police also discovered additional cases connected to the accused, with reported amounts of Rs 99,000 and Rs 5.32 lakh being fraudulently taken. Further investigations are underway to identify other potential victims and collaborators in the scam, said police. The duo has been booked under Section 318 (cheating) and 319 (cheating by personation) of the BNS.

'India is emerging as second largest market in consumption of polished diamonds after US'

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

India is emerging as the second largest market in the world after the United States in the consumption of polished diamonds and jewellery, leaving behind China, asserted Amit Pratihari, Managing Director, De Beers India, on Saturday. Pratihari was in Surat to announce the partnership of De Beers with Tanishq for a strategic collaboration to boost India's natural diamond jewellery market. The event bears significance at a time when the diamond sector in Surat is undergoing a phase of slump in the aftermath of the Russia-Ukraine war, among other factors.



The De Beers Group, a leading global firm in the sector, and Tanishq, which is among India's top jewellery retail brands, announced a long-term strategic collaboration to connect more Indian consumers with the "rarity and preciousness of natural diamonds and amplify the growing opportunity in the Indian market". Addressing the reporters, Pratihari said, "The diamond jewellery market of the world is worth 89 US billion dollars. The United States is the largest consumer of polished diamond and diamond-studded jewellery and India is the second largest market in the world, while China and the Middle East follow."

merely a collection, but a tribute to her world. With collections like 'Unbound' and our collaboration with De Beers Group, we aim to celebrate and honour the individuality and aspirations of every woman, today and for generations to come."

Fire breaks out at IOC refinery in Vadodara, no injuries reported



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

A fire broke out at the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) refinery in Koyali area of Vadodara city on Saturday, though there was no report of anyone getting hurt in the incident, a police official said. The blaze broke out at a furnace in the isomerate unit of the refinery at around 5:15 pm and was brought under control by firefighters of the IOC's emergency response team, Jawahar Nagar police station inspector A B Mori said. "No casualty was reported in the incident. It was a level-1 (minor) fire and cooling operations are underway," Kori said. In a statement the refinery said, "A fire incident occurred in the heater of NS1 unit of Gujarat Refinery at around 1730 hrs on 21/12/2024." The Refinery's Operating team and fire personnel responded immediately and the fire was extinguished in 10-12 minutes.

Artwork, radio bulletin, films: Talent showcase by students of Delhi's specialised schools

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

As part of their annual exhibition, Lehar 2024, students of Delhi government-run Dr B R Ambedkar Schools of Specialised Excellence (ASoSE) Saturday turned an art gallery in Chanakyapuri into a place where history, innovation, and youthful imagination converged. The theme for Lehar 2024 — being held at Shankar's Centre for Children CBT — is 'Parat: Interweaving the Layers of History, Memory, and the Passage of Time'. Students are showcasing a variety of works, including magazines, radio programmes and art installations. Delhi Chief Minister Atishi inaugurated the exhibition, which will continue till Sunday. She was later joined by AAP senior leader and former deputy CM Manish Sisodia. Atishi's arrival was marked by students performing a song by the band, Imagine Dragons. Sisodia, meanwhile, was welcomed with a traditional dance and went on to join students to shake a leg. An installation titled 'Migration', crafted by Rani and Vaishnavi, 17-year-old students from ASoSE Dwarka Sector 19, used cars dipped in black paint to symbolise ants carrying bundles of cloth and wood, alongside a massive sandcastle-like ant colony. "This represents ants leaving their old colony to settle in a new one, mirroring human migration due to pollution and urban challenges... Ants symbolise humans because both are social beings who live in organised colonies," Rani said. Ayush Kumar, a 16-year-old student from ASoSE Andrews Ganj,

presented 'Soch', a piece of installation art. It featured five human heads made from cardboard and molding clay, each representing different societal values — 'Azadi' (freedom), 'Katran' (creativity), 'Mehnat' (hard work), and 'Bachpan' (childhood). Anita, a 17-year-old from ASoSE Rohini Sector 21, showcased 'Journey of a Visual Arts Student', a ship divided into two sections representing Western and Indian art forms. "This reflects globalisation and the travel across the historical Silk Route, which has led to the integration of social but also artistic traditions," she said. Fifteen-year-old Idrish Takhani's 'Koodo se Qala Tak' (From Trash to Art) demonstrated the beauty of repurposing discarded materials. Keys, screws, cycle chains, and broken scissors were transformed into a stunning canvas painted black with a gold and silver finish. "Nothing is useless, we can create art instead of adding to landfills," he said. Harshita Kumari, 16, from ASoSE Andrews Ganj, blended tradition and innovation by designing a kurti worn over a saree, painted with art forms like Madhubani, Patua, Mughal, and Gond. "This is a tribute to India's rich artistic heritage," she said. The 'Digital Divine' section highlighted students' talents in photography, podcasting, and filmmaking. Mayank, a student from ASoSE Rohini Sector 21, said, "Technology isn't just AI and robots. Our movie, about an imam dasta (mortar and pestle), shows how traditional tools and crafts are also forms of technology."

On the matter of price fluctuation in the rough diamonds, Parathihari said, "There is a price fluctuation in rough diamonds and it is the mid-stream process. It relies on the economical situation of the world. There is instability in China and there is no growth even in the USA market, which consumes over 50% of diamonds. The price fluctuation in October and November month is to cater our sight holders through which the diamond reaches the local market. After the US elections, we are seeing double digit growth there. Earlier, China was the second largest market of diamonds, but after the pandemic, it has witnessed a slowdown and now slowly they are coming out of it. By the end of 2025, the market will be good." He further added, "India is the second largest diamond consuming market. India's gems and jewellery market domestic consumption of India is 85 billion dollar and it is expected to reach 120 billion dollar by 2030. India's economy is presently a 3.5 trillion dollar economy and by 2030, it is expected to reach 7.9 trillion dollars. Major growth in the Indian market is into the desirable products which includes gems and jewellery industry.

On the partnership with Tanishq, Pratihari said, "We will create awareness of precious natural diamonds among the customers, so that they would know how the diamonds are formed and how it passes to different hands and reaches to the craftsmanship and its value and uniqueness." Meanwhile, Tanishq Chief marketing officer Pelki Tshering said, "We are here to celebrate the trust and unconditional love bestowed by 1,06,325 Surat families. It's our privilege to have been a part of their most cherished memories and to have adorned their brides for so many decades. Today, we have launched our latest diamond jewellery collection, the 'Unbound'. Tanishq unbound is not



Water conservation, latest farming trends among highlights at inauguration of agriculture fair at Navsari Agricultural University



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Updating farmers with latest agricultural trends to get more yield, optimising resources and expenses, and use of drones in farming: these are among the highlights at a three-day agricultural fair that was inaugurated by Union Minister of Jal Shakti C R Paatil on Saturday at the Navsari Agricultural University. He was accompanied by Gujarat Agricultural minister Raghavji Patel, among others. Paatil also inaugurated and laid the foundations of development projects of the Road and Building Department of the state government at Tankal village in Navsari.

"People earn wealth through hard work with the intention that their seven generations would not face any financial problems. Similarly, water is also an important resource, and it should be saved for our future generations. Earlier, our forefathers saw creeks flowing without interruption. Now, we see water given in bottles to the guests, but if it is not saved, a time will come when water will be served in capsules," said Paatil, sounding a warning on possible shortage of water in future. He further added, "Under PM Narendra Modi's appeal from 'Karmabhumi to Janmabhumi', people from Rajasthan settled in Surat have given commitment to dig 1.40 lakh bores in different villages in Rajasthan. The cost of a single structure is around Rs 40,000. Surat is 'karmabhumi' and Rajasthan is their 'janmabhumi' and they have started working on it. Meanwhile, Gujarat Agricultural minister Raghavji Patel said, "Farmers' welfare is the priority of the state government, and our government has fulfilled the promise of compensation for crop damage given to the farmers of the state."

The Minister said that a total of Rs 1,372 crore has been given to more than 7.15 lakh farmers affected by the

heavy rains that occurred from July to September last year. He assured the farmers that the government will soon announce assistance for the damage to the paddy crop in the areas of South Gujarat including Navsari. Mentioning several farmer-oriented decisions like relief in electricity bills, easy and quick power connection installation, quick assistance for crop damage, he linked the prosperity of the state and the nation with agricultural prosperity. He asked the farmers to follow the path of economic prosperity through water conservation. Paatil also inaugurated a rainwater harvesting unit at the NAU. On this occasion, both the ministers also released a booklet related to Agro Textiles. Farmers will be given detailed information about various subjects and technologies. In addition, a demonstration of fertilizer spraying with the help of drone technology will also be given in this fair. In addition, more than 120 exhibition stalls have been set up to provide information about the scientific method of crop production as well as various welfare schemes for farmers. After the NAU event, Paatil participated in another event of inaugurated and laid foundation stone of expansion of different roads in the Navsari district on Saturday. The event was organised by state Road and Building department. Among these projects, Rankuva to Karanjveli village road which has width of 10 meters, has been expanded to four lane road. The road stretch is of 38.40 kilometers. Under this road stretch, four major and nine minor bridges will be built in a period of two years. The project is expected to cut down the number of accidents. Addressing the gathering, Paatil said, "Here in Gujarat, there is a triple engine government, and the development work done in Gujarat directly reaches the last person. There is no state in the country which meets the development done by triple engine government in Gujarat (Centre, State and local body). The role played by third engine (local self government body), by letting the development works at end level in the villages and district." He shared the details that Chikhli village became the first village in the country under Adarsh Gram Yojana launched by the PM in 2014, wherein 32 different types of facilities were provided to the people. Over 100 bore works had been done in Chikhli by for rainwater harvesting through people participation. He appealed to save the water and not to waste it. He also further shared details about 15,000 bores work in Madhya Pradesh will be done by businessmen who had taken responsibility and the work on it is in progress. Similarly in Bihar, the bore structure work is in progress in 10 districts.

Gujarat FDCA busts firms 'adulterating nutrition-linked products with aphrodisiacs'

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

The Gujarat Food and Drugs Control Administration (FDCA) has busted an alleged fraud of exporting aphrodisiac allopathic ingredients, mixed with nutraceutical (food or food-related component that provides health benefits) products, to African nations, as well as a factory manufacturing fake allopathic medicines without a license. Adulterated and fake medicines worth about Rs 32 lakh were seized, officials said on Saturday. A flying squad of the Gujarat FDCA, along with drug inspectors of Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), questioned the three partners of the firm, M/s. Joinhub Pharma LLP, as well as two persons in charge of purchase — Bhavesh Patel and Nazar Mohammed Saudi — at their office at Mondeal Heights in Ahmedabad. Ahmed Abbas Balospura, Abbas Ali Balospura, Sanket Shah are the three firm partners who have been questioned.

Officials then raided the firm's warehouse at Kunj Estate, Changodar. Samples of the medicine, Wholeshield Refire Capsule and Demex (Vitamin-D3), were taken and sent for testing and a quantity of product worth Rs 11 lakh was seized for legal action. Further, the partners of M/s. Joinhub Pharma LLP said that the said medication was manufactured by M/s. Aeron Life Sciences Pvt. Ltd, located at Kathwada, in Daskroi taluka of Ahmedabad, under a nutraceuticals license. They used to add aphrodisiac ingredient Sildenafil Citrate powder to it and had been exporting it in large quantities in the name of nutraceuticals.

Based on the information that they were going to export such quantity, the officials of Gujarat Food and Drug and Central Drug Licensing Authority (CDSCO) raided their



unit and found adulteration with Wholeshield Refire Capsules with Sildenafil Citrate aphrodisiac allopathic ingredient. They were meant for sale to M/s. Joinhub Pharma LLP for export, said officials. Further, at the M/s. Aeron Life Sciences Pvt. Ltd factory in Kathwada, the joint FDCA and CDSCO team also found Demex (Vitamin-D3) 10,000 IU and Demex (Vitamin-D3) 5,000 IU being illegally manufactured at another plant registered to M/s. 4Care Life Sciences Pvt Ltd located in Bagdol village of Kathlal taluka in Kheda district. This plant was illegally producing the nutraceuticals using the manufacturing license of M/s. Aeron Life Sciences Pvt. Ltd to speed up production. Directors of M/s. Aeron Life Sciences Pvt. Ltd — Kashyap Paresh Patel, Dhaval Harji Savaliya, Rajdeep Mathur Seldia, Hardik Uka Bhesaniya, Harshil Jayesh Barot and Priyanka Dhaval Savaliya — will be prosecuted under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act. Samples of the drugs produced in their factories were sent for examination and product worth Rs 21 lakh

Now, Rajkot Crime Branch takes journalist Mahesh Langa into 4-day custody in GST evasion case



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Rajkot City Police Crime Branch on Saturday took journalist Mahesh Langa on a four-day remand after arresting him in a GST fraud case which is under investigation. This is a separate case from the one being investigated by the Crime Branch of Ahmedabad City Police in which he was initially arrested. The EOW of the Rajkot City Crime Branch arrested him from Ahmedabad's Sabarmati Central Jail in a case pertaining to the evasion of Goods and Services Tax (GST) filed by a Superintendent of the Anti-Evasion Section of the CGST Department on November 27, said officials. They obtained a transit remand to take him to Rajkot on Friday and he was subsequently produced before a local court on Saturday. While the EOW sought his remand for 14 days, the court saw fit to grant four days custody ending on Tuesday, said officials. The case pertains to the alleged bogus billing between a total of 15 alleged shell companies, led by a firm named Parmar Enterprises, all having conspired to claim false Input Tax Credit (ITC), registered in Rajkot in June 2023. Police Inspector SM Jadeja of the Special Operations Group, who is also in charge of EOW, said, "Parmar Enterprises was set up in June 2023 as a shell firm. There

was a false rental agreement and on the basis of that fake bills were produced. A total of 14 other firms purchased fake bills from this firm, including DA Enterprise which is owned by Mahesh Langa. We have obtained a four day-remand of the accused." Notably, a total of 15 persons have been arrested till date in this case, including Langa, said police officials. The Indian Express has learnt that bogus bills to the tune of Rs3.27 crore (Rs3,27,63,162) were allegedly generated by Parmar Enterprises, which were then purchased by 14 other firms. The false ITC claimed through these bogus bills amounts to around Rs 61.38 lakh.

Police officials said DA Enterprise had purchased 4 fake bills from Parmar Enterprises worth Rs47 lakh. The bogus ITC from these fake bills amounts to Rs8,50,788. What are the cases against Langa?

The first case, filed on October 7, is regarding Langa's alleged involvement in running a benami firm linked to a network of 220 shell companies allegedly involved in a nationwide GST fraud, primarily investigated by the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGI). The second case, filed by Gandhinagar Police on October 22, named Langa as accused of theft and possession of confidential documents of the Gujarat Maritime Board (GMB). The third case, against the Ahmedabad Commissioner of Police Gyanender Singh Malik on October 29, was filed by the Detection of Crime Branch (DCB) of Ahmedabad City Police against the senior assistant editor of The Hindu newspaper on October 28, for cheating a businessman to the tune of Rs28.68 lakh. The fourth case, announced by the Ahmedabad Zonal Office of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on October 29, said it had filed a case of Money Laundering against Mahesh Langa and others, and had conducted a second set of search operations at 7 premises across Ahmedabad, Surat and Bhavnagar districts of Gujarat on Sunday (October 27), in the GST Fraud case, based on the FIR filed by the Ahmedabad Crime Branch.

Former bank manager among 15 sent to prison in Rs 1.62 crore bank fraud case by CBI court

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Fifteen people, including a former branch manager of the State Bank of Saurashtra in Ahmedabad, were sentenced to imprisonment for a period ranging from three to five years with a collective fine of Rs 15.35 lakh in a Rs 1.62 crore bank fraud case. The Special Judge for CBI cases, Court No 1 Ahmedabad, sentenced the fifteen accused, including Bechar Ganesh Zala, former branch manager of State Bank of Saurashtra, Naroda Road Branch, Ahmedabad, among others.

Fourteen others who have been convicted are Raghvendra K Rajgore; Mukesh Natwar Brahmbhatt; Amit Ajit Vyas; Rajendra Natwarlal Brahmbhatt; Chetan Jagdish Bhatt; Karan Vikram Mahida; Rajesh Arvind Patel; Mahesh Murlidhar Sabhani; Chinmay Girishchandra Trivedi; Jayesh Shyamal Aswani; Rajnikant Chotelal Upadhyaya; Nilesh Sureshchandra Shah; Vimal K. Mehta and Hemendra L. The CBI had registered the case on September 11, 2001, against the accused on allegations that accused BG Zala, then Branch Manager, had entered into a criminal conspiracy with aforesaid accused private persons and others with the aim to cheat the State Bank of Saurashtra, Naroda Road Branch, by abusing his official position as public servant in the matter of public housing finance by sanctioning housing finance of Rs. 1.62 crore on the basis of forged documents submitted by several borrowers.



A statement from the CBI on Saturday said that the accused BG Zala, in pursuance of the said criminal conspiracy, fraudulently and dishonestly did not verify the loan eligibility of the said borrowers and by abusing his official position as a public servant, sanctioned the housing loan to the borrowers. After the completion of the investigation, CBI filed nine separate chargesheets on various dates against the accused, including those convicted. Of the nine special cases, judgment on five cases has been pronounced. The charges against nine accused were abated as they died during the trial. After trial, the court found 15 people guilty and sentenced them accordingly.

Gujarat govt approves 24 new primary health centres

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

primary health centres According to the norms, one primary health center is approved for a rural population of 30,000 in general areas and 20,000 in tribal areas. The state government this week gave in-principle approval to construct a total of 24 Primary Health Centres (PHCs) in various districts of the state. According to a statement on Saturday, Health Minister Rushikesh Patel said that these centres will be important in making the rural health infrastructure of the state more robust and useful to the people.

He further said that currently health centers are approved in the state as per the rural population norms of the Central Government. According to the norms, one primary health center is approved for a rural population of 30,000 in general areas and 20,000 in tribal areas. At present, a total of 1,499 primary health centers are approved and functioning in the state as per the rural population norms of 2011. Currently, in the approval of these primary centers, a total of 24 primary health centers have been approved based on the geographical situation, taking into account the distance be-



tween the health centers based on geo-spatial analysis, without taking into account the said population norms. So that health services can be provided smoothly in such remote and inaccessible areas. It is worth mentioning here that a medical officer, laboratory technician, junior pharmacist, senior clerk and other staff are appointed in a primary health center.

Non-agricultural land fraud Case: Week after SC stays his arrest, Dahod CJM recalls warrant against real estate broker

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

A week after the Supreme Court stayed the arrest of real estate broker Kutubuddin Nooruddin Ravat, the alleged mastermind in the fake Non-Agricultural (NA) land fraud that is being investigated by the Dahod district police, the Dahod district Chief Judicial Magistrate on Saturday recalled a warrant issued against the 43-year-old. While staying his arrest, the Supreme Court on December 13 also directed Ravat to return to India from Dubai to cooperate in the trial court proceedings in Dahod. Earlier, on November 19, the Dahod court had issued a warrant directing Ravat to remain present in court on Friday (December 20) under Section 82 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC). However, Ravat approached the Supreme Court, seeking anticipatory bail, after his petition for anticipatory bail was rejected by the Gujarat High Court. The apex court, on the condition that the accused will cooperate during the trial in the trial court, granted him anticipatory bail and directed that he should not be arrested. On Saturday, the defence counsel in the Dahod court also argued that since the SC had granted anticipatory bail, the accused could not be considered an "absconder". Considering the submissions of the defence counsel and the SC order, the Chief Judicial Magistrate, in the order on Saturday said, "It does not appear appropriate to further continue the proceedings against Kutubuddin Ravat under CrPC Section 82. The notice, which was issued on November 19, 2024, directing him to remain present is cancelled."

The case against Ravat pertains to an alleged forged order dated December 21, 2016, in which an agricultural land was converted to a non-agricultural land in Dahod. Ravat, a real estate broker, has been ascribed a role in the scam that in 2019, he "facilitated" the owner of the land,



who is an accused in the case, in allegedly obtaining construction permission for the land and thereafter in selling the plots to buyers, "with the knowledge that the NA order was forged". Advocate Utkarsh Dave, who represented Ravat in the SC said, "The fact that was completely overlooked was that Ravat himself is a purchaser of some of the plots in question from the owner and is therefore a victim of the forgery... This entire investigation into the bogus NA orders appears to be directed at finding scapegoats to protect the officers, who were involved in the same in 2016. The role of Ravat in the FIR begins only after 2019 but he has been portrayed as the mastermind of the scam." Dave added that the SC had considered the argument that the Rs 10.51 lakh received by Ravat in his account — allegedly seen as incriminating crime evidence by the investigators — was "a very reasonable amount from the sale of plots considering the petitioner's occupation as a real estate broker". The police, which has filed chargesheet in the case in August this year, has not mentioned any other transaction made in the account of Ravat, the petition in the SC had stated.

Bharuch rape case: Chaitar visits survivor, slams govt over 'silence'

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

As Gujarat Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) working president and Dediapada MLA Chaitar Vasava on Saturday visited the 10-year-old girl who is battling for life at a hospital in Vadodra after she was raped allegedly by her neighbour in Bharuch, he attacked the BJP-led state government for "remaining silent" and demanded the resignation of Minister of State for Home Harsh Sanghavi. Accompanied by party leaders, Vasava arrived at the hospital and met the family of the girl who has undergone two surgeries to treat the internal injuries allegedly inflicted with a sharp metal object by the accused. The accused was arrested earlier this week.

According to the Bharuch District Superintendent of Police Mayur Chavda, the 36-year-old accused has admitted to have raping the girl earlier too. However, this time, the accused also allegedly injured the girl by inserting a sharp metal object to cause internal bleeding. The Bharuch district police, which is investigating the case, has been granted a five day remand of the accused until Monday. Meanwhile, during his visit, Chaitar Vasava attacked the BJP-led government saying, "If an incident happens in any other place, the BJP leaders start putting out tweets and giving advice. Now that this incident has occurred with an innocent child in Gujarat, not a single local leader or government representative has come to see the victim or are even willing to speak about it... Instead of showing off their strength, they

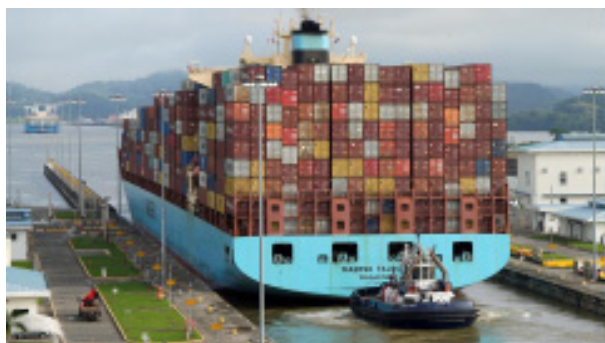


should make sure that the accused is handed out capital punishment." Vasava's visit and comments come after Jharkhand's Minister of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Dipika Pandey Singh on Wednesday visited her at the hospital in Vadodra, offering to 'airlift' the girl to any other advanced medical centre in the country. Congress leader Amit Chavda also visited her on Friday and attacked the state government. As per the doctors at the Vadodra Civic Hospital, the girl is critical after undergoing two abdominal surgeries — one of which was conducted at the Bharuch civil hospital immediately after she was found following the incident on December 16. Medical Superintendent of the Vadodra hospital told The Indian Express, "Ever since the girl was brought to SSG Hospital on December 18, she has been in the pediatric ICU with grievous injuries."

Trump threatens to take back control of Panama Canal

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump on Saturday (December 21, 2024) slammed what he called unfair fees for U.S. ships passing through the Panama Canal and threatened to demand control of the waterway be returned to Washington. He also hinted at China's growing influence around the canal, a worrying trend for American interests as US businesses depend on the channel to move goods between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. "Our Navy and Commerce have been treated in a very unfair and injudicious way. The fees being charged by Panama are ridiculous," he said in a post on his Truth Social platform. "This complete 'rip-off' of our Country will immediately stop." He added. The Panama Canal, which was completed by the United States in 1914, was returned to the Central American country under a 1977 deal signed by Democratic president Jimmy Carter. Panama took full control in 1999. "It was solely for Panama to manage, not China, or anyone else," Mr. Trump said. "We would and will NEVER let it fall into the wrong hands!" He continued that if Panama could not ensure "the secure, efficient and reliable operation" of the channel, "then we will demand that the Panama Canal be returned to us, in full, and without question." Authorities in Panama did not immediately react to Mr. Trump's post. Although he does not officially take office until next month, Mr. Trump has nevertheless been flexing his political influence in the waning days of President Joe Biden's administration. The real estate mogul boasted on the campaign trail that as an entrepreneur, he was uniquely positioned to fight for U.S. business interests. An estimated 5% of global maritime traffic passes through the Panama Canal, which allows ships travelling between Asia and the U.S. East Coast to avoid the long, hazardous route around the southern tip of South America. The main users of the passage are the United States, China, Japan and South Korea. The Panama Canal Authority reported in October that the waterway had earned record revenues of nearly \$5 billion in the last fiscal year.



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Seven Indians among around 200 injured in German Christmas market attack

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Seven Indians have been injured in the deadly car-ramming attack in the eastern German city of Magdeburg and the Indian embassy in Berlin is providing them all possible assistance, official sources said on Saturday (December 21, 2024) night. A 50-year-old man drove his car into crowds at a Christmas market on Friday evening in Saxony-Anhalt state's Magdeburg, leaving at least five people, including a nine-year-old, dead and nearly 200 injured, according to German authorities. Three out of seven injured Indians have been discharged from hospital, the Indian government sources said. Condemning the "horrific and senseless" attack, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the Indian mission in Germany is in contact with the Indians injured. It, however, did not specify the number of Indians injured. In a post on X, the Indian embassy in Berlin said it is maintaining close contact with the Indians injured in the attack. In a statement, the MEA said the Indian mission is rendering all possible assistance to the Indians injured in the incident.



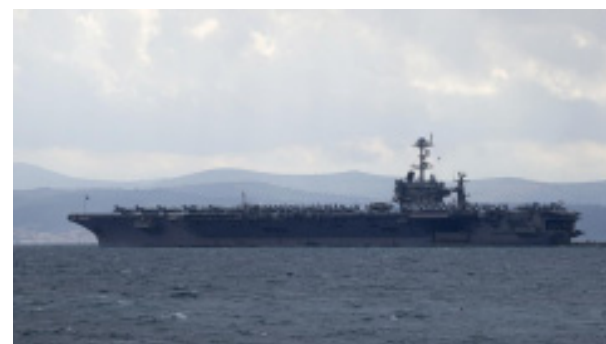
prayers are with the victims." "Our Mission is in contact with Indians who are injured, as well as their families, and rendering all possible assistance," the MEA said in a statement. Local law enforcement authorities said the 50-year-old man, who drove the car into the crowd, has been arrested. The man reportedly hails from Saudi Arabia and he has been living in Germany since 2006. Senior prosecutor Horst Walter Nopens said the motive for the attack remains unclear, but the suspect's dissatisfaction with Germany's treatment of Saudi refugees may have played a role, according to German broadcaster Deutsche Welle.

"We condemn the horrific and senseless attack at a Christmas market in Magdeburg, Germany," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said. "Several precious lives have been lost and many have been injured. Our thoughts and

Two Navy pilots shot down over Red Sea in apparent 'friendly fire' incident: U.S. military

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Two U.S. Navy pilots were shot down Sunday (December 22, 2024) over the Red Sea in an apparent "friendly fire" incident, the U.S. military said, marking the most serious incident to threaten troops in over a year of America targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels. Both pilots were recovered alive, with one suffering minor injuries, but the incident underlines just how dangerous the Red Sea corridor has become over the ongoing attacks on shipping by the Iranian-backed Houthis despite U.S. and European military coalitions patrolling the area. The U.S. military had conducted airstrikes targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels at the time, though the U.S. military's Central Command did not elaborate on what their mission was and did not immediately respond to questions from The Associated Press. The F/A-18 shot down had just flown off the deck of the USS Harry S. Truman aircraft carrier, Central Command said. On December 15, Central Command acknowledged that Truman had entered the Mideast but hadn't specified that the carrier and its battle group was in the Red Sea.



"The guided missile cruiser USS Gettysburg, which is part of the USS Harry S. Truman Carrier Strike Group, mistakenly fired on and hit the F/A-18," Central Command said in a statement. It wasn't immediately clear how the Gettysburg could mistake an F/A-18 for an enemy aircraft or missile, particularly as ships in a battle group remain linked by both radar and radio communication. However, Central Command said that warships and aircraft earlier shot down multiple Houthi drones and an anti-ship cruise missile launched by the rebels. Since the Truman's arrival, the U.S. has stepped up its airstrikes targeting the Houthis and their missile fire into the Red Sea and the surrounding area. However, the presence of an American warship group may spark renewed attacks from the rebels, like what the USS Dwight

D. Eisenhower saw last year. That deployment marked what the Navy described as its most intense combat since World War II. The Houthis have targeted about 100 merchant vessels with missiles and drones since the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip started in October 2023 after Hamas' surprise attack on Israel that killed 1,200 people and saw 250 others taken hostage.

Israel's grinding offensive in Gaza has killed more than 45,000 Palestinians, local health officials say. The tally doesn't distinguish between combatants and civilians. The Houthis have seized one vessel and sunk two in a campaign that has also killed four sailors. Other missiles and drones have either been intercepted by separate U.S. and European-led coalitions in the Red Sea or failed to reach their targets, which have also included Western military vessels. The rebels maintain that they target ships linked to Israel, the U.S. or the United Kingdom to force an end to Israel's campaign against Hamas in Gaza. However, many of the ships attacked have little or no connection to the conflict, including some bound for Iran.

Israeli strikes kill 17 Palestinians in Gaza, hospital in northern Gaza ordered to evacuate

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Israeli military strikes across the Gaza Strip killed at least 17 Palestinians, eight of them at a school sheltering displaced families in Gaza City, medics said, as the Israeli military ordered the evacuation of a hospital in the north. Palestinian medics said eight people, including children, were killed in the Musa Bin Nusayr School that sheltered displaced families in Gaza City. The Israeli military said in a statement the strike targeted Hamas militants operating from a command centre embedded inside the school. It said Hamas militants used the place to plan and execute attacks against Israeli forces.



At least five other Palestinians were killed in two separate airstrikes in Rafah and Khan Younis south of the enclave. In the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahiya, where the Army has operated since October, Hussam Abu Safiya, the director of Kamal Adwan Hospital, said the Army ordered staff to evacuate the hospital and move patients and injured people toward another hospital in the area. Abu Safiya said the mission was "next to impossible" because staff did not have ambulances to move the patients. The Israeli Army has operated in the two towns of north Gaza, Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun, as well as the nearby Jabalia camp for nearly three months. Palestinians have accused Israel of carrying out acts of "ethnic cleansing" to depopulate those areas to create a buffer zone. Israel denies this and says the campaign in the area aimed to fight Hamas militants and prevent them from regrouping. It said its forces have killed hundreds of militants and dismantled military infra-

structure since that operation began. Armed wings of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad said they killed many Israeli soldiers in ambushes during the same period. Mediators have yet to secure a ceasefire between Israel and the Islamist group Hamas. Sources close to the discussions told Reuters on Thursday (December 19, 2024) that Qatar and Egypt had been able to resolve some differences between the warring parties but sticking points remained. Israel began its assault on Gaza after Hamas-led fighters attacked Israeli communities on October 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people and taking over 250 hostages, according to Israeli tallies. Israel says about 100 hostages are still being held, but it is unclear how many are alive. Authorities in Gaza say Israel's campaign has killed more than 45,000 Palestinians and displaced most of the population of 2.3 million. Much of the coastal enclave is in ruins.

Syrian Democratic Forces: Rebels with a cause

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

When civil war broke out in Syria in 2011, one of the first things Bashar al-Assad's regime did was to pull back troops from the country's north-east so that they could defend the heartland against militias. This gave an opportunity to Syria's Kurds, the country's largest ethnic minority who make up some 10% of its population, to establish a de facto autonomous government in the region. In 2012, they established the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, also known as Rojava. In late 2015, the new administration formally established an armed wing called the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). In the subsequent years, the SDF would emerge as a highly effective ground force in the war against the Islamic State (IS) in the region.

After Mr. Assad crushed most of his enemies by 2016-17, with help from Russia, Iran and Hezbollah, his government entered into a detente with the Rojava. The SDF did not directly challenge Mr. Assad's authority. Mr. Assad's regime did not recognise the autonomous government, but stopped short of attacking the SDF. There was tense stability. Mr. Assad's government collapsed on December 8. The Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), formerly al-Qaeda's Syria branch, has now captured Damascus. The HTS is backed by Türkiye, which sees the SDF as a terrorist en-

tity. The Kurds are now caught between a pro-Turkish Islamist group that's in power in Damascus and a hostile Türkiye across the border. Kurds are often referred to as "a people without a state". They are divided among four countries — Türkiye, Iraq, Syria and Iran. In Iraq, they have enjoyed autonomy ever since the first Gulf war. In Türkiye, the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) has been fighting a bloody civil war against the state for decades. When the Syrian Kurds established their own autonomous government and militia, Türkiye got alarmed because it thought the empowerment of Syrian Kurds would invariably strengthen the Turkish Kurds. The main political party among Syrian Kurds was the Democratic Union Party (PYD). The People's Protection Units (YPG) was its armed wing. Türkiye considered both the PYD and the YPG as extended arms of the PKK and designated all of them as terrorist organisations. The YPG assumed regional prominence when the Islamic State, which seized eastern Syria's Raqqa and Deir Ezour, turned to Kobane, a Kurdish town on the Turkish-Syrian border. The YPG, backed by U.S. air power, defeated the IS in Kobane in 2015, which marked the beginning of the downfall of the IS's 'Caliphate', established across Syria and Iraq. Türkiye, a NATO ally of the U.S., strongly opposed America's support for the YPG. Later in 2015, the SDF was created, with the YPG being its core.

Trump taps 'Apprentice' producer, Mark Burnett, as special envoy to the United Kingdom

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Mark Burnett, the power producer who helped reintroduce Donald Trump to a national television audience with The Apprentice, is being tapped by the president-elect as special envoy to the United Kingdom in his upcoming administration. "With a distinguished career in television production and business, Mark brings a unique blend of diplomatic acumen and international recognition to this important role," Trump announced Saturday. Burnett, who was born in London, helped produce hits like Survivor and The Voice, but is perhaps best known for teaming up with Trump for The Apprentice, which first aired on NBC in 2004. Trump had been well-known in real estate and pop culture circles for decades. But the show helped again make him a household name — though Trump severed ties with NBC in 2015, the same year he launched his first White House run. The selection of Mr. Burnett continues Trump's trend of filling out his incoming administration with people who have high-profile backgrounds in television or politics, or both — including his choice to be defense secretary, Pete Hegseth, a former co-host of Fox's Friends Weekend, and ex-television doctor and unsuccessful Senate candidate in Pennsylvania, Mehmet Oz. Trump's first campaign in 2016 was rocked by allegations about his conduct on The Apprentice and other appearances during his association with NBC, notably in footage in which he said he could sexually assault women and get away with it because he was a "star."



Almost a decade after he left his reality TV role, Trump's television career remains central to his biography and political rise. The show presented Trump Tower to tens of millions of people as a symbol of power and success before Trump launched his first campaign from the building's lobby. "Mark is known for creating and producing some of the biggest shows in Television History," Trump wrote in his statement on Mr. Burnett, listing many of his biggest hits before adding, "most notably, 'The Apprentice'" and noting that Burnett "has won 13 Emmy Awards!" Special envoys are usually picked by presidents for the world's traditional hotspots, including the West Asia — where Trump has already said he'd like Steven Witkoff to fill the role. The United Kingdom, which has long enjoyed a "special relationship" with the U.S. that makes it one of Washington's strongest global allies, is not typically a candidate for such posts. But Trump has announced a series of special envoy positions to several top loyalists ahead of Inauguration Day on Jan. 20, including his former ambassador to Germany Richard Grenell who he chose as envoy for special missions. That announcement joined previous ones including Adam Boehler as special presidential envoy for hostage affairs, and Keith Kellogg to serve as special envoy for Ukraine and Russia. The president-elect said Mr. Burnett "will work to enhance diplomatic relations, focusing on areas of mutual interest, including trade, investment opportunities, and cultural exchanges."

Pope calls Gaza airstrikes 'cruelty' after Israeli Minister's criticism

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Pope Francis on Saturday (December 21, 2024) again condemned Israeli airstrikes in Gaza, a day after an Israeli government minister publicly denounced the pontiff for suggesting the global community should study whether the military offensive there constitutes a genocide of the Palestinian people. Francis opened his annual Christmas address to the Catholic cardinals who lead the Vatican's various departments with what appeared to be a reference to Israeli airstrikes on Friday that killed at least 25 Palestinians in Gaza. "Yesterday, children were bombed," said the Pope. "This is cruelty. This is not war. I wanted to say this because it touches the heart." The Pope, as leader of the 1.4-billion-member Roman Catholic Church, is usually careful about taking sides in conflicts, but he has recently been more outspoken about Israel's military campaign against Palestinian militant group Hamas. In book excerpts published last month, the pontiff said some international experts said that "what is happening in Gaza has the characteristics of a genocide". Israeli Minister of Diaspora Affairs Amichai Chikli sharply criticised those comments in an unusual open letter published by Italian newspaper Il Foglio on Friday. Chikli said the Pope's remarks amounted to a "trivialisation" of the term genocide.



Francis also said on Saturday that the Catholic bishop of Jerusalem, known as a patriarch, had tried to enter the Gaza Strip on Friday to visit Catholics there, but was denied entry. The patriarch's office told Reuters it was not able to comment on the Pope's remarks about the patriarch being denied entry. The Israeli Military said on Saturday the patriarch's entry had been approved and he would enter Gaza on Sunday, barring any major security issues. Aid from the patriarch's office entered last week, the Military said. Israel allows clerics to enter Gaza and "works in co-operation with the Christian community to make it easier for the Christian population that remains in the Gaza Strip — including coordinating its removal from the Gaza Strip to a third country," a statement from the military said. The war began when Hamas-led Palestinian militants attacked southern Israeli communities on Oct. 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking more than 250 hostages back to Gaza, according to Israeli authorities.

Israel's retaliatory campaign, which it says is aimed at eliminating Hamas, has killed more than 45,000 people, mostly civilians, according to authorities in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip. The campaign has displaced nearly the entire population and left much of the enclave in ruins. Israel says that at least a third of the dead have been militants and says it tries to avoid harm to civilians but is battling militants who it accuses of embedding among the population in dense urban areas. Hamas rejects this.

Nine killed, many injured as Israel bombards refugee camp in Gaza

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Gaza: At least nine people were killed in Israeli shelling on the Gaza Strip, according to Palestinian sources. Israeli warplanes targeted in the morning a gathering of Palestinians west of the al-Shati refugee camp on Saturday, said Mahmoud Basal, spokesman for Civil Defence in Gaza.

Basal told Xinhua that seven people were killed and some others injured in the strike, all of whom were taken to the Baptist Hospital in Gaza City. Medical workers also recovered a body and a number of wounded persons after an Israeli airstrike on a house in the vicinity of al-Ta'min school in central Gaza, according to Basal. Meanwhile, in southern Gaza's Rafah, medics said that a Palestinian was killed by an Israeli drone in the Khirbet al-Adas area, north of the city, Xinhua news agency reported.



Andhra makes special demand for extra 1% GST levy for disasters, opens floodgate of demands by other states



gst council meetingAfter the Council meeting, Andhra Pradesh's Finance Minister Payyavula Keshav said the state had experienced unprecedented rains and floods due to which most of the parts were inundated for 12 days. A special demand by Andhra Pradesh to raise funds through additional levy of 1 per cent Goods and Services Tax (GST) for damage caused due to rains and floods in the state opened floodgate of similar requests for disaster-specific levy by other states in the 55th GST Council meeting in Jaisalmer on Saturday. Once Andhra Pradesh raised its concerns about being in need of funds for recovering from the natural disaster, other states of West Bengal, Telangana, Karnataka also underlined instances of floods and droughts in their regions to the Council, which then decided to form a Group of Ministers on this issue. "On the request of the state of Andhra Pradesh, the Council recommended that a Group of Ministers be constituted to examine the legal and structural issues, and recommend a uniform policy on imposition of levy in case of a natural disaster/calamity in the state," an official release after the Council meeting stated.

The demand for additional GST levy for disasters, broadly on the same lines as an earlier flood-cess levy by Kerala in 2019, was discussed in detail in the Council. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said after the Council meeting. "The GoM will decide what it should be named, whether every disaster can be given, which disaster declared by who will have to have that power, will the GST Council then have the format. The GoM will decide on all these details and then the decision would be taken on that by the Council," she said.

Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Telangana have volunteered to be a part of the proposed GoM, Sitharaman said, adding that other ministers who want to be part of it can also join it. After the Council meeting, Andhra Pradesh's Finance Minister Payyavula Keshav said the state had experienced

unprecedented rains and floods due to which most of the parts were inundated for 12 days. "...on this situation, our financial situation is not that good due to the unjust bifurcation of the state and legacy liabilities, so for people to come back to normalcy, it takes about Rs 15,000 crore that has been the estimate submitted to the Government of India. To give us the leverage to come back to normalcy, we just suggested a small 1 per cent cess (under GST)," he said. Keshav said they have proposed this extra 1 per cent levy, which will consist of 0.5 per cent Central GST (CGST) and 0.5 per cent State GST (SGST), over and above the 28 per cent levy in their state for transactions related to luxury items.

Andhra's demand was supported by West Bengal also. West Bengal's Finance Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya said the legal aspect of such a proposal has to be looked into. "Cess, under the legal provisions, is only in the hands of the central government. If the state is given the responsibility of collecting cess, can the GST Council give that permission? I have asked that aspect should be looked into," she said. Explaining the earlier levy of flood cess by Kerala, Sitharaman said it had sought permission of the Council to levy 1 per cent cess on B2C sales in 2018. "It was a request made by Kerala in 2018, it was sent to a GoM, the GoM considered it and post that the agenda was placed in the Council, which then approved it in 2019," she said. The Finance Minister said when Andhra Pradesh brought the proposal to the Council, other states supported the need to facilitate the extra levy like Kerala. Telangana, Himachal Pradesh and West Bengal cited the instances of floods and cloudbursts in their regions over the last few years. Another point raised during this discussion was the need to define "disaster" for which such an additional GST rate can be levied. "...another point has come about whether disaster is only flood, only cyclone, why is drought not considered as disaster. This was raised by the Karnataka minister about north Karnataka. Then West Bengal said that at the time of levy by Kerala, it was collected as cess. They raised a correct technical point of cess belonging to the central government, under GST there is no right to collect cess. So how will you collect cess for disaster?" After a lot of discussion, I suggested that the Council should take a decision about whether every time such incidents happen in any state, does the Council have to agree immediately after they invoke it in the Council and whether there is a process for it or not. Since the tax burden will be on the public (of such additional tax), it has to be determined by right procedure. So everybody agreed, even Andhra's minister agreed that a GoM should be formed," Sitharaman said.

300 of 1,400 users from India, why ruling may re-open tapping debate

For the first time, a court in the US has held Israel's NSO Group liable for its intrusive spyware Pegasus, which could set up a measure of accountability for the company that it has, for long, allegedly downplayed. The decision came in a case filed by Meta-owned WhatsApp against the NSO Group, with the judge in the case, Phyllis Hamilton, holding that the Israeli spyware maker was liable for targeting the devices of 1,400 WhatsApp users, and violating sections of the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (CFAA), a federal cybersecurity law, and a similar state law in California called the California Computer Data Access and Fraud Act (CDFA). Victims of Pegasus's use included senior government officials, journalists, human rights activists, political dissidents and diplomats. The installation of Pegasus also extended to devices in India, including those allegedly belonging to journalists, politicians, Union Ministers, besides members of the civil society. In the US, President Joe Biden's administration put the NSO Group on a blacklist in 2021 and forbade US government agencies from purchasing its products. Pegasus has been implicated in hacks by authoritarian governments across the world. The alleged Pegasus targeting in India, Centre's denial



ported interception and the possession, storage and use of such information collected through such interception, in the hands of State actors and non-State actors." However, the Commission's work was cut short as the Supreme Court stayed its proceedings.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had later claimed that the West Bengal government had received an offer to purchase the Pegasus spyware, with the NSO Group ready to provide its spyware to the state police for Rs 25 crore around four-five years ago. In Andhra Pradesh, the alleged use of Pegasus became a political issue between the YSRCP and TDP. In 2022, the state's Assembly passed a resolution to set up a committee to find out if the previous Telugu Desam Party (TDP) government had bought and used Pegasus, following Banerjee's statements that West Bengal had been offered Pegasus. YSRCP, then in power in the state, alleged that TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu may have previously purchased the Pegasus spyware to keep tabs on rival political leaders including Chief Minister at the time Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy. In 2024, when the TDP regained control of the state after winning the Assembly election, Chandrababu Naidu sought a report from the Director General of Police (DGP) on whether Pegasus was used to tap the phones belonging to him and his son N Lokesh Naidu by the Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy regime. Lokesh Naidu told The Indian Express that him and Naidu were targeted twice and that they received alerts on their mobile phones. "I have been targeted twice, once during my Yuva Galam yatra in March 2023 and once this April during campaigning. We both received the alerts from Apple. We suspect that Pegasus was used by the Jagan government to tap our phones," Lokesh said.

From January, Honda Cars to hike prices across its model range

New Delhi: Honda Cars India on Friday said it will hike prices across its model range by up to 2 per cent from January next year, in order to partially offset the impact of rising input costs. The company sells models such as Amaze, City and Elevate in the domestic market. The automaker will increase the prices of its models by up to 2 per cent from the beginning of January 2025. Honda Cars India Vice President - Marketing and Sales Kunal Behl said.

The company has been making strong efforts to absorb price increases during this year, ensuring minimal impact on customers, he added. "However, due to the continued rise in input costs and logistics, a small portion of this impact will be passed on to customers through a price revision from the new year," Behl said. Additionally, the all-new third generation Amaze which was launched at a very competitive introductory price, will also see a price revision by mid of next month, he added. Already various carmakers including Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai and Tata Motors have announced price hikes from January.

Art of Living founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar breaks 6 records on first-ever World Meditation Day with group meditation



Explore how over 8.5 million participants joined Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar for a record-setting global meditation session on World Meditation Day, uniting people across 180 countries. Explore how over 8.5 million participants joined Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar for a record-setting global meditation session on World Meditation Day, uniting people across 180 countries. On December 21, the United Nations General Assembly observed the inaugural World Meditation Day. To mark the occasion, the Permanent Mission of India organised an event at the UN headquarters in New York, with Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the founder of the Art of Living Foundation and a prominent spiritual

leader, who led the gathering. 'World Meditates with Gurudev' saw participation from over 8.5 million people, both online and offline. Participants from over 180 countries joined the event, making it one of the largest collective meditation sessions in history, a press release from the foundation read, earning a place in the Guinness Book of World Records, the Asia Book of Records, and the World Records Union. The event began at the United Nations and concluded with a live session led by Gurudev from the World Trade Center in New York. Millions joined the live stream, emphasising the widespread interest in meditation as a tool for mindfulness and inner calm. Speaking before the session, Shankar said: "Meditation is the journey from knowing by thought to feeling what you know. It helps individuals transition from overthinking to experiencing the present moment. Meditation is not inactivity; it supports a balanced, dynamic, and peaceful state of mind." According to the press release, the event brought together diverse groups, including farmers, corporate employees, military personnel, healthcare workers, students, and homemakers. Educational institutions for visually impaired children and prisons also participated, highlighting the widespread reach of the initiative. Public figures, global leaders, and professionals across industries acknowledged the effort, recognising meditation's relevance in today's fast-paced world.

Health expert shares top 10 morning habits to include in your routine for a productive day

If your 2024 has been a mix of hitting the snooze repeatedly, staying up doom scrolling and skipping breakfast because you are running late, chances are you want to leave them all in the past and start the new year with a clean slate. 2025 is knocking at the door and on our quest to live a better life, health experts are dedicated to finding the best habits to optimise our morning and night routines. Indianexpress.com spoke to a health expert and found out what you can do to ensure you have the best year ahead to stay on top of your health and wellness game. Karan Bhargava, founder and CEO of Homoeo Amigo shared the following 10 habits to include in your morning routine:



1. Wake Up at Your Optimal Time: Aligning with your natural circadian rhythms ensures you feel rested and alert, enhancing focus and efficiency.
2. Hydrate Immediately: Drinking water upon waking rehydrates your body and kick-starts your metabolism.
3. Engage in Physical Activity: Morning exercise

4. Practice Mindfulness or Meditation: A few minutes of meditation reduce stress and improve mental clarity.
5. Plan Your Day: Outlining goals and prioritizing tasks provides direction and improves time management.
6. Eat a Nutritious Breakfast: A balanced meal

7. Avoid the Snooze Button: Waking up immediately helps maintain your sleep cycle and increases morning alertness.
8. Limit Early Screen Time: Avoiding immediate exposure to screens prevents information overload and stress.
9. Practice Gratitude: Reflecting on things you're

10. Tackle the Most Important Task First: Addressing your most critical task early capitalizes on peak energy and focus.
- According to Bhargava, incorporating these habits into your morning routine can create a structured and positive start to your day, enhancing productivity and overall well-being.

How can I keep my cat happy? 5 tips from a vet to help your feline friend live their best life

Around one third of Australian households live with at least one cat, yet surveys tell us the cats' needs are not being met. Cats may rule the internet, but humans often misconstrue feline behaviour. Earlier this year, the Washington Post boldly declared cat's aren't jerks - they're just misunderstood. This was prompted by research showing that, contrary to unhelpful stereotypes, cats are not antisocial. They can and do bond closely with humans.

The more we learn about cats, the more we realise they are complex individuals with unique personalities and preferences, capable of learning. From understanding your cat's language to keeping them safe and healthy - here are science-backed tips to improve the lives of your feline flatmates.

1. Pay attention to body language
Cats communicate with humans using body language and vocalisation. However, while cats direct meows at humans, and the meows vary depending on the context, humans are not great at decoding them. But we can read cat body language. For example, slow blinking is likely to indicate a positive emotional state. Cats who are not happy (for example, don't want to be touched) will freeze, move away, flatten their ears, hiss, or - if they feel they have no other option - scratch or bite. It is better to allow cats to approach you on their terms, rather than pushing for social interaction. A cat approaching you with their tail up is giving a friendly signal, while a tail swishing from side to side signals annoyance. Cats should always have the option to opt out of any interaction, like being touched. If you aren't sure, just "ask": stop patting them. If they walk away, they're not keen. If they rub their head against you, they want to continue the interaction.
2. Provide a healthy environment

The American Association of Feline Practitioners and the International Society of Feline Medicine have agreed upon five pillars of a healthy feline environment: A safe space so that cats can retreat if frightened. Multiple, separated key resources (food, water, toileting areas, scratching areas, play areas and resting or sleeping areas) so that cats can comfortably conduct their daily activities. Opportunity for play and predatory behaviour, such as games with wand toys that simulate hunting. Positive, consistent and predictable human-cat interactions, respecting a cat's choice about whether and how they interact. Respecting the importance of a cat's senses by avoiding undesirable stimuli (strong smells and loud noises), and providing desirable sensory stimulation (for example, use of catnip or silver vine). These pillars provide a useful checklist. If you read this and realise your cat's food and water

are right next to the litter tray, you can improve your cat's environment (and their experiences of eating and toileting) by separating these resources right now.

3. Clean the litter tray!
A litter tray may represent an unpleasant chore to you, but the importance of a spacious litter tray to your cat cannot be overstated. Cats prefer using a clean litter tray, even if they are the only cat in the household. Cats like to spend time in the tray before, during and after toileting, and they generally prefer a large tray. Poor litter hygiene is associated with a risk of urinary problems, which can be life-threatening. A survey of over 12,000 Australian cat owners found that urinary problems were more common in households with a low number of litter trays per cat, less frequent removal of faeces from the trays, and the use of crystal-type cat litter. If you switch the type of litter you provide, a slow transition is recommended to allow cats to get used to the change.
4. Read the room

Do you have more than one cat? Tension between household cats is common but often overlooked, as it's not always physical fighting. Signs of inter-cat tension can include prolonged staring, or even blocking the use of resources such as the litter tray or cat door, to prevent other cats from using them. In their 2024 intercat-tension guidelines, the American Association of Feline Practitioners note this can cause chronic fear, anxiety and stress-related illnesses in cats. Learning to recognise and manage tension between household cats can improve the welfare of all parties. When you love your cat, it is tempting to seek to amplify the joy by adopting another. But many cats prefer to be the only cat in the household, and don't cope well with a feline flatmate. If they have positive interactions with familiar, trusted humans, they're unlikely to be lonely.

5. Keep cats and other animals safe
Historically, domesticated cats earned their keep protecting grain stores from rodents. But what constitutes responsible cat ownership has changed. Around 65% of Australia's cat owners confine their cats indoors always, while 24% keep their cats confined at night. A major driver for indoor-only housing of cats is their predation of wildlife. Another is concerns about roaming-associated risks to cats, including cat fights, infectious diseases (such as feline immunodeficiency virus or FIV), misadventure and motor vehicle trauma. But owners of cats kept entirely indoors were more likely to report "problem" behaviours. Ideally, cats shouldn't be allowed to free-roam unsupervised where they can harm wildlife, even within the bounds of the property where you live. More than a third of local councils in Australia now require cats to be contained overnight or 24 hours a day.

Protesters vandalise Allu Arjun's residence, pelt stones demanding justice over stampede death



Arjun now finds himself in the centre of a war of words with the Telangana police and the government. As a tipping point, members of the Osmania University-Joint Action Committee (OU JAC), barged into the residence of the star.

... 'In a video doing the rounds, we can see the members of the OU JAC scaling the walls of the house, entering the compound. They pelted stones at the residence, and vandalised flower pots placed in the premises. This led to an intense confrontation between the protesters and the security personnel at the Allu Arjun residence. They were protesting for justice to Revathi and her son Sri Tej, who is currently in the hospital undergoing intense treatment. While Arjun, and team Pushpa 2 have constantly extended their support to the family, and promised to take care of the treatment, the star revealed that he has not met the family because of legal advice from his team due to the ongoing investigation. Following the stampede, the police registered a case against the actor, his security team, and the theatre management under the sections of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

Allu Arjun warns fans against abusive behavior: 'Strict action will be taken'



Allu Arjun warns fans against using abusive language. A day after addressing a press conference regarding the tragic death of a woman during a stampede at the screening of Pushpa 2 at Sandhya Theater in Hyderabad, Allu Arjun has taken to social media to issue a stern message to his fans. The actor urged them to refrain from using abusive language and warned of strict action against those indulging in such behaviour, especially via fake IDs and profiles. In his statement, Arjun wrote, "I appeal to all my fans to express their feelings responsibly, as always and not resort to any kind of abusive language or

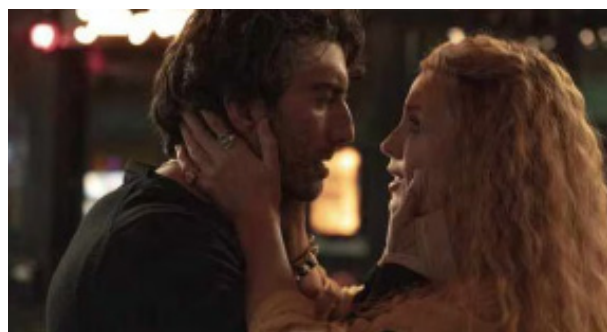
behaviour both online and offline." He further warned, "Misrepresenting as my fans with fake IDs and fake profiles, if someone indulges in abusive posts, strong action will be taken against them. I request the fans to not engage with such posts." In the caption of his post, the actor urged fans to express their feelings responsibly. "I appeal to all my fans to express their feelings responsibly, as always and not resort to any kind of abusive language or behavior both online and offline," he wrote. The tragic incident occurred during a screening of Pushpa 2 at Hyderabad's Sandhya Theater, where Allu Arjun made an appearance. A stampede broke out, leading to the tragic death of a woman and the hospitalization of her son. Following the incident, a case was filed against Arjun, his security team, and the theatre management based on a complaint from the deceased woman's family. The actor was also arrested from his home following the complaint but was released on bail the next day. At the press conference held on Saturday, Allu Arjun addressed the allegations made by Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. Speaking in the Telangana Assembly, CM Reddy had accused the actor of visiting the theatre despite police denying permission. He further alleged that Arjun remained on the premises even after the woman's death and that the police had to "force the actor out." In response, the Pushpa 2 actor refuted the claims, calling them untrue and defamatory. He emphasized that he followed all police instructions during the visit and ensured full cooperation. The actor also expressed his condolences to the deceased woman's family.

It Ends With Us writer Colleen Hoover comes out in Blake Lively's support; Justin Baldoni gets dropped by his agency

Blake Lively recently filed a sexual harassment lawsuit against her *It Ends With Us* director and co-star, Justin Baldoni. In response, Colleen Hoover, the writer of the book *It Ends With Us*—on which the film is based—and also an executive producer of the movie, has come forward to support Blake. On Saturday, Colleen took to her Instagram Stories to share her support for Blake. She wrote, "@blakelively, you have been nothing but honest, kind, supportive and patient since the day we met. Thank you for being exactly the human that you are. Never change. Never wilt."

Alongside her statement, Colleen Hoover included a link to a New York Times article titled, "We Can Bury Anyone: Inside a Hollywood Smear Machine," which detailed Blake Lively's allegations against Justin Baldoni, including claims of a "social manipulation" campaign by him and his team to "destroy" her image. Reports also confirmed that Justin has been dropped by his agency, WME, following the sexual harassment accusations.

In the lawsuit, Blake alleged that Justin engaged in sexual harassment and orchestrated a smear campaign to damage her reputation. She claimed that Justin and his team targeted her public image after she attended a meeting accompanied by her husband and actor Ryan Reynolds. The purpose of the meeting, she stated, was to address "re-



peated sexual harassment and other disturbing behavior" by Justin and a producer involved in the film. Justin Baldoni's team refuted Blake Lively's allegations. His statement to Variety read, "It is shameful that Ms Lively and her representatives would make such serious and categorically false accusations against Mr. Baldoni, Wayfarer Studios and its representatives, as yet another desperate attempt to 'fix' her negative reputation which was garnered from her own remarks and actions during the campaign for the film; interviews and press activities that were observed publicly, in real time and unedited, which allowed for the internet to generate their own views and opinions."

Magizh Thirumeni pens heartfelt note to Ajith Kumar: 'Vidaamuyarchi is a triumph of perseverance and we owe you'

Ajith Kumar and Magizh Thirumeni from team *Vidaamuyarchi* Magizh Thirumeni pens a letter of gratitude to Ajith Kumar as *Vidaamuyarchi* shoot wraps up. Perseverance is the name of the game for team *Vidaamuyarchi*, as the cast and crew have braved many an obstacle to finally wrap up the shoot. Interestingly, the makers of the film, which has always been in the news for one reason or another, announced that the principal cast of *Vidaamuyarchi*, including Ajith Kumar, have completed their dubbing. Just days after this announcement, the team flew to Bangkok to shoot some more portions leaving netizens in doubt about the movie meeting its Pongal release deadline. However, director Magizh Thirumeni, and Ajith's team shared that the filming was indeed wrapped up.

In a straightforward and straight-from-the-heart note, Magizh wrote, "Sir, infinite love and gratitude to you." The note begins with the title, "Final Day of Shoot" much to the happiness of everyone involved in the project. The Thadam filmmaker also said, "You have guided, inspired and motivated all of us simply by being yourself." Using the title of the film, which translates to perseverance, Magizh added, "Vidaamuyarchi has indeed been a triumph of perseverance and the entire team owes it to you, sir." Adding a personal touch to this note, the filmmaker said, "I thank you sir for the love, care and support you have give me from day one to this day. Much love and respect!" A note of gratitude from the Director to Ajith sir ?? Wrapping up VIDAAMUYARCHI with heartfelt thanks and admiration for his support and guidance. *Vidaamuyarchi* is the maiden collaboration between Ajith and Magizh Thirumeni. The movie, which is backed by Lyca Productions, marks the



reunion of the Mankatha stars Ajith, Trisha, and Arjun. The other members of the ensemble include Arav, Regina Cassandra, and Ramya. With music by Anirudh Ravichander, who has previously worked with Ajith in films like *Vedalam* and *Vivegam*, and cinematography by Om Prakash, *Vidaamuyarchi* will clash at the box office with Bala-Arun Vijay's *Vanangaan*, this Pongal. While there has been no update about the other releases in Tamil, both *Vidaamuyarchi* and *Vanangaan* will have a tough time in the Telugu markets as they have a jam-packed Sankranti schedule featuring films like *Game Changer*, *Sankranti* *Vastunnam*, and *Daaku Maharaj*.

Allu Arjun-starrer breaks Baahubali 2's seven-year domestic record, takes pole position

Pushpa 2 The Rule breaks seven-year-old record *Pushpa 2* box office collection day 18 early report: *Pushpa 2 The Rule* breaks seven-year-old record of *Baahubali 2* as the highest grossing Indian film in the domestic market. *Pushpa 2* box office collection day 18 early report: Biggest Hindi grosser of all time. Fastest film to cross the Rs 600 crore mark. Highest grossing film of 2024. And a few more records continue to tumble as *Pushpa 2: The Rule* continues to mark its strong presence across the country. The Allu Arjun movie, directed by Sukumar, has also crossed the Rs 1000 crore mark in the domestic market, becoming just the second film after *Baahubali 2* to achieve this remarkable target. After 17 days of its run, the film had amassed Rs 1029.65 crore in the domestic market, and over Rs 1500 crore in global collections. Now, according to trade website *Sacnilk*, the film has crossed *Baahubali 2*'s domestic collections to become the biggest grosser in India (nett).



centres in India and the globe, team *Pushpa 2* find themselves in an intense quagmire over the death of a woman due to a stampede that occurred in a Hyderabad theatre during the premiere show. Allu Arjun, who was present at the show, has been charged on multiple counts for the woman's death, and was even arrested and kept in the jail for a night. This has led to a lot of controversy around the film. But, the movie has shown no signs of slowing down, as it tramples every film coming its way.

With just days left for the release of Hindi cinema's biggest offering in a while, director Kalees' *Baby John*, starring Varun Dhawan, Keerthy Suresh, and Wamiqa Gabbi,

Prashanth Neel on how Prabhas influenced Salaar script: 'His perspective changed the Deva-Varadha equation'



Prashanth Neel on the inputs given by Prabhas to the *Salaar* script Prashanth Neel on how the inputs of Prabhas brought an important change to the *Salaar* script. The usually reticent and introverted Prabhas becomes a different beast altogether on the big screen. But one aspect of his repertoire that is under discussed is his script knowledge. While his filmography is testament to his clarity on script selection, his *Salaar* director Prashanth Neel revealed that Prabhas' inputs came in handy while scripting the *Salaar* movies. In an interaction on the occasion of the first year anniversary of the blockbuster film *Salaar*, Prashanth shared that it was Prabhas' perspective that brought about an important change in *Salaar*.

"I can't share the exact details because it features in the second part. But what I can tell is that he changed the perspective on how we look at the relationship between Deva (Prabhas) and Varadha (Prithviraj Sukumaran)," said Prashanth, adding, "Genuinely, Prabhas is phenomenal with drama. He understood that I came from *KGF*. So, he didn't concentrate on the key moments of the film, but he looks

for the drama, always." Considering how *Salaar* was started as a standalone film that later became a two-parter, Prashanth Neel revealed that Prabhas had a firm grasp on how he wanted the first part to end. "He was particular about the ending of *Salaar*, and how it lead to the happenings of part 2. He was so particular about that one moment." Talking about how all of his films, despite the action set pieces and the elevation, are based on human emotions, Prashanth revealed that *Salaar 2* will be no different. "It is innocence that makes them the best of friends, and it is innocence that makes them enemies too. That is the intriguing part of the sequel. I am very excited for the world to know what is that moment that facilitates this changeover. I think my best bits of writing is when they have to separate and become enemies. It is a very emotional part." While *Salaar* revolved around the friendship of Varadha and Deva, the sequel is set to focus on how these best of friends become the worst of enemies. The film is currently in the pre-production process, and will be backed by *Hombale Films*. This marks the first of the three-film deal signed by Prabhas and the banner behind projects like *KGF* and *Kantara*.

When Vinod Khanna, Rishi Kapoor, Shakti Kapoor jumped to their feet upon seeing Sridevi: 'It was like an army general had walked in'

Indian cinema has seen many queens, spanning a range of languages. From *Madhubala*, *Savitri*, *Meena Kumari* and *Nargis* to *Shabana Azmi*, *Smita Patil* and *Rekha*, the list is long. However, if there's one person whose achievements warrant the title of "Supreme Queen," it would undoubtedly be Sridevi. Nearly seven years after her passing, Sridevi continues to be one of Indian cinema's most beloved actors. Interestingly, despite the film industry being deeply patriarchal, she earned universal respect — not only for her extraordinary performances but also for the grace and dignity with which she carried herself.

Director Pankaj Parashar, who collaborated with Sridevi on two films — *ChaalBaaz* (1989), which earned her the Filmfare Award for Best Actress, and *Meri Biwi Ka Jawaab Nahin* (2004) — recently reminisced about his experiences with her. Among his memories was an incident that highlighted the immense

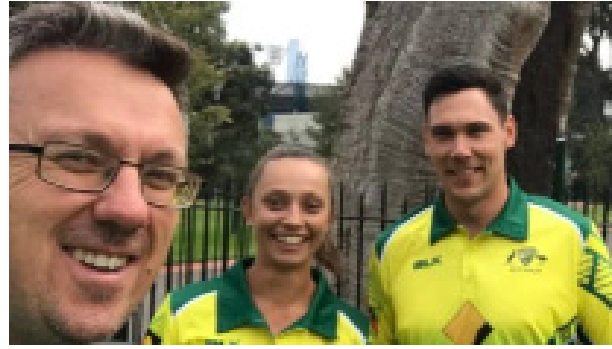


respect she commanded within the industry when a group of Bollywood's top male actors stood up in reverence upon seeing her.

"Himmatwala, Sadma, Tohfa, Mr India, Nagina had all been released by then and Sridevi was the reigning queen," Parashar recalled during a chat with *Rediff*, adding, "I had once gone to discuss some scenes with her in Film City Studio, where she was shooting with various actors." "It was

lunchtime and Vinod Khanna, Rishi Kapoor, Ranjeet and Shakti Kapoor were sitting together and eating mutton biryani, which had come from Rishi's home. Suddenly, all of them jumped to their feet. Sridevi had entered. It was almost like a top army general had walked in. The kind of respect she commanded without demanding it was incredible!" he recalled. While Sridevi played dual roles in *ChaalBaaz*, the movie also featured Rajinikanth and Sunny Deol, and was a major critical and commercial success. Parashar recalled, "The first schedule was in Chennai and Sunny Deol was there too. The first day was terribly exciting for me, a young director of 30-31, living out his dream. But Sridevi was cold and distant. There were no 'good mornings' and I couldn't sit next to her or even talk to her directly. Everything had to be conveyed through her make-up man or assistant."

How Scott Boland discovered his aboriginal roots in his mid-20s and became an inspiration for the indigenous groups in Australia



chubby, weighing 118 kgs. He used to work part-time as a bartender at Doyle's hotel at a beachside suburb of Melbourne and drive a car scattered with fast-food wrappers. A couple of years later, in 2009, at his Frankston Peninsula cricket club's 'Meet the Coach' day, the head coach Nick Jewell gave him the hard frank talk: "You want to play for the first team more but you won't under me, until you show me how much you really want it." The deal was that if Boland lost at least five kgs, he would be given a chance to play in the main team's game.

Boland was called 'Barrel', an obvious reference to his size. He requested his mother to give him soup as main food, and he kept his side of the deal, losing those kgs. So did the coach, and Boland's career began to slowly come on track. In four months, he lost almost 10 kgs as he turned serious about his game. Under Jewell's tutelage, he learned to cut the ball away from the left-handers from round the stumps, a strength of his now. On Thursday, he would return to the MCG where he had exploded into the Australian public's imagination with a 6 for 7 dream haul against England on his debut in December 2021 in a Boxing Day Test. In just four overs. His team-mates would try to make him hold up the ball but the shy 'Scotty' just threw the ball to the umpire, even as nearly a lakh fans kept screaming, "Scotty Scotty!". A cult-hero was born, almost despite himself. "That's him," says his mentor Stewart. "Apart from that Harrow meeting episode, I haven't seen him too emotional. Never seen him angry. Always a soft voice. He is not the one to sledge or even chirp on a field. He just bowls and walks away." "It must have helped him cope with the reality of being in the squad but never getting a chance because of the presence of the trioka: Pat Cummins, Mitch Starc, and Josh Hazlewood. "Oh yes, definitely. I would joke with him whose hammy or knee he wants me to twist, and all I would get is a shake of head and a smile. But for sure, as a professional athlete, it must be pretty frustrating but he wouldn't show. He just waits for his opportunity." Boland is intimate with waiting: for his time to play in the first team at his club, for a spot in the first-class team of Victoria, for the national selectors to give him a call, and for a rare chance to be in Australia's eleven. Or for that matter, getting to know about his Aboriginal roots. As part of the education, Boland started visiting the historical places sacred to aboriginals in Western Districts. Waterholes, communities, and eventually he found his way to Harrow, where Mullahg museum is now the pride of the town.

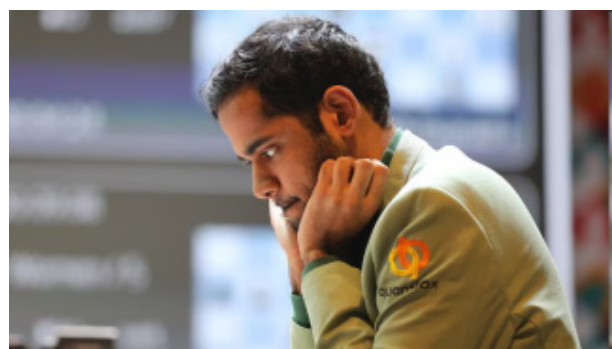
"We would initially talk about how perhaps, it was the decision of the grandfather not to tell anyone about his heritage. Because of so many challenges that we face. I remember telling Scott, 'Mate, you are really lucky because so many other families are not so lucky'. That stuck with him and he wanted to learn more and how he can help the other more disadvantaged kids. He would talk about how to embrace the culture," Stewart says. "We would go to the Western districts, talk to the aboriginal families there, and be welcomed by them." Scott's reserved nature doesn't seem to make him a natural choice to be a cult hero for the cricketing fans or for the native people. "But that's the thing that has appealed to the cricketing section. As for the aboriginal kids, nothing greater than seeing someone like him play for Australia. Deeds, more than words, move people." On his debut, when she gave the Mullahg medal to the man of the match Boland, the pride was visible in an emotional Belinda Duarte, the first indigenous member of MCG Trust and a descendant of Dick-a-Dick, a team-mate of Mullahg on that historic first tour. "Some would even say the old people have had something to do with this," she said. "We carry our old people everywhere. There were so many indicators today that they were by his side." Stewart hopes they will be with Boland again against India in yet another Boxing day Test at the MCG. "Imagine, 90,000 people yelling 'Scotty' and he once again gets that Mullahg medal".

Only in his mid-20s, did the 35-year old Scott Boland, Australia's fast bowler set to play in the fourth Test against India, realise his aboriginal origins. It started with his uncle remembering the secretive whispers of Boland's grandmother hushing up her husband. Paul Stewart, Boland's life-mentor, a proud Taungurung man who worked with Cricket Australia as their indigenous cricket expert, recalls Boland's family talking about those difficult memories. "The story goes that whenever his grandfather Jack had a few drinks, he would start talking about Colac, home to aboriginal tribes of Guldij and Gadubanud people. And his wife would tell him, 'shut up Jack, shut up'.

Years later, Boland's uncle followed that memory trail, dug around, and found that Jack's real name was 'Alexander John Wyn' whose mother died shortly after his birth. He grew up with an aunt, but was then adopted by a family named Edwards. He joined the army and became a printer after retirement, but until his death, he supposedly never spoke about Edwards family. "Scott's grandfather was possibly a kid of the 'stolen generation'; I don't know if he was forcibly removed but growing up as an aboriginal in the 60s was a very tough time. We didn't have voting rights. Babies were taken away from aboriginal women," says Stewart.

Every country has its dark guilt and this was Australia's. From the early 19th century till 1970 Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their families as part of the Australian government plan to assimilate them into the dominant non-indigenous population. The establishment had ill-treated the indigenous population so much so that in 2008 the government, under the prime ministership of Kevin Rudd, issued a formal apology to the "stolen generations". Stewart ran into a young Boland and his brother during an annual cricket tournament he ran for the aboriginal players. "He wanted to know about his roots and it set the ball rolling." In 2018, Stewart had taken Boland, the fourth aboriginal man to don the Baggy Green to Harrow, the spiritual cricket home of aboriginal cricketers. Stewart remembers the usually-composed Boland getting emotional. It was at a special dinner at Harrow, a small town halfway between Melbourne and Adelaide, home of Johnny Mullahg, the most popular Aboriginal player who starred in Australia's first ever tour of England in 1868. "That experience of that private quiet dinner was the most touching moment for him. I remember him saying, "It's so amazing that I have the privilege of carrying their names and I got to meet their descendants". In 2018, the Boland brothers had made it to the Australian Aboriginal team that toured England to commemorate the first-ever tour. Each player was given a name to 'carry' on the tour, name of a player from the original 1868 tour. Scott was given the name Gulligan from the player from the original team Yellanach aka Johnny Cuzens. His brother Nick represented Gronggrong (Mosquito). "Mosquito and Cuzens were brothers just like the Bolands. During our visit to Harrow before going on tour - Nick got to meet Auntie Fiona Clarke (descendant of Mosquito) who designed the walkabout wickets artwork logo which was used in our touring uniforms," Stewart says. "Scott also had the opportunity to meet Auntie Vicki and Ashley Couzens (descendant of J Cuzens). Boland was so moved that he would tell Stewart: 'This is a true wow factor that I will carry into this tour and for the rest of my life'. An 18-year old Boland was

FIDE Circuit standings: Arjun Erigaisi trails leader Fabiano Caruana by six points with final event left



and Blitz chess tournament on Thursday at the Dhono Dhanyo Auditorium in Kolkata. (Express photo by Partha Paul) It must be noted that Arjun Erigaisi is yet to receive his visa for USA to compete at the World Rapid and Blitz tournament.

Meghalaya beat Goa 1-0, book quarterfinals spot



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Hyderabad: Meghalaya secured a spot in the quarterfinals of the 78th Senior National Football Championship for the Santosh Trophy, after their narrow 1-0 win, while Tamil Nadu and Odisha played out a 1-1 draw at the Deccan Arena on Sunday. The Northeastern team, with seven points from four matches in Group B, moved to second place behind Kerala, while fifth-placed Goa have three points from as many games. Goa, who entered the match on the back of two losses and just one win, were hoping for a better result, but Damanbhalang Chyne's penalty in the 89th minute earned Meghalaya a place in the last eight. Tamil Nadu's search for their first win in the Santosh Trophy final rounds continued as they were held to a 1-1 draw by Odisha. The teams were locked in a goalless battle until the break. Alexander Romario Jesuraj converted a penalty to put his side ahead in the 68th minute. However, their lead lasted only seven minutes as Rahul Mukhi scored in the 75th minute to level the score for Odisha. Odisha remain fourth in Group B with four points from as many games, while Tamil Nadu stay at the bottom with two points from four matches. Results: Tamil Nadu 1 (Alexander Romario Jesuraj 68') drew with Odisha 1 (Rahul Mukhi 75'), Meghalaya 1 (Damanbhalang Chyne 89') bt Goa 0.

Wrestling with mismanagement: How poor planning is severely impacting India's grapplers



GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Before he climbed the podium in Paris, Olympic bronze medalist Aman Sehrawat had to face trial(s) by fire at home. On July 22 last year, the then-rookie appeared for his maiden Asian Games selection trials. Like every other wrestler competing there, Aman had only four days to prepare for it; the official notification of the trials was issued on July 18. Then, a month later, the teenager had another test to navigate - for the World Championships. This time, he got just an 11-day notice. Like the first trial, he reigned supreme here too in the 57 kg class, one of the most competitive categories in India. Twenty days later, exhausted after back-to-back competitions at home, Aman landed in Belgrade for the World Championships. And in the round of 16, he was steamrolled in 2 minutes and 45 seconds. Aman wasn't the only wrestler to endure the challenge of having to compete three times in approximately 50 days, go through three weight cuts, and manage the peaking cycle three. "When you reduce the weight again and again, it affects your body since you can't maintain or increase strength. Thus, it affects performance," says Lalit Kumar, Aman's coach. "At the trials, we are given a 2 kg exemption. So, he could compete with 59 kg domestically. But still, he had to reduce almost 2 to 3 kilos each time and around 4-5 kilos for the actual championship." Chaos reigns For the last two years, as a fallout of the quagmire that's gripped Indian wrestling, the country's athletes - rookies and Olympians, juniors and seniors - have had to deal with unprecedented uncertainty, leading to mismanagement of Olympic proportions. The extent of the impact it has had on the wrestlers has now been analysed by a researcher. Focusing primarily on the conduct of the selection trials for major continental and world events in 2023 and 2024, the researcher - requesting to remain anonymous - observed that leading up to the Paris Olympics, confusion and chaos reigned supreme primarily in selection. The wrestlers, the study noted, got little time to prepare for the trials, thus severely impacting their preparedness for the main competitions, potentially causing health risks due to repeated weight cuts in a short period and even expecting them to peak more than once during that period. The selection trial for the Hangzhou Asian Games was held on July 22 and 23. Its official directive came on July 18. To pick the team for the 2023 World Championships, the trials were held on August 25 and 26. Wrestlers were informed about it just 11 days before, on August 14. The trials for Asian Olympic Qualifiers were conducted on March 10 and 11, 2024. The notification came just two days before, on March 8. The gap between the selection trials and the actual tournament averaged two-to-three weeks, forcing the athletes to cut weight twice in a short span, apart from other physical, psychological, and logistical challenges.

At least in the above cases - which happened un-

der the watch of the Indian Olympic Association-mandated ad-hoc committee and the Wrestling Federation of India - the trials took place. Former World Championship silver medalist Deepak Punia and under-20 and under-23 world medalist Sujeet Kalkal set up a base camp in Dagestan, Russia, to prepare for the final Olympic qualifier earlier this year. Out of the blue, the Sanjay Singh-led WFI said there was a possibility of holding a selection trial to pick the team for the event, forcing Punia to take the first flight back home. Upon landing in New Delhi, the wrestlers were told there would be no trials. Eventually, neither made the cut for Paris 2024. Increasing uncertainty The opaque ways to pick India's teams for international wrestling competitions have been the cause for as long as one can remember, even leading to repeated court cases. But in the last two years, the uncertainty has only increased. Since January 2023, when India's top wrestlers began their protest against former WFI president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, there has been a constant tussle to assume control of the sport's administration.

Dayanand Kalkal, the father and the coach of Sujeet, says: "If we look at established wrestling nations like the USA or Japan, the wrestlers there know at the start of the year when the trials will take place. It gives clarity to the wrestlers, helps them prepare better and reduces overall stress." Indeed, in countries like Japan and the USA, who finished first and third in the wrestling medals tally at Paris 2024, the wrestlers are informed of the annual calendar - including the dates of the selection trials - at the start of the year. The trials for the Olympics were held in April in categories where quotas were already booked, giving the Paris-bound athletes nearly three months to recover and prepare. In India, amidst a lack of clarity, the wrestlers had to plead with the WFI until weeks before the opening ceremony to not hold another selection trial - a request that the WFI eventually accepted. Throughout the Paris Olympics cycle, however, the sudden holding of selection trials meant some wrestlers had to rush into tournaments on the back of injuries, complicating their rehab. "In the case of the Asian Games trials last year, for example," says Dharamveer Malik, the father of former Asian champion and World Championship silver medalist Anshu, "there was so much confusion over the dates of the trials that we couldn't plan Anshu's rehab properly. When they finally announced the dates, we were given only four days to prepare for the trials for such a big event." Recovering from a knee injury, Anshu lacked time to get fit for the trials and lost in the first round. It was the same case with Tokyo Olympics silver medalist Ravi Dahiya, who too had to rush into competition after nursing an injury for a prolonged period. Anshu and Ravi were among the half-a-dozen elite wrestlers who spent as much time in rehab - if not more, like in Ravi's case - as they did on the wrestling mat during the last Olympic cycle. Anshu had recurring knee and neck injuries. Another young wrestler, Sonam Malik, reported injuries six times between April 2023 and March 2024. World Championship medalist Antim Panghal wounded her neck in June 2023 and thumb four months later. Ravi had two surgeries on his knee while Aman suffered a hamstring injury in April. Under-23 world champion Reetika Hooda, Bajrang Punia, Vinesh Phogat and Deepak Punia, too, suffered injuries at different points in the last two years. "The situation hasn't been ideal in the last two years," says Dayanand, whose ward Sujeet recently returned from a training stint in Japan. "We hope that things will settle down in the coming weeks so that the preparation for the upcoming tournaments won't be compromised."

Shivani Karra dominates CM Cup with dual Swimming titles at LB Stadium



Goa, who entered the match on the back of two losses and just one win, were hoping for a better result, but Damanbhalang Chyne's penalty in the 89th minute earned Meghalaya a place in the last eight

GNS News Agency, Dec 25

Hyderabad: Shivani Karra of Gachibowli Swimming Pool clinched the girls' 200m butterfly and breaststroke titles in the CM Cup Hyderabad District Swimming Competition (Boys & Girls) at LB Stadium, Hyderabad, on Sunday.

In the 200m butterfly, Shivani topped the charts with a timing of 02:44.07, finishing ahead of Mokshitha of Viswa Many Club (02:44.09) and Hanvika Reddy of LB Stadium (02:54.10). She secured second and third positions, respectively. In the 200m breaststroke event, Shivani secured top spot with a timing of 02:30.17, as LB Stadium's P Niyathi (03:01.16) and Harshitha (04:12.04) finished second and third, respectively.

Results: 50m butterfly: Girls: 1. Aditi Nadella (Gachibowli Swimming pool) (32.31s), 2. Ritu Snehal (Viswa Many Club) (36.15s), 3. Ananya Bandla (LB Stadium) (41.63s); 50m breaststroke: Girls: 1. Sgvani Reddy (Viswa Many Club) (41.02s), 2. Neena Bahi Kasturi (HPS) (47.96s), 3. Ira Shanker (LB Stadium) (57.83s); 200m butterfly: Girls: 1. Shivani Karra (Gachibowli Swimming pool)

(02:44.07s), 2. Mokshitha (Viswa Many Club) (02:44.09s), 3. Hanvika Reddy (LB Stadium) (02:54.10s); Boys: 1. Tejas Kumar (Viswa Many Club) (02:25.63s), 2. G Sriansh (Viswa Many Club) (03:24.74s); 200m breaststroke: Girls: 1. Shivani Reddy (Viswa Many Club) (03:11.09s), 2. Hanvika Reddy (LB Stadium) (04:01.68s), 3. Neena Bahi Kasturi (HPS) (04:10.10s); 200m backstroke: Girls: 1. Shivani Karra (Gachibowli Swimming pool) (02:42.17s), 2. P Niyathi (LB Stadium) (03:01.16s), 3. Harshitha (LB Stadium) (04:12.04s); Boys: 1. Abhay Lakkoji (Zion Sportz Academy) (02:30.17s), 2. Devansh Raj Singh (LB Stadium) (03:24.52s), 100m backstroke: Boys: 1. G Shreyas Reddy (LB Stadium) (01:32.06s), 2. B Sai Sri Harshith (Zion Sportz Academy) (01:39.18s), 3. Suprathik Gupta (LB Stadium) (02:12.60s); 200m Individual Medley: Girls: 1. Sai Akshara Avodotha (Gachibowli Swimming pool) (02:57.18s), 2. Sunandani Reddy (Zion Sportz Academy) (02:59.01s); Boys: 1. B Sai Sri Praneeth (Zion Sportz Academy) (02:47.37s), 2. Devansh Raj Singh (LB Stadium) (03:48.82s).