

# INDIAN CHRONICLE

11 January, 2025 | Saturday | Volume No:12 | Issue No:285

Pages: 8+8

www.indianchronicle.com

Published from : Ranga Reddy (Telangana State)

₹ 3

## Swift action by Hyderabad Cybercrime Police recovers 1.9 crore in cyber fraud case

Hyderabad: The alertness and swift response of Hyderabad Cybercrime police has helped in uncovering a large-scale fraud involving Rs 1.90 crore which was siphoned from the bank account of a city-based businessman through unauthorized transactions, and in refunding the same.

According to the police, Kamlesh Kumari (60), who runs an NGO in Mainpuri in Uttar Pradesh and has been facing financial problems for the past some time, helped a cyber-fraudster by lending her bank account for making fraudulent transactions.

## HYDRAA demolishes illegal structures at Nekkampur Lake in Hyd

Hyderabad: Several illegal structures were demolished at Nekkampur area in Manikonda in Rangareddy district on Friday.

Following complaints against illegal structures occupying the Nekkampur lake being received by HYDRAA, Commissioner AV Ranganath had directed officials to raze the structures down. Telangana government issues order to set up new HYDRAA police station as per available information, civic authorities are taking up demolitions amidst tight security from the police force.

## Mukkti Ekadashi: Devotees throng temples in Karimnagar



GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Karimnagar: All temples in the erstwhile Karimnagar district teemed with devotees on the occasion of Mukkti Ekadashi. Devotees were seen standing in temples in serpentine queues to have 'uttaradwara' darshan of presiding deities right from early in the morning.

Sri Rajarajeshwara Swamy temple, Vemulawada, Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple, Dharmapuri, Anjaneya Swamy temple, Kondagattu, Ramalayam, Ellanthakunta and other shrines witnessed heavy rush of pilgrims. In Dharmapuri, devotees had darshan of Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy by taking holy dip in the river Godavari.

## Tragic Bus Accident in Suryapet District: Four Dead, 17 Injured



GNS News Agency, Jan 10

A serious accident happened in Suryapet district, where a bus carrying passengers from Odisha crashed into a parked sand lorry. The accident took place early on Friday morning in Ailapuram, Chivvenla mandal. Four people died at the scene, and 17 others were seriously injured. The injured were taken to a local hospital.

The bus, from Gupta Private Travels, was transporting workers from Odisha and Chhattisgarh to Hyderabad. It hit the parked lorry on the Hyderabad-Khammam National Highway. The bus was moving at high speed, and the cause of the crash is believed to be drowsiness and fog. There were 32 passengers on the bus at the time. After the accident, police arrived at the spot and helped with rescue operations. A case has been filed, and the police are investigating the incident.

## Hyderabad Cybercrime police nab two persons from Gujarat in Digital Arrest fraud case



GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Hyderabad: The Hyderabad Cybercrime unit solved a Digital Arrest fraud case involving Rs 34 lakh and arrested two persons on Friday. The arrested persons, Baria Sanjeev Kumar Babubhai and Kali Rohit Kumar from Ahmedabad in Gujarat, targeted people posing as law enforcement officials and extorted money.

According to the police, these scammers posing as representatives of courier, telecom department, TRAI, CBI, Cyber Crime Police, Income Tax department, contacted victims on WhatsApp calls, Skype calls and Internet calls. They threatened victims by forwarding fake court order copies and placing them under digital arrest claiming they were involved in serious offences such as money laundering cases, terrorist activities etc. "They also caution victims that it was a national security issue and confidentiality has to be maintained and nothing to be disclosed to anyone otherwise it will affect their entire family. Once the victim trans-

## Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Eidgah dispute: Consolidation of suit should benefit both sides, says SC

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday remarked that the decision of the Allahabad High Court to consolidate all suits pertaining to the Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Eidgah dispute of Mathura should benefit both sides. "Why should we intervene in the issue of consolidation of suits? It doesn't make a difference. It is to the benefit of both sides, so multiple proceedings are avoided," remarked a bench of CJI Sanjay Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar as it heard a plea filed by the management committee of the Shahi Masjid Eidgah against an order passed by the Allahabad High Court in January last year "in the in-



terest of justice" directing that all 15 suits filed by the Hindu side be consolidated.

In the course of the hearing, the counsel appearing on behalf of the mosque management committee submitted that suits not similar in nature were also consolidated and the impugned decision will bring complica-

tions in trial proceedings. Expressing its prima facie disapproval with the submission, the CJI Khanna-led Bench adjourned the proceedings and posted the matter for hearing in April 2025.

Earlier, the mosque management committee had petitioned the top court against another order

passed by the Allahabad High Court transferring to itself a clutch of petitions seeking various reliefs with respect to the Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Eidgah dispute. The Supreme Court had then remarked that it was "difficult" to accept the contention raised by the mosque management committee that all the parties do not have the wherewithal to travel to the Allahabad High Court. "It is not acceptable to us that you can come to Delhi but could not go to Allahabad," the top court had said. Multiple suits were originally filed before different courts of Mathura, with a common claim that the Eidgah complex was built on the land believed to be the birthplace of Lord Krishna and where a temple had existed.

## Wilting MVA in Maha, Sanjay Raut dares Congress to announce end of INDIA bloc

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Mumbai: Ahead of the local and civic body elections in Maharashtra, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) or INDIA bloc appears to be wilting as leaders are now openly questioning each other. Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut on Friday said that after the Lok Sabha elections, the INDIA bloc meeting has not taken place which was not good. He dared the Congress party to announce that the INDIA bloc was restricted to the Lok Sabha elections and does not exist anymore. Raut targeted the Congress party, being a big brother in the opposition bloc, saying that Mamata Banerjee, Tejashwi Yadav, Akhilesh Yadav and Omar Abdullah have already said that the INDIA Abloc does not exist anymore. "If such feelings come into the minds of leaders of the alliance, then the Congress party, which is the biggest party in the alliance is a bloc. If the Congress party had taken a stand that the INDIA bloc was formed for the Lok Sabha elections then it should declare it. I tell you one thing if this alliance breaks, then this alliance will never be formed again," he said.

Raut's statement comes amid a chorus in Shiv Sena (UBT) to go solo in the upcoming elections to the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation elections. The MVA, which had won 31 seats in the Lok Sabha elections, failed to cross the 50 mark in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly elections after the Mahayuti scored a landslide victory. Despite the drubbing, the MVA partners have not



swung into action to keep the alliance alive to take on the Mahayuti in Maharashtra. The NCP (SP) MP, Dr Amol Kolhe at the party meeting held on Thursday took a dig at Congress saying, "The Congress party's broken back is not ready to straighten out yet, while the Thackeray group is not ready to wake up from its slumber." He criticised Congress and Shiv Sena (UBT) for not starting fresh after the debacle in the Assembly elections and taking due initiatives for the Maha Vikas Aghadi to gear up for the ensuing local and civic body elections. "Shiv Sena and Congress have not yet shaken off their stagnation, so we, NCP (SP), will have to work from now on with new enthusiasm to revive and win the local and civic body election," he told the party workers. "

## SC stays GST show-cause notices to online gaming sector in temporary relief

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

The Supreme Court on Friday stayed the Goods and Services Tax (GST) show-cause notices, issued to several online gaming companies to the tune of Rs 1.12 lakh crore, providing temporary relief to the sector. The apex court stayed all further proceedings with respect to all show-cause notices, issued by the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI), until the final disposal of the case. The final hearing on the case has been set for March 18. After the ruling, shares of gaming companies like Delta Corp and Nazara Tech increased up to 7 per cent during the intraday trade on stock exchanges. Anuraag Saxena, CEO of E-Gaming Federation (EGF), welcomed the relief granted by the Supreme Court.

"This is a win-win, both for gaming operators who were facing coercive action, and the government whose timelines may now be extended. We are confident about a fair and progressive resolution to this issue, after which we will see investments, employment, and valuations in the gaming sector grow to its full potential," said Saxena. In 2023, the DGGI sent 71 notices to gaming companies, accusing them of evading GST worth Rs 1.12 lakh crore during 2022-23



and the first seven months of 2023-24, excluding interest and penalties. The notices were issued under Section 74 of the GST Act, which allows the department to impose a penalty of up to 100 per cent of the tax demand, the total liability could exceed Rs 2.3 lakh crore, including interest. In August 2023, the GST Council amended the law which stated that all online games involving bets, irrespective of skill or chance, would attract a GST rate of 28 per cent on the full value of the bets placed, and not on the gross gaming revenue, from October 1 the same year.

## India's first robotic system performs complex cardiac telesurgeries

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

New Delhi: The made-in-India surgical robotic system SSI Mantra has successfully performed two robotic cardiac surgeries via telesurgery over a distance of 286 kilometres. The surgeries were performed remotely by Dr Sudhir Srivastava from Gurugram to Manipal Hospital Jaipur, using the SSI Mantra 3 Surgical Robotic System. The Telerobotic-assisted Internal Mammary Artery Harvesting procedure was conducted remotely in just 58 minutes. The surgery demonstrated exceptional precision with an

incredibly low latency of just 35-40 milliseconds (1/20th of a second). This groundbreaking procedure was followed by another world-first, a robotic beating heart totally endoscopic coronary artery bypass (TECAB) — a procedure known as one of the most complex cardiac surgical procedures. This was also performed via telesurgery, connecting from Gurugram to Jaipur, with an incredibly low latency of just 40 milliseconds. "We are extremely thrilled to have advanced surgery capabilities to benefit humanity, especially in areas that need it the most.

## Musi project work has begun, says Revanth Reddy



GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Hyderabad: Even before the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the River Musi rejuvenation project was prepared, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday claimed that the project work had commenced and said that a 55-km long pollution-free river would soon flow in Hyderabad. Speaking at the CII's National Council Meeting here on Friday, the Chief Minister said the State government was focusing on making Hyderabad a flood-free city. It was also India's first city with a climate change strategy action plan, he said. Briefing CII representatives about the proposed Young India Skills University, the Chief Minister said a corpus fund was being created for the university. This would help the University's Board to decide on fund utilization and projects to be taken up without depending on the government, he said. "Already, funding to the tune of Rs.400 crore has been received and we want to raise Rs.200 crore more for the university," he said.

## GMR Hyderabad International Airport hosts inaugural 'PushpUtsav'25' horticulture show



GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Hyderabad: GMR Hyderabad International Airport Limited (GHIAL) on Friday hosted its first-ever horticulture show, PushpUtsav'25, at the Aero Plaza, Car Park Level, near the Passenger Terminal Building. PushpUtsav'25 aims to create a unique airport experience by showcasing the horticulture expertise of GHIAL and brings together flower, horticulture, and nature enthusiasts to enjoy a vibrant display of various flowering plants and floral arrangements, including seasonal flowers, chrysanthemums, dahlias, roses, bonsais, Ikebana, and cut-flowers.

The three-day event will feature competitive categories and display exhibits, attracting a diverse audience of gardening enthusiasts, families, tourists, local residents, students, floral designers, and horticulturists. The competitions included categories such as seasonal flowering plants, chrysanthemums, dahlias, roses, Ikebana arrangements, and cut-flowers, with prizes awarded based on criteria like cleanliness, disease-free plants, number of blooms, and overall appearance, a press release said. PushpUtsav'25 will provide a platform for nurseries, specialist arrangement makers, and visitors to the airport to engage with the horticultural community.

## TTD Offers Special Darshan and Medical Support to Stampede Victims

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Tirupati: In the wake of the tragic stampede incident during the issuance of Vaikunthadwara Sarvadarshan tokens at Tirupati, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) administration has stepped forward to provide support to the injured. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu announced at a media conference that those affected would receive enhanced medical treatment and an opportunity for Srivari darshan. Following the announcement, TTD Chairman BR Naidu directed officials to prioritize the well-being of the injured devotees. As a result, special darshan was facilitated for 52 individuals right after the regular protocol darshan. The affected devotees expressed their gratitude to the Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister, and the TTD administration for their prompt medical assistance and the opportunity for Vaikunthadwara darshan. In response to the incident, an emergency meeting of the TTD Board of Trustees is scheduled to take place in Tirumala at 4 PM. The meeting will address the circumstances surrounding the stampede.

# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Courting Taliban

It has taken India a while to realise that the Taliban are going nowhere. They are here to stay, for better or worse, and it's worthwhile to engage with them rather than wait interminably for the restoration of democracy in Afghanistan. New Delhi is no longer insisting that the regime should protect the rights of all sections of the Afghan society, especially women, children and minorities. Such lofty aspirations don't really matter when there are geopolitical points to be scored. There is a lot of catch-up to be done as China and Russia have been quick off the blocks on the Afghan front. The Taliban, though still deprived of international legitimacy, are making their presence felt by gaining the support of key regional players. Every ally counts as Pakistan has upped the ante against Afghanistan over alleged sheltering of terror groups.

The meeting between India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and Taliban's acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Dubai marks a pivotal moment for bilateral ties as well as multilateral equations. New Delhi has signalled that its strategic and economic interests will take precedence over everything else. Last year, India had humbled its nose at the US-led West by signing a 10-year deal with sanctions-hit Iran to operate the Chabahar port. The move was aimed not only at boosting India's trade links with Afghanistan and Central Asia but also bypassing the ports of Karachi and Gwadar in Pakistan. Chabahar figured in the Misri-Muttaqi talks too, with its potential use for sending humanitarian aid to Afghanistan being vital for New Delhi's goodwill mission.

For all intents and purposes, India has granted recognition to the Taliban regime, though it will not say that in so many words. What's more, New Delhi has pulled off a diplomatic triumph by pushing an insecure Islamabad into a corner.

## Barefoot trek on a raw road to education

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Every day, eight-year-old Gemeli Meghana, a Class III student from Korrapadu village, must make a perilous trek for nearly 3 km from her village through a thick forest infested with poisonous snakes to reach school. Nevertheless, she still chases her educational dreams along with 17 other children from her village. She bravely crosses three overflowing streams and slippery roads to reach their school. The adventure is even more risky during the rainy season, when landslides make the roads on the hilltop unfit for trekking.

Accessible schools continue to remain a far-fetched dream for the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) living in the interior hamlets of the Agency areas of the Alluri Sitarama Raju (ASR) district in Andhra Pradesh, despite their increased awareness of the importance of formal education and desire to pursue it. All these children belong to the Kondhu tribe, which speaks the Kui language and is spread across Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. The road to the village is not suitable for walking and is dangerous for motorcycle riders. With rocks piled up in the centre, the vehicle must be driven to the extreme corner of the road overlooking the valley. Sometimes, Meghana and the children have to wade through knee-deep water. The villagers say that their children, more often than not, slip and injure themselves during their journey to school.

Graveyard scare For Meghana, however, what's scarier than the slippery roads and the snakes-ridden forest is the graveyard on the way. "I got used to the trekking. But the graves at the graveyard terrify me," she says, adding that, out of fear, the children start to run as they approach the graveyard, and in that haste, they end up slipping on the wet roads, ending up with more injuries. Ex-ward member and village elder Gemmili Krishna says, "The parents take turns accompanying the children to the graveyard point and pick them up from there after school. If the children have to come alone, they get panicky and run." Mr. Krishna says that setting up a school in their village would end their woes and give their children a better chance to excel academically. Snake encounter

When The Hindu visited Korrapadu on a bike with much difficulty, passing through rocky terrain and crossing a couple of streams, a venomous snake killed by locals was found. The children said in unison that they encounter snakes frequently on their trek to school. "It is impossible for us to drop and pick up the children from school as we have to leave to work in agriculture fields or coffee plantations. During the coffee plucking season, we have to guard the crop from monkey attacks and can't leave the place." Gemmili Krishna Former ward member, Korrapadu Korrapadu can be reached on two-wheelers; some even have bikes. "It is impossible for us to drop and pick up the children from school as we have to leave to work in agriculture fields or coffee plantations. During the coffee plucking season, we have to guard the crop from monkey attacks and can't leave the place," Mr. Krishna says.

A little away from Korrapadu, another hilltop village, Tatipalem, was sanctioned a school, but there is no building there. The teacher takes classes under tree shades and during rains, under a temporary shed. On the way to Korrapadu is the Mandal Parishad Upper Primary School at Kothapalem in Chintapalli mandal of the ASR district. Children from four villages study here, but nearly 20 students from Kidagari of G. Madugula mandal must trek 3 km through forest and hilly slopes to reach the school. A total of 174 children are studying in Classes I to VII in this school. "We start at 7 a.m., and it takes one hour to reach the school. We start in groups as it is safer to be with others while passing through the forest." K. Radhika Government school student, Kidagari village

K. Radhika of Kidagari village, a 10-year-old studying Class VI and aspiring to become a doctor, said they have no option but to walk to school. Another girl, Killa Bhanu of the same village, studying Class VII, reluctantly said, "We start at 7 a.m., and it takes one hour to reach the school. We start in groups as it is safer to be with others while passing through the forest." The lack of proper roads, making these children walk barefoot, affects their studies. "They can not bear the weight of the schoolbag, which weighs around 4 kg to 5 kg, and that is why they leave their bags in the school itself," says P. Srinivas, who teaches maths and science at the school. Since the children could not study at home, they ended up lagging behind. So, from last year, we started giving them plastic bags to carry the books. We began giving them homework for only one or two subjects daily so that they can carry only those books to study at home, adds Mr. Srinivas.

## Pune reduces PM2.5 levels by nearly 21% since 2019, Pimpri-Chinchwad significantly more polluted: report



GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Pune achieved a 20.7 per cent reduction in PM2.5 levels from 47.9  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2019 to 38  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2024, according to a new report which focused on 82 cities under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP). Meanwhile, Pimpri-Chinchwad recorded an annual average PM2.5 level of 51.8  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2024, a slight improvement from 54.3  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2023. PM2.5 refers to particulate matter with a diameter equal to or less than 2.5 micrometres, which poses the greatest health threat and is often used as a metric in legal air quality standards. Respiro Living Sciences, an award-winning climate tech startup and a pioneer in scalable air quality monitoring, on Tuesday published the report named 'Towards Clear Skies 2025: An In-Depth Analysis of Air Quality Improvements in Indian Cities (2019-2024)'.

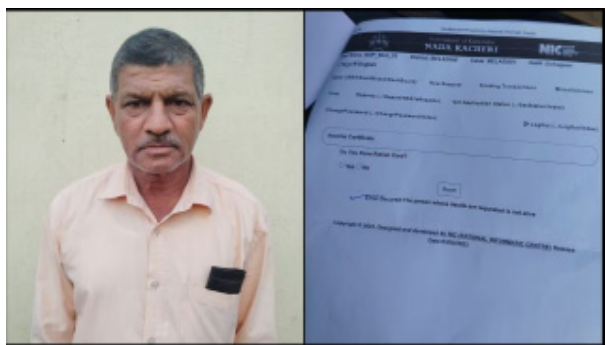
"These findings underscore the need for localised and coordinated measures to address pollution hotspots in the Pune Metropolitan Region (PMR). Pune's progress demonstrates the effectiveness of targeted interventions. Still, the disparities with Pimpri-Chinchwad highlight the urgent need for a more integrated regional approach to air quality management," said Ronak Sutaria, founder of Respiro Living Sciences. As per the report, improved public transport,

stricter dust controls, and industrial emission regulations contributed to Pune's progress. The higher pollution levels in Pimpri-Chinchwad, according to the report, reflected higher emissions from industrial zones and traffic congestion. Traffic congestion at major junctions like Swargate and Shivajinagar and ongoing construction projects contributed to local spikes in PM2.5 levels. In Pimpri-Chinchwad, industrial activities in MIDC areas and vehicular emissions along arterial roads like the Pune-Mumbai highway were key contributors. Both cities experienced higher pollution levels during winter due to reduced dispersion and increased heating-related emissions. Recommendations for Pune Metropolitan Region

The report provided actionable recommendations to address these challenges and build on the progress. These included developing a unified air quality management strategy for Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad, focusing on industrial regulation and urban planning, accelerating EV adoption across both cities to reduce vehicular emissions, enforcing stricter rules for construction activities and expanding road-sprinkling initiatives to reduce dust pollution. The report also recommended increasing the number of air quality monitoring stations in Pimpri-Chinchwad and launching community awareness campaigns to encourage behavioural changes. "A collaborative approach between Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad will be critical to ensuring sustainable air quality improvements for the entire region," said Sutaria.

What the report said for other major Indian cities The report said Mumbai saw a 2.6 per cent increase in PM2.5 levels from 35.2  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2019 to 36.1  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2024, reflecting a persisting air quality issue for the financial capital. As for Bengaluru, the report said the city recorded an 8 per cent reduction in PM2.5 levels, from 35.9  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2019 to 33.0  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2024. Delhi saw a marginal improvement of 1.3 per cent in PM2.5 levels from 108.4  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2019 to 107.0  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in 2024, the report said.

## Declared 'dead', man walks into Belagavi IAS officer's room seeking help – to prove he's alive



GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Belagavi Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Roshan had a visitor with a peculiar request – armed with his death certificate, a villager from Savgaon wanted the IAS officer's help to prove he was alive. For Ganapati Kakatkar, the visit to Roshan's office was a desperate bid to correct a data entry operator's mistake that had led to the 62-year-old villager losing his Aadhaar card, access to his bank account and several government benefits. According to Ganapati, his ordeal began when he and his brothers applied for a succession certificate to claim their share of the six acres and 23 guntas of land left behind by their grandfather Masanu

Shattu Kakatkar, who passed away on February 2, 1976. Before his death, Masanu had divided his land among his three sons, retaining six acres and 23 guntas in his name. This land was not transferred even after his demise. Over time, Masanu's three sons passed away, leaving the property to his eight grandsons, including Ganapati. Two years ago, the grandsons sought to transfer the land to their names but faced delays as the tahsildar's office had failed to provide their grandfather's death certificate. They approached a local court in Belagavi, which then ordered that the certificate be issued. It was at the revenue inspector's office at Hindalga that a computer operator made a mistake – one that Ganapati would only realise months later after his Aadhaar card was locked and his name was removed from the family ration card. Ganapati had been declared 'officially dead'.

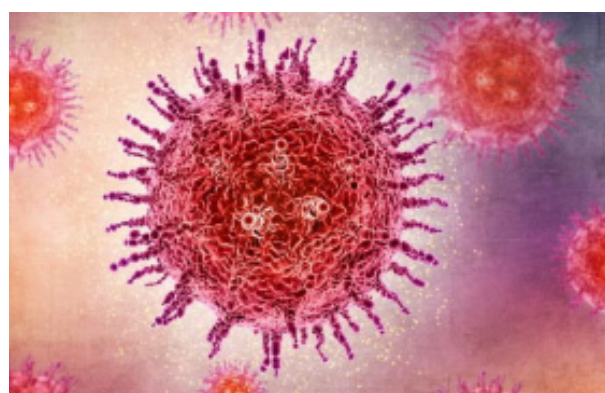
After discovering the error on August 3, 2023, Ganapati visited multiple local offices, including the tahsildar's, but to no avail. In June 2024, Ganapati learned how the error was introduced. "My Aadhaar number had been wrongly entered instead of my grandfather's," Ganapati told The Indian Express. "Despite telling them, the officials did not act," he added. On Monday, Ganapati, accompanied by his family members and an advocate, approached Roshan, who assured him the matter would be resolved and directed the assistant commissioner to take action.

## With HMPV cases under scanner, how Kolkata hospitals are ramping up measures

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Hospitals in Kolkata are ramping up precautionary measures as Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) cases get reported across India. The virus, known for causing respiratory illnesses, predominantly affects young children and the elderly. A six-month-old baby, diagnosed with HMPV in November, made a full recovery after intensive treatment at Kolkata's Peerless Hospital. The infant, suffering from high fever, cough, and severe breathing difficulties, was admitted to the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU). A viral PCR test confirmed the infection. The baby required respiratory support for a week and was discharged after a two-week stay in stable condition. Dr. Sudipta Mitra, Medical Superintendent at Peerless Hospital, clarified that the virus detected in the child was not linked to the subvariant recently spreading in China. "The HMPV virus is not new; it is common during this period. The cases that we have seen were HMPV but not of the same subvariant that is in China. There was no link between the HMPV virus that was found in the child's body and the virus that has spread in China," he said. A senior doctor told The Indian Express that the infections occur every year. "This year it has not yet outnumbered the previous year's cases. The cases of HMPV are less than 1 percent. We shouldn't panic," he said.

The first cases were reported in Bengaluru – an eight-month-old and a three-month-old child – followed by a two-month-old infant in Ahmedabad. Kolkata's Desun Hospital has made HMPV tests mandatory for patients presenting with upper respiratory infections, particularly among high-risk groups such as children under five and individuals over 75. However, doctors caution against unnecessary testing, citing the high cost of respiratory panel diagnostics. HMPV, commonly seen during winter, spreads through respiratory droplets, similar to influenza and COVID-19. Symptoms include fever, cough, and respiratory distress, with severe cases requiring breathing support in intensive care. Dr. Arindam Biswas, a specialist in Internal Medicine at the RN Tagore Hospital, said preventive measures like wearing masks, maintaining hygiene, and isolating when symptomatic. "There is nothing to panic about. HMPV is common and the symptoms are very ordinary; most of the cases of HMPV are non-complicated. Two age groups that require monitoring are below five years and above 60 years because their immunity is less," he said. Dr. Saheli Dasgupta, Pediatric Critical Care Head at Peerless Hospital, advised parents to seek medical care for symptoms like high fever, difficulty breathing, or feeding issues in children, adding that there is no antiviral treatment for HMPV. "If your child is having a high fever, cough, breathing with difficulty, or is unable to feed, please consult your doctor. Your child might need admission to the hospital for monitoring symptoms and preventing complications. Do not



panic and consult your pediatrician timely," she explained. Kolkata health officials and medical practitioners reiterate that the situation remains under control. "Talking too much about it causes unnecessary panic," noted a senior government hospital doctor. According to doctors, the infection generally affects children below one to five years of age during winter.

## Salman Khan enhances security with bulletproof glass

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Mumbai: Security at Bollywood actor Salman Khan's residence in Bandra area here has been enhanced with bulletproof glass protecting his balcony and a high-tech CCTV camera system keeping a watch on the road outside, a police official said on Tuesday. The bulletproof glass panel will ensure the actor's safety when he steps onto the balcony of his flat at Galaxy Apartments to greet his fans, said the official.

The security upgrade, being carried out by a private contractor hired by Khan, comes months after two men on a motorbike, allegedly belonging to the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, opened fire outside the building in April 2024.

A high-tech CCTV camera has been installed in front of the building to detect any suspicious movement and also razor wire fencing is being put around it, the police official said.

The actor had received threats from the Bishnoi gang in the past. Navi Mumbai Police in June 2024 had claimed to have discovered a plot to kill the actor when he traveled to his farmhouse at Parvel near Mumbai. Khan already enjoys 24-hour police protection.

## Union Minister wants to transform every SHG woman into an entrepreneur



GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Union Minister for Science, Technology and Earth Sciences, Jitendra Singh, wants to see every woman member of the self-help group (SHG) transform into a prospective entrepreneur. As part of his three-day tour of Kadapa district, Mr. Singh interacted with SHG members at Moragudi village in Jammalamadugu constituency on Thursday, along with the local MLA Ch. Adinarayana Reddy and Collector Sridhar Cherukuri. During his interaction, the Union Minister stressed on the importance of strengthening small groups to address problems such as poverty alleviation, women's empowerment and ensuring gender parity.

Explaining the government's resolve, he said efforts were being taken to identify enthusiastic women from rural areas, nurture their production and marketing talent through skill upgradation programmes, and introduce them to e-commerce business. The Minister also held discussions on food items, spices, brown rice, handloom products and millets with the women. He later inaugurated a central kitchen built at Moragudi Zilla Parishad High School for the benefit of students. "We have identified some of the best talent from this region, who are making hundreds of products and are now encouraged to become global businesswomen. Kadapa being identified with the aspiration district tag, this is a two-way strategy to ensure rural development and women's empowerment," said Collector Sridhar Cherukuri.

Meanwhile Kadapa MLA said that several women were being introduced to launch units pertaining to primary sectors like agriculture, industrial, and food processing. He recalled that his Jammalamadugu constituency had become the power house and reservoir of Kadapa district, having the most number of power plants and prominent water projects. The Minister also inspected the Ayushman Arogya Mandir (village health clinic and primary health centre) in C.K. Dinne mandal in the morning and visited Gandikota tourism spot at evening.

## Water being pumped out of foundation trenches dug for govt. buildings in Amaravati



GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Water is being pumped out of the foundation trenches dug for buildings to house the Andhra Pradesh High Court, General Administration Department and the four towers that will have the offices of the heads of departments among others in Amaravati Capital City. Once this work is done, a team from IIT-Madras will check the structural stability of the foundations. The work is being undertaken by M/s Prudhvi Raj Constructions of Nellore, which had secured a contract for it from the Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (APCRDA).

Doddapaneni Raja Naidu, managing partner of Prudhvi Raj Constructions, told The Hindu on Wednesday (January 1) that the pumping will be completed in January itself. He said they have high-capacity pumps to do the job. These pumps, which are working in full capacity as on December 31, 2024, have been removing as much as 30-odd lakh litres of water an hour. He said the pumps will work round the clock for the next 20-25 days, estimating that about 1 tmc ft (thousand million cubic feet) of water will be extracted in this process. As construction of these building were stopped five years ago, water from rain and other sources had filled the trenches and had been stagnant for a long time. To begin anything, the water has to be pumped out first, according to APCRDA officials. He further explained that the extracted water is being diverted to the Krishna river through existing drains and canals, without causing any inconvenience to the public or other government works in progress.

## Gujarat GST dept raids coaching institutes, 'finds Rs 7.49 crore in evasions'

During the investigation, several "irregularities" such as the misclassification of tax rate, wrongful availing of Input Tax Credit, and unaccounted sales were "noticed", the department said. (Representational Image) During the investigation, several "irregularities" such as the misclassification of tax rate, wrongful availing of Input Tax Credit, and unaccounted sales were "noticed", the department said.

The Gujarat State Goods and Services Tax (SGST) Department on Tuesday said it had raided 11 coaching institutes and found "evasions" to the tune of Rs 7.49 crore in preliminary investigations, with a total liability of around Rs 11.33 crore. Based on information received by the Enforcement Branch of the State GST Department and analysis, search and seizure operations were conducted against 11 coaching institutes, located at 36 places including Ahmedabad, Bharuch, Gandhinagar, Godhara, Junagadh, Rajkot, Mehsana, Palanpur (Banaskantha), Surendranagar, Surat, Vadodara and Valsad on January 2, a statement from the department on Tuesday said. During the investigation, several "irregularities" such as the misclassification of tax rate, wrongful availing of Input Tax Credit, and unaccounted sales were "noticed", the department said.

## This tribe in Andhra Pradesh prefers to live and let 'live-in'



There was no waiting for an auspicious date and time. The next day of the abduction was the ideal time to tie the knot. It happens in every Konda Reddi village. The woman is freed from the abduction if she rejects the wedding proposal during the wedding talks attended by her parents. Festivals are the most suitable time for Laagudu

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Thirty-two-year-old Konda Reddi tribal woman Marigela Pandamma, a mother of three girls, is pregnant with her fourth baby. The first three deliveries were normal and institutional. Now, in her third trimester, Ms. Pandamma says she had to abandon her sewing machine, which lies in a corner on the veranda of the house, upon her doctor's recommendation. The woman from the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) manages all her household chores to prepare an early dinner for her family even as she engages her daughters in their play. Amid bone-chilling cold on a wintry evening, she waits for her husband to return from work. Mr. Pratap Reddy, her husband, is toiling to build their dream house adjacent to the house they live in, which his parents built.

Next summer, the couple will complete 12 years in their live-in relationship and they are eager to move into their new home with their fourth baby. It all started with Mr. Pratap, a Jeep driver, falling in love with Ms. Pandamma. He managed to win her heart. After deciding to enter into a live-in relationship, the couple convinced their parents first and then sought the tribe members' consent to their relationship. "Our marriage was not solemnized under any tradition. We began to live together after our parents and community elders consented to our request to allow us to live as a couple," recalls Ms. Pandamma. "Both of us preferred a live-in relationship to a traditional wedding, which involves huge expenditure. Neither of our families could bear that kind of expense," says Mr. Pratap, who discontinued education after failing Class X. He began earning a livelihood as a driver and rose to become the vice-sarpanch of Chatlavada gram panchayat of Maredumilli mandal in Alluri Sitharama Raju (ASR) district.

Mr. Pratap's fortune turned as tourists from across India began thronging Gudisa, Andhra Pradesh's only grass-land destination. He owns a Jeep and operates it for tourists throughout the year. The couple lives in Ukkuluru village, 20 kilometres from the Maredumilli headquarters, in the Maredumilli forest. Deep inside the reserve forest, the tiny village consists of 36 families, all of which are Konda Reddis. Ten kilometres ahead of the village are naturally-grown Jamun (*Syzygium cumini*) orchards on both sides of the road in the reserve forest. Jamun is a sacred tree; without it, Konda Reddi's traditional wedding would not be solemnized. In the winter, the Anatto plantations in full bloom greet at the entry of Ukkuluru. The Anatto, locally known as Japra, is used in lipstick-making. It is the prime commercial crop grown by the Konda Reddis of Maredumilli forests. The red soil applied on their mud-walled houses is integral to the tribe's housing architecture.

"In the past eight years, only five weddings were performed as per our tribal tradition. However, 21 couples, including my wife and me, have opted to live in." Mr. Pratap Reddy, vice-sarpanch, Chatlavada gram panchayat, ASR district, Andala Sami Reddy, 26, Mr. Pratap's neighbour, claims, "In the past eight years, only five weddings were performed as per our tribal tradition. However, 21 couples, including my wife and me, have opted to live in." Mr. Sami Reddy, an auto-rickshaw driver and farmer, and Ms. Aruna Kumari, 20, entered into their live-in relationship last summer. Elaborate wedding rituals The traditional Konda Reddi tribal wedding ritual lasts four days and mandates a feast for the guests every day. Chicken and mutton are a must on the menu, and guests from across the gram panchayat and nearby Konda Reddi tribal villages must be invited, irrespective of the wedding budget. Ms. Aruna Kumari belongs to Chekkavada village, 10 kilometres from Ukkuluru. She dropped out of college in the first year of Intermediate to help her parents in shifting cultivation-based agriculture. Ms. Kumari is the eldest child of her family and has three siblings, including one brother.

"I fell in love with Sami Reddy and decided to marry him. Since I was of marriageable age, I proposed to my parents about my plans for a live-in relationship with him. My family also could not afford a traditional wedding. We got a nod from both our parents," says Ms. Kumari. Now, this couple is preparing to build a new house by reaping profits from the Anatto farming.

No dowry practice Vice-sarpanch Mr. Pratap says, "In any marriage or a live-in relationship, our tribe does not give or seek anything in dowry. It is an unwritten practice that exists in our society. However, the man voluntarily helps his in-laws in agriculture work in their fields and receives a payment, which is considered a gift from the in-laws. "I have brought nothing in dowry. I simply came with a bag of clothes to Mr. Pratap's house. Our prosperity depends on the hard work we invest in my husband's land," adds Ms. Pandamma. In unison, the Prataps and Sami Reddis say that none of the couples who entered a live-in relationship in their village had been separated.

Bigger issues to worry However, minor disputes that mostly arise between couples are resolved by village elders, a team which has an authority on the affairs of the village and cultural practices. The majority of the disputes between couples arise over men's drinking problem, they say. Elaborating on the legal sanctity of live-in relationships among the Konda Reddi tribe, Rampachodavaram-based lawyer Venkata Ratna Prakash says, "Any Scheduled Tribe, including the Konda Reddi tribe (PVTG), does not come under the purview of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. However, they have their traditional system comprising community heads to deal with their issues of marriage." Pallala Chambamma, a 60-year-old woman from the Konda Reddi tribe in Ukkuluru village in the ASR district, is a firm supporter of the live-in trend emerging in her tribe. Pallala Chambamma, a 60-year-old woman from the Konda Reddi tribe in Ukkuluru village in the ASR district, is a firm supporter of the live-in trend emerging in her tribe. "Our village does not have a history of visiting the police station in mat-

ters of live-in relationships. No couple have gone to such an extent. In fact, they live in harmony, leading a happy life," says Pallala Chambamma of Ukkuluru. A decade ago, Ms. Chambamma, 60, was widowed after her husband, Mangi Reddi, succumbed to alcoholism-related health complications. The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 (Sec.2) states, "Nothing contained in this Act shall apply to the members of any Scheduled tribe within the meaning of clause (25) of article 366 of the Constitution unless the Central Government, by notification in the Official Gazette, otherwise directs." In the event of the death of the husband, the Public Distribution System ration card and birth certificates of the children would be submitted to establish the 'live-in relationship' to claim the benefits, including pensions under the 'widow/single woman' category.

Laagudu tradition Ms. Chambamma was nostalgic about her wedding, which happened according to the Konda Reddis' Laagudu, a tradition that existed before the emergence of live-in relationships. In this tradition, the village elders and the groom's friends would 'abduct' the woman when she is alone at the stream, farm field, or carnival. She would be kept in a house alone with the groom for a day or until the wedding talks commence. "I was abducted by the village elders and friends of my husband while I was attending a carnival of Gangamma. They put me in the room along with my husband. The next day, our wedding talks were held, and everything was set for the wedding ritual," recalls Ms. Chambamma. "Our wedding was held as per Laagudu. It was a minimal affair. A branch of the Jamun tree was placed next to me, the bride. The groom then tied a yellow thread with a piece of turmeric tied to the branch," she says.

There was no waiting for an auspicious date and time. The next day of the abduction was the ideal time to tie the knot. It happens in every Konda Reddi village. The woman is freed from the abduction if she rejects the wedding proposal during the wedding talks attended by her parents. Festivals are the most suitable time for Laagudu. The tribe had scheduled all the major festivals in the summer season as most of the crops grown by the tribe would be harvested by then. Night rituals and dances are integral to most of their festivals wherein it is common to see women of marriageable age getting 'abducted' by men who are confident of winning their hearts.

"In the Laagudu, too, we never heard of any separated couples, and divorce is unheard of," says Ms. Chambamma, a firm supporter of the live-in relationship trend emerging in her tribe. Her eldest daughter, Meena Kumari is in a live-in relationship while her son, Chiranjeevi Kumar, had recently proposed to a woman to a live-in and talks are in progress, she says. The major festivals are the Gangamma festival, in which the village deity is worshipped for the peace in the village and the Bhudevi festival, celebrated seeking blessings for the bountiful harvest. The uniqueness of the Pindi festival is the community feast, in which food prepared with millet is served. "The decision of the elders during the wedding talk is final, and every couple should stick to it till their last breath. Nowadays, the same commitment is also seen among couples in the live-in relationship," says Pallala Rajamma. The 65-year-old woman wedded Mr. Saami Reddy under the Laagudu tradition, and their marriage is still intact. Another wedding tradition, Thokkudu, exists among the Konda Reddis who live on the hills and are still hunter-gatherers, wherein the man can marry a woman of his choice if she is a relative and agrees to the marriage. If both families formally consented to the proposed wedding, the woman's family will be invited to the man's house during a community festival. During the festival day, the wedding between the man and the woman is solemnized after the man touches the woman's feet with his feet at the entrance of the house. The man welcomes the woman into his house, and they have been considered a couple since that moment. In the Moganal tradition of the wedding which happens among the relatives, both man and woman who like each other would voluntarily go to any of their relatives house, where they need to stay together for a week. Later, they would return to the man's house to be accepted by the family and community to live as 'wife and husband'. "The aim of these live-in relationships or other marriage traditions that have evolved in our tribe was to avoid or minimise the financial burden on the families for wedding rituals. We have been accepting every tradition as long as that does not harm the relationship between man and woman" Sarla Linga Reddy Former MPTC, Kutravada village, ASR district. "The aim of these live-in relationships or other marriage traditions that have evolved in our tribe was to avoid or minimise the financial burden on the families for wedding rituals. We have been accepting every tradition as long as that does not harm the relationship between man and woman," said 70-year-old Sarla Linga Reddy, former Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituency member. Sarla Linga Reddy, former MPTC and a Konda Reddi tribe elder at Kutravada village in ASR district.

He lives in Kutravada village under Pamuleru Gram Panchayat in Maredumilli mandal. Kutravada is one of the biggest villages where more than one hundred Konda Reddi families live. Mr. Linga Reddy couple have been blessed with eight children; five boys and three girls. Seven of them were married. He had consented to his two sons to choose the 'live-in' relationship. His 33-year-old daughter, Lalitha Kumari, is the Maredumilli Mandal Parishad president (MPP). Ms. Lalitha Kumari is the youngest MPP and holds a bachelor's degree in Nursing. "Over the past decade, less than ten weddings happened with the four-day rituals and lavish feasts in our village. Most of them are government employees.

However, the number of couples who choose a live-in relationship is more than 40," said Mr. Linga Reddy, the former president (2000-10) of erstwhile East Godavari District Konda Reddi Tribe Society. Society strives to fight for the causes and rights of the tribe. Inevitable change Ms. Lalitha Kumari, who meets the tribal elders and various political representatives, opines, "New challenges have emerged in our society. Some of us who cracked government jobs and live in nearby towns prefer to marry outside our tribe. Some disputes over property are being reported among those couples."

Ms. Lalitha Kumar reiterates: "Change is inevitable in any tradition and society. The institution of marriage in our tribe may have encountered more challenges as a consequence of marriages with non-tribals, which are happening more often nowadays." Vice-sarpanch Mr. Pratap and Mr. Linga Reddy say that all disputes, including land disputes, are resolved at the village level. During a meeting, a three-member group of elders decides on a particular issue. "The village elders are asked to decide if any problem arises in any family in the event of the death of any partner in the live-in relationship. However, disputes between couples over land or property are rare in our society," says Mr. Linga Reddy. As the family of Ms. Pandamma prepares to go to bed, she remarks, "Within a few weeks, I will become the mother of four children born out of a bond called live-in. It had never betrayed any woman in our village. It never will."

## Western Railway to launch digital lounges with 'productive and comfortable space' for passengers



GNS News Agency, Jan 10

western Railway, digital lounge The lounges will be equipped with facilities such as charging stations for laptops, mobiles, and other gadgets, and food services. The Western Railway (WR) is set to pilot digital lounges at select long-distance express train stations, modelled after the comfort and convenience of airport lounges, to make the waiting time for passengers, particularly for long-distance travellers, more efficient. Initially, Mumbai Central and Borivali

stations in the Mumbai suburban area, and Surat and Vadodara stations in Gujarat will feature these lounges. The lounge facility will be developed in place of existing waiting areas with upgraded facilities for users. "Train passengers typically arrive one to two hours before their scheduled departure. The lounge will provide them with a productive and comfortable space during this wait," said a Western Railway official.

According to the official, the lounges will offer a noise-free environment where passengers can relax, work, or wait for their trains in comfort. The lounges will be equipped with facilities such as charging stations for laptops, mobiles, and other gadgets, and food services. However, the plan is still at a conceptual stage. Additionally, the lounges are expected to be operated by private service providers appointed by Western Railway. These operators will offer the services on an hourly basis, allowing commuters to access the lounges for a reasonable fee. If the pilot project is successful and receives positive feedback, WR plans to extend the concept to other major suburban stations with ample space, such as Antheri and Bandra.

## Property tax default: BBMP attaches over 81k properties in Bengaluru, seals nearly 7k others

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has intensified its crackdown on property tax defaulters, attaching over 81,000 properties and sealing 6,914 others this financial year. As of January 4, the BBMP has collected Rs 4,370.81 crore in dues, achieving nearly 84 per cent of its revenue collection target of Rs 5,210.48 crore. This marks a 25.31 per cent increase compared to Rs 3,487.96 crore collected by the same time in the last financial year. According to the civic body, its officials identified 2,06,753 property tax defaulters in early January, with pending dues amounting to Rs 329.15 crore. In the past week alone, Rs 3.69 crore was recovered, 203 non-residential properties were sealed, and 180 properties were attached for non-payment.

Out of the 3,95,250 defaulters recorded last April, the BBMP has recovered Rs 404.46 crore from 1,88,497 defaulters so far. The Mahadevapura zone has the highest number of defaulters at 44,363, followed by Bommanahalli (33,042) and RR Nagar (32,508). Special Commissioner (Revenue) Munish Moudgil said, "Directions have been given to all zonal commissioners to seal the properties with



long-pending tax arrears." The focus will be on sealing commercial shops with the highest arrears. Recovery methods include sealing, confiscation, and foreclosure of properties. Currently, 9,691 properties are under revision, with Rs 191.47 crore pending in arrears. Last week alone, the BBMP recovered 25 such properties, collecting Rs 10 lakh. A zonal review will be conducted this week to assess progress and ensure aggressive recovery measures are implemented, officers added.

## BJP inducts 5 former Shiv Sena (UBT) Pune corporators, hands them a task

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

While inducting five former Shiv Sena (UBT) corporators from Pune in the party, Maharashtra BJP chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule Tuesday gave them the target of enrolling one thousand people as members by January 12 while following the discipline of the BJP. Those who quit the Uddhav Thackeray-led party to join the Bharatiya Janata Party included Bala Oswal, Vishal Dhanawade, Pallavi Jawale, Sangeeta Thosar, and Prachi Alhat. "The state BJP convention is scheduled on January 12. The party has launched a drive for enrolment of party members in the state. The former corporators are welcomed in the BJP and now they should enrol 1000 members each by visiting every door in their respective area," said Bawankule in Mumbai.

He said the Shiv Sena (UBT) gave up the Hindutva ideology while joining hands with the Congress. "We have seen the flags of Pakistan being carried in the victory procession of MVA candidates during the Lok Sabha elections. The true Shiv Sena worker was upset at what all happened after the party joined hands with Congress," he said. Senior party leader and Maharashtra minister Chandrakant Patil said the former Shiv Sena (UBT) corporators made the right



decision to join the BJP to carry forward their commitment to Hindutva. Patil said many more will join the BJP in the coming days. He also said the BJP single-handedly won the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) polls in 2017 and will continue to have power in the civic body. Most of the senior BJP leaders from Pune, including Union minister Murlidhar Mohol, legislator Sunil Kamble, and city BJP chief Dheeraj Ghate, were present on the occasion.

## Resident of Gujarat's Dingucha village, travel agent booked for 'forging immigration stamps to get UK visas'

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

A resident of Dingucha village and a travel agent in Kalol in Gandhinagar were on Monday booked for the alleged forgery of immigration stamps to obtain UK visas. The alleged incident took place in the early hours of October 16 at the SVP International Airport in Ahmedabad where a family of four from Dingucha village of Kalol, Gandhinagar, were on their way to London, UK. Notably, Dingucha is the same village of origin for a family of four who froze to death while illegally crossing the international border from Canada into the US during a snowstorm on January 19, 2022. In November, a Minnesota jury convicted two persons, including an Indian, Harshkumar Ramanlal Patel, 29, and Steve Shand, 50, for their roles in an international human smuggling ring that resulted in the deaths of the family of Jagdish Patel, his wife, and their two children while attempting to cross the US-Canada border.

In the present case, based on a complaint by PI S A Gohil of the Special Operations Group (SOG), Narendrasinh Ranjitsinh Vaghela and the agent Kalpesh alias Alpesh alias Abhishek Patel were both booked under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) Sections 336(2) (forgery), 338 (forgery of valuable securities), 336(3) (makes false document or record), 340(2) (using forged documents as genuine), and 54 (abatement). The accused were also booked under Section 12(2) (abatement of punishable offence) of the Passport Act, in an FIR filed at the Airport police station in Ahmedabad on Monday. Speaking to The Indian Express, Inspector Gohil said efforts are underway to apprehend the accused. The FIR stated that immigration officer Kripalsinh Chudasama was on duty at departure terminal 11 at the SVP International Airport in Ahmedabad on the intervening night of October 15 and 16. At about 1.40 am, Vaghela and his family, including his wife, daughter, and son, appeared before him. They were to board a flight to Dubai and were transiting from there to London. Vaghela and his family are residents of the Vaghelavaas area of Dingucha village in Kalol, Gandhinagar.

Vaghela's passport allegedly had visa stamps of Istanbul in Turkey from February 14 as well as from February 5, as well as February 5 departure stamp from Mumbai and an arrival stamp in Mumbai from February 14. The of-



ficer, checking a travel history database, allegedly found that the passenger had departed from Mumbai on February 5 and had returned on February 6, with Vaghela allegedly declaring himself as a "deportee". When asked about the discrepancies, Vaghela allegedly confessed that the family had indeed travelled to Turkey on February 5 from Mumbai. However, while his wife and children had cleared immigration in Turkey, he was allegedly denied entry. He claimed that the family had then allegedly returned to Mumbai on February 6. The immigration officer then allegedly checked the passports of the other three family members, and all allegedly had fake immigration stamps of February 14 — showing departure from Istanbul and entry into Mumbai. When he was "confronted" over the "facts", Vaghela allegedly told the immigration officer that an agent named Alpesh alias Abhishek Patel of Pramukh Travels in Kalol had the passports in his possession since they had applied for UK visas. Immigration officers had then given an application to the airport police who had made a station diary entry about the matter and handed it over to the Special Operations Group (SOG). Upon investigation, Gohil stated in the FIR that he found that after the family had "returned from Turkey on February 6", they had given their passports to Patel to arrange for UK visas. While those visas were obtained, the family allegedly saw the false immigration stamps of February 14 when they got the passports back from the agent. The Ahmedabad SOG then wrote to the Immigration Bureau in Ahmedabad for the travel history of the family.

## Godman Asaram Bapu bail: SC grants interim bail in 2013 rape case on medical grounds till March 31



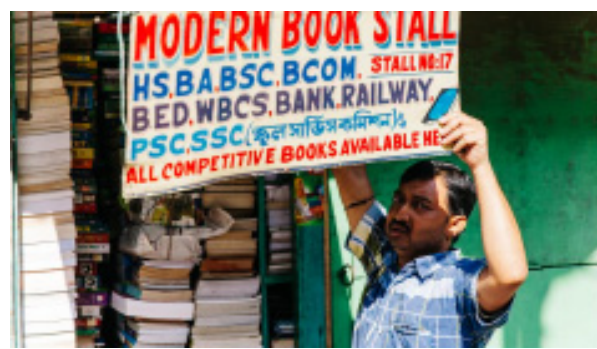
GNS News Agency, Jan 10

The Supreme Court on Monday granted interim bail to 86-year-old godman Asaram Bapu on medical grounds till the end of March, while restricting him from meeting his followers. A Bench of Justice M.M. Sundresh and Justice Rajesh Bindal passed the order while disposing of his plea for suspension of sentence. The petition filed by Asaram, through advocates Rajesh Inamdar and Shashwat Anand, had said his health was precarious and rapidly deteriorating. Senior advocate Devadutt Kamat, for Asaram, that his client's conviction was based solely on the testimony of the survivor. They alleged inconsistencies in the prosecution version. However, the Bench restricted itself from entering into the domain of the merits of the case and focussed solely on submissions made regarding Asaram's

health while allowing bail. Mr. Kamat said Asaram had "suffered a series of heart attacks and his coronary angiography report of January 14 arterial blockages of up to 99%". "The petitioner who is in the twilight of his life, aged more than 85 years, is apprehending that he may die in jail if he is not allowed to take treatment from a hospital/doctor of his choice which is fundamental right granted to every person regardless of the fact whether he is a convict or an undertrial," Asaram's plea had stated.

It said the godman had already served 11 years of imprisonment. The petition argued that a suspension of the sentence was imperative to safeguard not only his health but also to prevent the imposition of a punishment that could be tantamount to a death sentence. The self-styled godman was convicted by the Special POCSCO court at Jodhpur and sentenced to life imprisonment for raping a teenage girl in his ashram. He is serving a life sentence in Central Jail, Jodhpur. A Gandhinagar Sessions Court in Gujarat had also convicted Asaram in another rape case in January 2023, and sentenced him to life imprisonment. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the State of Gujarat, opposed the plea, emphasising the gravity of Asaram's conviction and asserting that adequate medical facilities were available to him in custody. Granting relief, the Bench however clarified that the bail was granted solely on humanitarian grounds. The court also indicated that Asaram's medical status could be reassessed closer to the expiration of the bail term.

## English education: A case for two-language policy



GNS News Agency, Jan 10

For decades, "modernisation" in India has often boiled down to minor tweaks dressed up as major reforms — announced with fanfare but seldom pursued with real vigour. This inertia reflects a familiar pattern: whenever genuine progress threatens to disrupt entrenched hierarchies, the guardians of the status quo resist wholesale change. Language policy is no exception. While India's diverse linguistic landscape demands bold thinking, we have seen more symbolic gestures than transformative action. The result? Persistent historical inequities remain undressed, as the gap between our lofty ambitions and half-hearted execution widens. It is precisely this gulf that an ambitious, bilingual approach seeks to bridge — recognising that inclusive education must challenge complacency if it is to deliver genuine social mobility and national growth. Nowhere is the tension between aspiration and hesitation more evident than in the challenge of ensuring every child grows up fluent in both their mother tongue and English. Over the years, "modernisation" in this sector has frequently been repackaged as minor upgrades to existing structures, draped in slogans of change and hope. Governing systems, content to move at the slow pace of inevitability, announce initiatives without the resolve to implement them meaningfully. Yet such superficial measures only entrench historical inequities, leaving behind those who stand to benefit most from substantive educational reform. Incrementalism vs. bold reform Since Independence, India has pursued a range of language policies, yet the idea of a single lingua franca has neither effectively unified the nation nor guaranteed prosperity for all. In practice, parents across diverse states share one predominant aspiration: they want their children to acquire English proficiency for better-paying jobs, access to international opportunities, and, ultimately, the chance for upward social mobility.

Meanwhile, educational experts underscore the vital role of the mother tongue in fostering cognitive growth and introspection. It is evident that learning any language is significantly enriched by one's native linguistic foundation and the broader environment in which one is immersed. Neither view should cancel out the other. A policy that maintains the child's mother tongue as the bedrock of cultural and conceptual understanding — while guaranteeing proficiency in English — can tackle deep-rooted educational inequalities and unlock India's unrealised potential on the global stage. Yet we repeatedly see half-measures dressed as breakthroughs. Without the willingness to embrace genuine, far-reaching change, the vision of inclusive progress risks remaining unfulfilled, held back by the persistence of the status quo.

Why English matters and why mother tongue still counts English has become a global medium for diplomacy, commerce, science, and technology. In India it underpins key sectors such as medicine, higher education, and IT services. The digital age, propelled by artificial intelligence and rapid innovation, has only magnified English's importance. Those who lack fluency in English may find themselves cut off from opportunities that drive not only personal success, but also the broader development of their communities and, by extension, the nation. At the same time, mother-tongue instruction offers a crucial cognitive advantage. Children learn complex concepts more easily and retain a stronger sense of cultural identity when initial teaching is conducted in the language they speak at home. Rather than viewing English and local languages as mutually exclusive, education policies should recognise them as complementary tools, each essential for holistic development.

Widening gaps in access Recent data reveals that only a small fraction of India's population — primarily from affluent, urban backgrounds — has access to quality English education. Schools where regional languages serve as the primary medium often lack the resources or curriculum

needed to build strong English skills, perpetuating socio-economic privilege and deepening the divide between the nation's elites and countless families struggling to escape poverty. While the 2011 Census recorded over 10% of Indians reporting the ability to speak some English, a more recent nationally representative survey conducted by the Lok Foundation and Oxford University, in collaboration with the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (2019), suggests that just 6% claimed they could speak English — a figure even lower than the Census data. This sharp disparity underscores the uneven access to English education, reinforcing existing inequalities and posing a substantial challenge to India's aspirations for inclusive growth and socio-economic mobility.

A transformational policy approach India now has the opportunity to move beyond well-intentioned but incomplete measures. A truly bold plan would ensure that all children, regardless of social or economic background, graduate from school with solid proficiency in both their mother tongue and English. Achieving this requires coordinated policies, robust funding, and committed leadership. Three core elements stand out: A dedicated national commission: Tasked with assessing the linguistic divide, this body would identify cultural, economic, and infrastructural barriers to English learning. It might, for instance, propose significant incentives for well-trained English teachers — offering scholarships, higher pay, and rural service allowances. Such a commission should report annually on progress, ensuring accountability. Curriculum overhaul and early intervention: Integrating English from the early primary years, without compromising the primacy of the mother tongue, could ensure students acquire both foundational and advanced language skills by graduation. This reimagined curriculum demands sustained political will and financial commitment. Equally crucial is ongoing teacher development, given that teachers themselves need the tools and training to impart bilingual skills effectively.

Respecting parents' demands: No language policy can succeed if it remains at odds with parental aspirations. Surveys and consultations can give families a voice, acknowledging that English, far from diminishing local languages, empowers communities by connecting them to the wider world. Positioning parents as stakeholders ensures that any new approach resonates with the grassroots reality of India's diverse population. Unlocking India's full potential

By granting every citizen the key to English proficiency — while strengthening the cultural roots anchored in their mother tongue — India stands to amplify its demographic dividend and global influence. An English-speaking workforce is poised to thrive in science, technology, healthcare, and international trade, propelling the entire nation forward. Meanwhile, regional languages can and should continue to flourish, preserving India's rich cultural fabric. Despite the critical need, no major political party has yet championed this cause at scale — yet the demand from parents is loud and clear, even if it remains unacknowledged by policymakers. It is time to heed the hopes of millions who recognise that English is not a luxury, but a powerful tool for social mobility and national unity. Reimagining education

The question is: will we let this pivotal moment slip by under the guise of "we can" instead of "we will"? Or will we take a resolute stance for universal bilingualism, valuing local languages while harnessing the power of English to propel India onto the global stage? It is easy to preserve the status quo — far harder to disrupt it. As we contemplate the future, the place to start may well be with the very parents who have been systematically ignored. Why not conduct a nationwide survey to ask families which language skills they believe would genuinely benefit their children, and how best these skills can be imparted without eroding cultural identities? Encouraging such dialogue could spark a shared sense of purpose, emphasising that real progress must begin at the grassroots level. Ultimately, India needs to recognise the value of linguistic synergy: weaving regional languages together with English to unite this diverse nation and unlock its full potential. Refusing to confront inertia — the quiet but formidable resistance of the guardians of the status quo — will only perpetuate existing inequalities. By adopting a balanced approach that aligns with parents' aspirations, ensuring children's mother tongues are preserved while they master English, India can chart a genuinely transformative course. This is not simply another policy option; it is an imperative for inclusive growth, social cohesion, and the nation's emergence as a leading player on the world stage.

## Over 500 women representatives from local bodies to get crash course in parliamentary procedures



GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Organised to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of tribal icon Birsa Munda, the Panchayat Se Parliament 2.0 programme will have workshops and sessions, a guided tour of the new Parliament House, Samvidhan Sadan, Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya, and Rashtrapati Bhavan for the participants offering them a deeper understanding of India's legislative process and the functioning of democratic institutions. Organised to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of tribal icon Birsa Munda, the Panchayat Se Parliament 2.0 programme will have workshops and sessions, a guided tour of the new Parliament House, Samvidhan Sadan, Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya, and Rashtrapati Bhavan for the participants offering them a deeper understanding of India's legislative process and the functioning of democratic institutions.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla will on Monday (January 6, 2025) inaugurate "Panchayat Se Parliament 2.0" which seeks to give insight into the Constitution and parliamentary procedures to over 500 women representatives from Panchayati Raj institutions from across the country. Organised to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of tribal icon Birsa Munda, the programme will have workshops and sessions, a guided tour of the new Parliament House, Samvidhan Sadan, Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya, and Rashtrapati Bhavan for the participants

offering them a deeper understanding of India's legislative process and the functioning of democratic institutions. The programme will bring together 502 elected women representatives from Scheduled Tribes of 22 States and Union Territories, ensuring a diverse and inclusive group, the Lok Sabha secretariat said on Sunday (January 5, 2025). It aims to empower elected women representatives from Scheduled Tribes from Panchayati Raj institutions and enhance their knowledge of constitutional provisions, parliamentary procedures, and governance to foster effective leadership. Women and Child Development Minister Annapurna Devi, and National Commission for Women chief, Vijaya Rahatkar will attend the event.

## Telangana universities operate without regular faculty

Hyderabad: Osmania University, one of the oldest and prestigious universities in the country, has been operating with just 28 per cent regular faculty out of a sanctioned strength of 1,267 positions.

Of the total sanctioned posts, 354 teachers, including professors, associate and assistant professors, are currently on the university rolls. This means, vacancies are more than thrice the regular working staff. The vacancies will further increase as another 19 senior professors in various departments are set to superannuate this year. This month alone, three professors, one each from Business Management, Chemistry, and Physics departments will retire. With departments witnessing superannuations and no regular recruitment in sight, the student-teacher ratio, which is considered one of the parameters for educational standards and rankings, is taking a heavy beating. The situation has become so alarming that several departments, including Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, Journalism and Mass Communication, and Psychology are being operated without a single professor.

## Atul Subhash death case: Karnataka High Court declines to stay probe against wife Nikita and her family members

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Declining to pass any interim order at this stage, the High Court of Karnataka on Monday adjourned further hearing till January 22 on a petition by Nikita Singhania and her family members, who have sought stay of the probe on the First Information Report (FIR) registered against them for allegedly abetting 34-year-old techie Atul Subhash to commit suicide.

Observing orally that a complaint by the father of Atul Subhash prima facie contains ingredients to invoke Section 108 (abetment to suicide) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Justice S.R. Krishna Kumar adjourned further hearing while asking the police to file their statement of objection to the petition. The petition was filed by Subhash's wife Nikita, her mother Nisha Singhania, brother Anurag Singhania, and uncle Sushil Kumar Singhania, who have been arraigned as accused in the FIR.

Earlier, advocate for the petitioners had contended that registration of criminal complaints by Nikita against her husband Subhash cannot be treated as abetment to suicide while seeking the stay of further investigation in the case, while claiming that there is no ingredient in the complaint to invoke the provision for abetment to suicide. However, the court orally declined to pass any interim order while directing the police to file their statement. Meanwhile, advocate



for the petitioners withdrew an interlocutory application seeking a direction from the High Court to declare as illegal the arrest of the petitioners and release them on bail, as a sessions court on January 4 enlarged them on bail.

## 'Sri City attracted ₹3,750 crore of investments in 2024, provided 17,000 jobs'

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Sri City, an integrated business city located in A.P.'s Tirupati district, ended calendar year 2024 by attracting investments of ₹3,750 crore and has provided jobs to more than 17,000 people, according to its founder. "The investment highlights exceptional performance of Sri City in a year that was interrupted by elections in India and the U.S. The creation of new jobs will strengthen livelihoods and employment opportunities in and around our premises," its founder and managing director Ravindra Sannareddy said during an interaction.

Stating that 2024 had been another remarkable year, he said that Sri City had yet again proved to be an "undisputed leader" when it came to driving economic growth, generating employment and advancing sustainable development. According to him, more than 220 companies from 29 countries have invested in Sri City, representing a diverse manufacturing portfolio consisting of automobiles, air-conditioning, electronics, engineering, formulations, FMCG, food processing and warehousing among others. The cumulative exports since inception stands at \$4 billion. Mentioning that construction is an ongoing activity in Sri City, Mr. Reddy said, "The entrepreneurs don't stop with



one unit. They keep on expanding. Currently, nine companies have started construction activities, 16 units commenced full-scale operations and nine units expanded to meet growing demands," he said. With over 26 Japanese companies, Sri City has quickly grown to become India's second-largest investment destination for Japanese brands. Mr. Reddy said Sri City is also known as 'a gateway for manufacturing activities', as 'cool capital' since it has the maximum number of air-conditioning facilities, and as 'Shree City' since it employs more women.

## Andhra Pradesh government will take effective steps to prevent recurrence of Budameru floods

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

The State government will take effective measures to prevent the recurrence of Budameru floods. The Old Channel parallel to Budameru will be upgraded to a capacity of 10,000 cusecs, and Upputeru will be developed to ensure a smooth water flow to the sea from Kolleru, says Water Resources Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu.

On the occasion, Mr. Ramanaidu said that the officials were asked to prepare proposals to enhance the capacity of the Old Channel from Enikepadu UT to Kolleru Lake. The previous YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) government didn't spend even a rupee on Budameru. The entire State witnessed the damage caused by Budameru, where 50,000 cusecs of floodwater entered the canal in a single day, resulting in breaches at three locations. To protect the citizens from flooding of Budameru in the future, a detailed report will be prepared shortly. Pending works to increase the Budameru Diversion Canal's capacity from 17,500 cusecs to 37,500 cusecs will be completed as per the action plan, he said.

During 2014-19, the Budameru Diversion Channel capacity was increased to 35,000 cusecs, tenders were issued for ₹464 crore, and 80% of the works were completed. However, despite the availability of funds, the previous government neglected the remaining 20% of the work, leading to the flood situation in Budameru, for which Vijayawada residents had to pay the price, he said.

Municipal Administration and Urban Development



(MAUD) Minister P. Narayana said that people of 34 wards in Vijayawada faced hardships due to the Budameru floods, with around 5 lakh people having to live in waterlogged conditions for four days. Even daily water needs were not met at that time. The government distributed 20 to 30 lakh drinking water bottles daily. But, some people have politicised the distribution of water bottles, too. The government, however, prioritised public welfare during the crisis, he said.

## Fentanyl smuggling: Two Indian companies charged with criminal conspiracies to import fentanyl precursor chemicals to U.S.



GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Two Indian companies — Raxuter Chemicals and Athos Chemicals — have been charged with criminal conspiracies to distribute and import fentanyl precursor chemicals to the United States. Bhavesh Lathiya, a founder and senior executive of Raxuter Chemicals, was arrested in New York on January 4 on the same charges. U.S. Magistrate Judge Joseph A Marutollo for the Eastern District of New York has ordered detained pending trial. If convicted, Lathiya faces a maximum penalty of 53 years in prison.

This is probably for the first time that Indian companies and its executives have been charged for distribution and import of fentanyl precursor chemicals to the United

States. Most Chinese companies have been charged for such criminal conspiracies for distribution and import of Fentanyl, a Schedule II controlled substance, which is considered to be the deadliest drug threat currently facing the US. It is a highly addictive synthetic opioid that is approximately 50 times more potent than heroin and 100 times more potent than morphine. "We allege these companies, and a company founder and senior executive who is now in custody, conspired to distribute and import fentanyl precursor chemicals from India to the United States and Mexico," said Attorney General Merrick Garland on Saturday.

"(We) will continue to take the fight against fentanyl directly to alleged foreign precursor chemical exporters like the companies and the individual indicted today — because the best way to stop illicit fentanyl from killing Americans and devastating communities is by preventing it from being manufactured in the first place," said Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas. In the indictment unsealed Monday, Raxuter Chemicals and Lathiya are charged with conspiracy to distribute and import a listed chemical, distribution and importation of a listed chemical knowing it would be used to manufacture fentanyl, smuggling, and other related offenses. Athos Chemicals is charged with similar offenses, including conspiracy to distribute and import a listed chemical and distribution and importation of a listed chemical.

## Franco dictatorship splits Spain 50 years after death

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Spain's conservative opposition will boycott the start of official commemorations marking the 50th anniversary of right-wing dictator Francisco Franco's death, laying bare the enduring divisiveness of his legacy. The general overthrew a democratic republic in a brutal civil war that killed hundreds of thousands and ruled with an iron fist from 1939 until his death in 1975. Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has announced around 100 events in 2025 to "showcase the great transformation achieved" in the half-century since the European country initiated its democratic transition. Madrid's Reina Sofia art museum — home to Pablo Picasso's "Guernica" painting, one of the most famous anti-Franco works — will host the first ceremony on Wednesday (January 8, 2025). Mr. Sanchez will lead it but neither King Felipe VI nor the leader of the main conservative Popular Party (PP), Alberto Nunez Feijoo, will attend. Mr. Feijoo believes the initiative is an opportunistic ploy by the minority leftist government to distract attention from its political and legal woes.

Corruption investigations are ongoing against Mr. Sanchez's wife and political allies, while the Socialists have to negotiate painstakingly with an array of fringe and separatist parties to pass legislation. The commemorations planned in schools, universities, museums and streets are the work of a government which "in its desperation constantly looks to the past", Mr. Feijoo said. The Socialists have retorted by pointing to the origins of the PP, born in 1989 as the successor to the Popular Alliance, founded in 1976 by a former Franco minister. Victims disappointed Far-right Vox, the third-largest force in parliament, will also snub the programme.

One of its MPs recently said in parliament that Franco's rule "was not a period of darkness, as this government makes out, rather a stage of reconstruction, progress and reconciliation". At the other end of the political spectrum, the hard-left Podemos has called the commemorations a "facade" to cover up the scant compensation for the dictatorship's victims. Mr. Sanchez passed a "democratic memory" law in 2022 aiming to revive their memory, including the creation of a register of victims and the removal of Francoist symbols. But the law has not tried or convicted any ex-Franco officials accused of crimes and who remain



alive as they benefit from an amnesty approved during the transition, to the disappointment of survivors. The polarising memory of the 1936-1939 civil war and Franco stems from the regime's tame demise, according to Joan Maria Thomas, professor of contemporary history at the University of Rovira i Virgili. An ailing 82-year-old Franco passed away peacefully in hospital, in contrast with the spectacular collapse of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy during World War II or the Carnation Revolution that overthrew Portugal's right-wing dictatorship in 1974. Democratic elections followed in 1977 and newly enfranchised Spaniards approved a new constitution in a referendum the following year, now celebrated with a public holiday on December 6. Positive step in Spain, "there was a big agreement... to look forwards" without revisiting the injustices of the past, Mr. Thomas told AFP. Remembering Franco's death was "positive" because today's Spain "does not keep in mind the importance of recovering a democratic system in 1977 and being able to consolidate it", he said.

But "we cannot avoid... a memory of the part of the country that was pro-Franco, which was a very considerable part", he added. Fascist and conservative Catholic elements were among his supporters and loyalists once venerated Franco with masses and visits to the Valley of the Fallen, a gigantic mausoleum near Madrid that housed his tomb. A previous Sanchez government took the historic step to remove Franco's remains in 2019 and renamed the valley, seen as a triumphalist monument to his cause. In a 2018 survey by pollster Sigma Dos for the conservative El Mundo daily, the plan won only slightly more support than disapproval.

## U.S. transfers 11 Guantanamo detainees to Yemen after more than two decades without charge



GNS News Agency, Jan 10

The Pentagon said on Monday that (January 6, 2025) it had transferred 11 Yemeni men to Oman this week after holding them for more than two decades without charge at the U.S. naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The transfer was the latest and biggest push by the Biden administration in its final weeks to clear Guantanamo of the last remaining detainees there who were never charged with a crime. Guantanamo: a U.S. turned detention site

The latest release brings the total number of men detained at Guantanamo to 15. That's the fewest since 2002, when President George W. Bush's administration turned Guantanamo into a detention site for the mostly Muslim men taken into custody around the world in what the U.S. called its "war on terror." The U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and military and covert operations elsewhere followed the Sept. 11, 2001, al-Qaeda attacks. The men in the latest transfer included Shaqawi al Hajj, who had undergone repeated hunger strikes and hospitalizations at Guantanamo to protest his 21 years in prison, preceded by two years of detention and torture in CIA custody, according to the U.S.-based Center for Constitutional Rights. Rights groups and some lawmakers have pushed successive U.S. administrations to close Guantanamo or, failing that, release all those detainees never charged with a crime. Guantanamo held about 800 detainees at its peak.

Never-charged detainees of Guantanamo The Biden administration and administrations before it said they were working on lining up suitable countries willing to take those never-charged detainees. Many of those stuck at

Guantanamo were from Yemen, a country split by war, with its capital held by the Iranian-allied Houthi militant group. The sultanate of Oman, on the eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula, did not acknowledge taking in the prisoners early Tuesday. Officials in the country did not respond to questions from The Associated Press. The key Western ally has taken in some 30 prisoners in the past since the founding of the prison. However, those prisoners have since been released in circumstances unexplained by Oman. Two Afghans once held by Oman returned to Taliban-controlled Afghanistan in February. One Yemeni died in Oman after being told he and 27 others would be repatriated to Yemen, the British activist group CAGE International said. "Faced with little choice, 26 of the men and their families returned to Yemen after being pressured by the Omani government, which offered each \$70,000 as compensation," the group said. It wasn't immediately clear what happened to the 28th prisoner. The transfer announced Monday leaves six never-charged men still being held at Guantanamo, two convicted and sentenced inmates, and seven others charged with the 2001 attacks, the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole, and 2002 bombings in Bali, Indonesia.

## Zendaya, Tom Holland 'Spider-Man' co-stars are engaged

Los Angeles: "Spider-Man" co-stars Tom Holland and Zendaya are engaged. The news comes after Zendaya stepped out for the 2025 Golden Globe Awards on Sunday flashing a massive diamond ring on her left-hand ring finger to the shutterbugs. Holland, however, gave the ceremony a miss. A family source confirmed to People magazine that Holland and Zendaya, both 28, got engaged during the Christmas and New Year's holidays. Another source told the publication that "everyone close to them knew an engagement was happening", adding Holland had been keen to propose to Zendaya "for a while". "He's always been crazy about her. He always knew she was the one. They have something very special," the source added. Holland and Zendaya, however, are in no hurry to get married. "They will just enjoy things for now and won't rush a wedding.

## Israel struggles to deter escalating attacks from Yemen's Houthi rebels as other fronts calm



GNS News Agency, Jan 10

The rockets from Gaza have mostly fallen silent. A ceasefire with Hezbollah militants in Lebanon has taken hold. But repeated fire from Yemen's Houthi rebels, a far-away foe, is proving a stubborn threat for Israel. The Iran-backed Houthis are stepping up their missile attacks, sending hundreds of thousands of Israelis scrambling for shelter in the middle of the night, scaring away foreign airlines and keeping up what could be the last major front in the Middle East wars. "It's like musical chairs," said Yoni Yovel, 31, who left the northern Israeli city of Haifa late last year to avoid rocket fire from Hezbollah only to see his apartment in Tel Aviv's Jaffa neighborhood heavily damaged by a Houthi missile.

Israel has repeatedly bombarded ports, oil infrastructure and the airport in the Houthi-held capital Sanaa, some 2,000 kilometres (1,200 miles) away. Israeli leaders have threatened to kill central Houthi figures and have tried to galvanize the world against the threat. But the Houthis persist. In recent weeks, missiles and drones from Yemen have struck nearly every day, including early Friday (January 3, 2025) morning, setting off air raid sirens in broad swaths of Israel. In some cases, the projectiles have penetrated Israel's sophisticated aerial defence system, most recently toppling an empty school and shattering the windows of apartments near an empty playground where one missile landed.

Because most missiles are intercepted and because the fire is usually a single missile at a time, the strikes have not caused major physical damage, although a few attacks have been fatal during the 15-month war in Gaza as the Houthis attack in solidarity with Hamas. But the rocket fire is posing a threat to Israel's economy, keeping many foreign airlines away and preventing the country from jump-starting its hard-hit tourism industry. Houthi attacks on shipping in the Red Sea have all but shuttered an Israeli port in the city of Eilat and have prompted ships destined for it to take a longer, more costly route around Africa to Israel's Mediterranean ports. The Houthi strikes are also a symbolic reminder for Israel of the Iran-backed enemies that encircle it, known as the "Axis of Resistance," and the last major holdout. And because Israel's counterstrikes have yet to deter the Houthis, their persistent attacks defy Israel's image as a regional military powerhouse. "They are the only ones who are active now," said Danny Citrinowicz, a research fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies, a Tel Aviv think tank.

## Israeli strikes kill dozens in Gaza Strip as new ceasefire talks begin

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

An Israeli military strike killed 12 persons in a house in Gaza City early on Saturday (January 4, 2025), bringing the death toll from strikes across Gaza to 62 over the last day, Palestinian medics said, as mediators launched a new ceasefire push in Qatar. Residents and medics said at least 14 persons had been in the house of the Al-Ghoula family when the strike took place in the early hours, destroying the building. People scoured the rubble for possible survivors trapped under the debris and medics said several children were among those killed. A few flames and trails of smoke continued to rise from burning furniture in the ruins hours after the attack. "At about 2 a.m. (00:00 GMT) we were woken up by the sound of a huge explosion," said Ahmed Ayyan, a neighbour of the Al-Ghoula family, adding that 14 or 15 people had been staying in the house. "Most of them are women and children, they are all civilians, there is no one there who shot missiles, or is from the resistance," Ayyan told Reuters. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military on the incident.

The military said in a statement on Saturday that its forces had continued their operations this week in Beit Hanoun town in the northern edge of the enclave, where the army has been operating for three months, and had destroyed a military complex that had been used by Hamas. Later on Saturday, an Israeli airstrike killed three persons in a car east of Deir Al-Balah in central Gaza, medics said. Dozens of Palestinians were killed in strikes on Friday, bringing the death toll during the past 24 hours to 62, health officials said. A surge in Israeli operations and the

The Houthis, he said, "are a challenge of a different kind." Shortly after Hamas launched its attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, the Houthis began striking Israel-linked ships in the strategic Bab el-Mandeb Strait along Yemen's coast. Those attacks expanded to include other ships with no ties to Israel, disrupting cargo and energy shipments that are critical for worldwide trade. The Houthis said it was part of their campaign aimed at pressuring Israel and the West over the war in Gaza. In response, U.S. and partner forces have launched multiple rounds of coordinated airstrikes against Houthi launch sites and weapons storage sites. Throughout the war, the Houthis have also been firing missiles and drones at Israel, at first focusing on Eilat and eventually broadening attacks to include major population centres and the seaside metropolis of Tel Aviv. The launches have intensified in recent weeks. "There was thunder the other night and my daughter thought it was a missile. She woke up and started screaming," said Ibrahim Sosa, 53, whose home in Jaffa is near the site of a recent missile landing. Israel has retaliated repeatedly and vowed to escalate if the attacks don't stop. "We will hunt down all of the Houthis' leaders and we will strike them just as we have done in other places," said Defense Minister Israel Katz, shortly after Israeli jets struck Yemen last week. The Israeli strikes have been deadly, with several people killed. Israeli military spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari told The Associated Press that Israel's strikes focused on "military infrastructure which was used and directly contributed to Houthi terror activities, including to smuggle arms and finance their terror activities." Mr. Hagari acknowledged the battle would be complex. And despite massive Israeli air power, the Houthis have continued their assaults. That stands in contrast to Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran — three other enemies Israel has largely neutralized over the past 15 months. "Israel has many years of familiarity with those enemies. There is intelligence and there is the important element of a ground maneuver, and in Yemen we can't do that. The scale here is different," said Eyal Pinko, a former Israeli defence official and senior research fellow at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, an Israeli think tank.

Yemen does not border Israel, and Israel cannot easily stage a ground invasion as it has in Gaza and Lebanon to dismantle enemies' infrastructure. Israel has to orchestrate complex air missions to fly to Yemen, which are costly and limited in what they can achieve. Pinko also said the Houthis have learned over years of fighting against a Saudi-led coalition how to bounce back from airstrikes. While the Houthis have been active as an insurgent force for years, Israel hasn't seen them as a priority or invested as much in gathering intelligence against them. Against Hamas, yearslong intelligence helped target and erode the group's forces. With Hezbollah, Israel penetrated deep into the organization, allowing it to unleash an offensive last year that detonated the pagers of rank-and-file members and decimated its senior ranks in secret bunkers. In Iran, Israel struck Hamas' top leader in an apartment in Tehran and knocked out many of its air defences in an October strike that left parts of the capital exposed. But the Houthis' hideouts, weapons and infrastructure are less known to Israel, making its counterstrikes somewhat less effective. Mr. Hagari recognized that Israel's intelligence in Yemen was "an issue" and said the military was working to improve.



number of Palestinians killed in recent days comes amid a renewed push to reach a ceasefire in the 15-month-old war and return Israeli hostages before U.S. President-elect Donald Trump takes office on January 20. Israeli mediators were dispatched to resume talks in Doha brokered by Qatar and Egyptian mediators, and U.S. President Joe Biden's administration, which is helping to broker the talks, urged Hamas on Friday to agree to a deal. Hamas said it was committed to reaching an agreement but it was unclear how close the two sides were. Israel launched its assault on Gaza in response to the Hamas attack on Oct. 7, 2023, in which militants stormed border communities from Gaza, killing about 1,200 people and seizing around 250 hostages, according to Israeli tallies. Its military campaign, with the stated goal of eradicating Hamas, has levelled swathes of the enclave, driving most people from their homes, and has killed 45,717 Palestinians, according to the Gaza health ministry.

## Hezbollah leader Nasrallah was killed last year inside war operations room, aide says

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah was killed in an Israeli airstrike last year while inside the militant group's war operations room, according to new details Sunday (January 5, 2025) disclosed by a senior Hezbollah official. A series of Israeli airstrikes flattened several buildings in Beirut's southern suburbs on September 27, 2023, killing Nasrallah. The Lebanese Health Ministry said six people died. According to news reports, Nasrallah and other senior officials were meeting underground. The assassination of Nasrallah, who had led Hezbollah for 32 years, turned months of low-level strikes between Israel and the militants into all-out war that battered much of southern and eastern Lebanon for two months until a U.S.-brokered ceasefire took effect November 27. "His Eminence (Hassan Nasrallah) used to lead the battle and war from this location," top Hezbollah security official Wafiq Safa told a news conference Sunday (January 5, 2025) near the site where Nasrallah was killed. He said Nasrallah died in the war operations room. He did not offer other details. Lebanese media had reported that Mr. Safa was a target of Israeli airstrikes in central Beirut before the ceasefire but appeared unscathed. During the first phase of the ceasefire, Hezbollah is supposed to move its fighters, weapons and infrastructure away from southern Lebanon north of the Litani River, while Israeli troops that invaded southern Lebanon need to



withdraw all within 60 days. Lebanese army soldiers are to deploy in large numbers and alongside United Nations peacekeepers be the sole armed presence in southern Lebanon. Lebanon and Hezbollah have been critical of ongoing Israeli strikes and overflights across the country and for only withdrawing from two of dozens of Lebanese villages it controls. Israel says that the Lebanese military has not done its share in dismantling Hezbollah infrastructure. Hezbollah's current leader Naim Kassem in a televised address Saturday (January 4, 2025) warned that its fighters could strike Israel if its troops don't leave the south by the end of the month. Mr. Safa said that Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, who negotiated the ceasefire deal with Washington, told Hezbollah that the government will meet with U.S. envoy Amos Hochstein soon. "

## Akasa Air appoints marketing veteran Belson Coutinho as Chief Operating Officer



Domestic carrier Akasa Air on Monday announced the appointment of its co-founder and marketing veteran Belson Coutinho as the company's Chief Operating Officer from January. In his new role, Belson will be responsible for in-flight services, airport services, maintenance and engineering, flight operations, IOCC (integrated operations command centre), among others, while also spearheading Akasa Air Learning Academy, the airline said in a statement. Prior to taking up the current assignment, Coutinho was holding the position of Akasa Air's Chief Marketing and Experience Officer (CMO and CXO).

Previously, he has served as Chief Marketing Officer at VFS Global and also in various marketing roles at the now-defunct Jet Airways for over 26 years. His appointment

comes at a time when Akasa Air is under regulatory lens for certain alleged safety norm violations and lapses. Late last month, aviation safety regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) ordered suspension of its two senior executives — director of operations and director of training — for six months for alleged lapses in pilot training. On Monday, the DGCA relieved one of its pilots from training over landing lapses. Besides serving multiple show-cause notices to the airline in the last few months for various alleged lapses and violations, the DGCA October last year imposed a penalty of Rs 10 lakh on Akasa Air for failing to provide timely compensation to some passengers who were denied boarding at Bangalore Airport in September. With over two decades of experience in the aviation industry, Belson has delivered multiple industry-first initiatives in Indian aviation, underpinned by his strong operational, strategic and leadership skills, Akasa said. "Belson's multifaceted role over the years had him successfully collaborate with cross-functional teams across airline operations, developing a good understanding of the functioning of operational departments. His passion for brand building, service excellence, training, technology, processes, employee centricity and sharp focus on cost leadership equips him to bring tremendous value to his new role as our COO," said Vinay Dube, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Akasa Air. Belson has been a part of Akasa Air's executive committee since the airline's inception in 2022, Akasa Air said.

## Janmejaya Sinha: Make all pay for water, give a laptop to kids from 8-18, measure Indian missions by tourists from those countries



1. Fiscal deficit: I would like the gradual consolidation path that the Finance Minister has charted since Covid on fiscal consolidation to continue. It has allowed us to have some weapons in our arsenal in a very uncertain world. So, achieve 4.9 per cent this year and target 4.5 per cent next year but no more than that.

2. Water: The most urgent and profound crisis that India faces is the shortage of water. India's current water consumption stands at 1,385 m<sup>3</sup> per capita, is a third of the global average and below that of low-income countries. Water requires a GST-level council to create consensus on water pricing. All sectors including agriculture need to pay for water. In addition, the Centre should create a fund to provide low-cost loans for building and maintaining sewage treatment plants in all cities that are close to water bodies — sea, rivers or lakes; and to municipal corporations to replace all old pipes supplying water in their municipalities.

3. Ease of doing business (EODB): It would be wonderful if we change the metric to capture ease of doing business in India by State.

Construction is well recognised to be one of the highest employment creating businesses in India. Anecdotally I have been told that to construct a 42-story building in Mumbai takes 4 years though it takes less than one year in China. My friends in the business tell me that they provision around two years to just obtain government clearances, and the additional one year is on account of the lower productivity of our manpower. The right target to check EODB should be time taken to construct and deliver a building by State (from start to occupancy certificate date) and published. It will give a truer picture of EODB by State.

4. Computers for children between 8-18: India is going to supply manpower for the world given age demographics and aging in the rich world including China. Our education outcomes are currently very poor. We must supplement

learning efforts and prevent digital apartheid by providing a free computer to all children between 8-18 with pre-loaded learning programs. There should also be a building in each tehsil or village with 24-hour power and wifi connections, and learning competitions should be introduced as incentives for children.

5. Encouraging tourism: Tourism is a big employment creator. India is doing very poorly in attracting international tourists. Of even the 10 million international tourists that come to India most are non-resident Indians or business travelers. The genuine international tourists are unlikely to be more than 3 million. We need to act on multiple fronts. Firstly, given how hard it is to get tourists to come to India when here we must get full value from them, so the mantra should be "ek din aur" before we try to get "ek tourist aur." A tourist should not go see the Taj Mahal and return to Delhi the same day, there should be a night programme too. The government must address the root causes. Why does Patna have no good hotels? Land acquisition and land leases for constructing hotels are a nightmare. Getting to important Buddhist sites like Bodhi Gaya, Nalanda and Rajgir is hard. It needs to be easier. In fact, coming to India itself should be simplified. We should provide 15-day visa free entry for international tourists from selected countries based on tourism potential and not reciprocity. We should also consider a tax holiday for private players to encourage them. GST rates for hotels and restaurants need to be moderated. The government should conduct a cost benefit analysis of its GST collections from hotels versus the tourist earnings foregone. In fact, a bureaucrat friend told me he chose to go to Bentota in Sri Lanka, rather than any Indian location because it was cheaper to do so (including flights). Finally, all Indian missions should also be measured on the number of tourists that have come from that country. Each state should identify its message for international tourists as Kerala had done with its "God's Own Country" campaign. Bihar might consider religious sites for Buddhist and Jain, Rajasthan its places, other states may focus on historical monuments, temples, medical tourism, beaches, hill resorts, wildlife, plantations, or even educational institutions. State governments should be encouraged to post one state bureaucrat to target location missions with the task of facilitating tourists come to their state in India. This is India's decade but to really make it our own we should remember Benjamin Franklin's pithy invocation "you may delay but time will not!"

## AMFI calls for restoration of long-term indexation benefit for debt funds

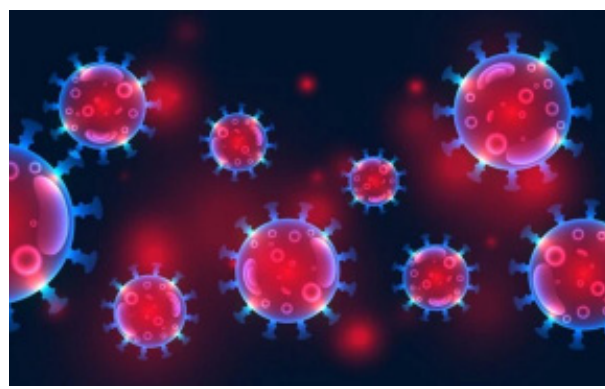
The Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) has called for restoration of the long-term indexation benefit for debt schemes of mutual funds which was withdrawn in the Budget 2024. In its proposals for Union Budget 2025-26, the mutual fund body has also requested the government to restore earlier tax rates on capital gains, amend definition of equity oriented funds, allowing mutual funds to launch pension-oriented MF schemes with uniform tax treatment as National Pension Scheme (NPS) and a uniform rate for deduction of surcharge on TDS (tax deducted at source) in respect of NRIs (non-resident Indians).

The Budget 2023 discontinued the indexation provision for new investments prospectively from April 1, 2023, which clearly implied that all investments up to March 31, 2023 shall be permitted to avail indexation benefit. However, in July 2024 Budget the said indexation benefit was withdrawn retrospectively for all old long-term investments in debt funds made even prior to or upto March 31, 2023 also. "It is our humble and a logical request to kindly revisit the withdrawal of indexation on long term debt investments and restore the status quo ante by amending the tax laws re-introducing the indexation benefit on long term capital gains from debt funds in respect of all investments in debt funds made up to March 31, 2023," AMFI said in its proposal. The restoration of indexation benefits will boost the confidence of retail investors in the debt market and help in the development of the economy. To encourage retail participation in bond markets, the mutual fund body has requested that capital gains on redemption of units of debt oriented mutual funds held for more than one year should be taxed at the rate of 12.5 per cent, as applicable in respect of listed bonds. Currently, debt mutual fund is considered as short-term capital asset irrespective of the holding period and are taxed at applicable rates. In the Budget 2024, the short term capital gains tax was hiked from 15 per cent to 20 per cent, increasing tax liability by 30 per cent. The long term capital gains tax was raised from 10 per cent to 12.5 per cent, increasing tax liability by 25 per cent. The mutual fund body, in its Budget 2025 proposal, has requested to reinstate the earlier capital gains taxation rates as the percentage of hike is large. AMFI has also proposed that for mutual funds as an investor, the STT (Securities



Transaction Tax) on futures and options should be reinstated to the earlier rates. In the last budget, the STT was increased in futures from 0.0125 per cent to 0.02 per cent, for options it was hiked from 0.0625 per cent to 0.1 per cent. The mutual fund body has requested to amend the definition of equity oriented funds (EOFs) to include fund of funds (FOF) investing in equity oriented funds. A FOF scheme of a mutual fund scheme invests in the units of other mutual fund schemes. Under current income tax regime, a FOF scheme is treated as an EOF only if a minimum of 90 per cent of the total proceeds of such fund is invested in the units of EOFs; and such EOFs also invest a minimum of 90 per cent of their total proceeds in the equity shares of domestic companies listed on a recognised stock exchange. AMFI has suggested that the tax treatment for NPS and retirement pension oriented schemes launched by mutual funds should be aligned by bringing the latter also under Sec. 80CCD of IT Act, 1961. Currently, while NPS is eligible for tax exemptions under Section 80CCD, only a handful of mutual fund retirement benefit/pension schemes which have been specifically notified by CBDT (Central Board of Direct Taxes) qualify for tax benefit under Sec. 80C. AMFI has also proposed that mutual fund units, wherein the underlying investments are made in specified infrastructure sub-sector, be included in the list of the specified long-term assets qualifying for tax exemption on long term capital gains. The mutual fund body has also recommended for a need to further simplify taxation provisions of offshore funds managed by Indian portfolio managers, increase in threshold limit of withholding tax (TDS) on income distribution by MF scheme, i

## Understanding isolation guidelines, contagious period, and precautions to prevent spread



Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) is a significant cause of respiratory illnesses, particularly in young children, older adults, and immunocompromised individuals. After cases were detected in Karnataka, all states have been urged to enhance surveillance for Severe Acute Respiratory Illnesses (SARI) and Influenza-Like Illnesses (ILI) to monitor for any increase in respiratory infections amid the alleged spread of the Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) in China. During a meeting with officials from the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), Union health ministry officials instructed increased surveillance of SARI and ILI cases, according to a health official in Karnataka. "An advisory has been issued stating that all SARI cases should be tested for HMPV, and testing kits will be dispatched to the states," the official confirmed with indianexpress.com. While the symptoms can range from mild to severe, understanding the recommended isolation period for HMPV cases is crucial to prevent its spread and ensure proper recovery. However, what guidelines should individuals follow, and how can isolation practices protect the patient and the community?

Recommended isolation period for someone diagnosed with HMPV Dr Ravi Shekhar Jha, director of pulmonology at Fortis Hospital Faridabad, tells indianexpress.com, "The exact isolation period for HMPV is not yet fully established, but it is recommended to remain isolated until symptoms subside." Dr Vivek Nangia, vice chairman and head of the pulmonology department at Max Healthcare, adds, "The main factor is infectivity. The virus has an incubation period of two to three days during which a patient may not show symptoms but can still be contagious, and the transmission risk remains high for about five to seven days." Even if there are no symptoms, Dr Jha notes, HMPV is an RNA (Ribonucleic acid) virus, and its

RNA can be shed in respiratory secretions for five to 14 days after the onset of symptoms. "Therefore, the ideal isolation period is 14 days," he notes. Dr Nangia further said that the isolation period is generally "the same for both adults and children." Standard precautions are key: maintain a safe distance, wear an N95 mask, practice hand hygiene, and follow proper cough etiquette. Standard precautions are key: maintain a safe distance, wear an N95 mask, practice hand hygiene, and follow proper cough etiquette (Source: Freepik)

At what stage of the illness is HMPV most contagious?

HMPV infection is most contagious during the early days when symptoms are most pronounced, notes Dr Jha. "During this time, the viral concentration is at its peak in respiratory secretions, as the virus is actively multiplying. The period from 3 to 6 days after symptom onset is the most contagious phase." "It's most contagious around the third or fourth day of the illness, although transmission can happen during the early stages as well," notes Dr Nangia.

How can individuals minimise the risk of spreading HMPV to others?

According to Dr Nangia, standard precautions are key: maintain a safe distance, wear an N95 mask, practice hand hygiene, and follow proper cough etiquette. "If symptoms like cough or fever develop, individuals should stay home for at least three to four days until symptoms subside." "The key precautions, Dr Nangia asserts, include practicing good hand hygiene, maintaining a safe distance, and wearing a mask when handling infected individuals. Since the virus spreads through respiratory droplets when someone coughs or sneezes, avoiding close contact is important. "Also, it spreads via fomites, meaning that objects touched by an infected person can harbour the virus. Therefore, it's crucial to sanitise surfaces regularly. And, of course, we should return to more traditional greetings, like Namaste, instead of shaking hands, to avoid contact transmission."

What symptoms or changes in condition indicate that it's safe for someone to end their isolation after HMPV infection?

Dr Jha states, "The resolution of fever, cough, and coryza without the medication can indirectly indicate that the isolation period has ended." Concurring, Dr Nangia says, "Once the cough and cold symptoms have settled, it's generally safe to end isolation," adding that HMPV is not a major cause for concern. "Cases like this are typically seen around this time of year, and they're not unusual. However, it's important for us to stay vigilant, follow precautions, and avoid complacency."

## 'Single mother kya hota hai': Sanjeeda Shaikh on overcoming societal labels and embracing motherhood

Parenting is a journey defined by love, care, and responsibility, yet societal labels often attempt to compartmentalise how we perceive it. Actor Sanjeeda Shaikh recently expressed her discomfort with being referred to as a 'single mother,' emphasising that motherhood is a universal role that transcends marital status. In an interview with Hauterrfly, she said, "Matlab mujhe lagta hai... single mother kya hota hai? (It means I think... what does being a single mother mean?) I'm a mother. I tell everyone, mother is a mother. Single mother hona, single mother nahi hona doesn't matter. Mere responsibilities kuch kam ya zyada nahi ho jayegi. As a mother mujhe jo karna hai woh karna hi hai (Being a single mother or not doesn't matter. My responsibilities won't decrease or increase. As a mother, what I need to do, I will do regardless)."

"Main toh bahut hi khushnaseeb insaan hu ki mere saath jo bhi hua hai life mein... maybe uss waqt mujhe laga hoga arey (I consider myself a very lucky person for everything that has happened to me in life... Maybe at that time, I must have thought) I am the most depressed person or I am really sad and what is happening with me, what is happening with my life. But, to overcome all of that and to think like that and to be happy with this version of myself, I am blessed." This perspective opens up a broader conversation about parenting without labels. It challenges the stereotypes surrounding how parents, particularly mothers, are categorised based on their personal circumstances.

How do societal labels like 'single parent' influence perceptions of parenting?

Gurleen Baruah, existential psychotherapist at That Culture Thing, says, "Societal labels like 'single parent' often carry a perception of something being incomplete, as if a vital piece of the family puzzle is missing. This viewpoint, shaped by societal norms, can lead to judgments or assumptions that the parent might not be doing enough or that the child is at a disadvantage." For parents, she adds, this can create feelings of guilt or inadequacy, as though they need to overcompensate to prove their capability. For children, hearing or internalising these labels might lead to a sense of missing out, wondering if their family dynamic is "less than" because it doesn't align with traditional ideals. "These perceptions, though external, can deeply influence the emotional well-being of both the parent and the child, even when their bond and efforts are strong. Recognising



and challenging these biases is essential to support diverse family structures. "It's not about being 'as good as' any other parent; there's no real difference in the capacity to love, nurture, and guide a child. It's not about being 'as good as' any other parent; there's no real difference in the capacity to love, nurture, and guide a child. Challenges and advantages of parenting without adhering to labels

Baruah explains that the advantages lie in the freedom it offers — parenting becomes less about fitting into societal molds and more about focusing on the unique needs of the child. It's not about being 'as good as' any other parent; there's no real difference in the capacity to love, nurture, and guide a child. "However, challenges often arise due to societal norms and external pressures. For example, in educational or social settings, questions about family structures can sometimes make parents feel judged or excluded. Legal matters, too, may be complicated by forms and systems designed for traditional family units, unintentionally creating hurdles," she states. From a psychological perspective, Baruah mentions, the absence of labels can also leave parents navigating a gray area where they feel the need to justify their choices or prove their adequacy. Children might pick up on these societal biases, potentially questioning their family dynamic, not because of any lack within their home but because of external cues. The psychologist recommends, "Navigating these challenges requires resilience and self-awareness, both for parents and children. Emphasising open communication, focusing on strengths, and fostering an environment of acceptance can help counteract societal pressures and build confidence in the family dynamic."

## When Vishwanathan Anand's wife Aruna made him do 50 pushups: 'Everybody thinks chess is a mental game'

While former Chess Grandmaster Vishwanathan Anand rarely spoke about his life, achievements, and how he dealt with struggles and setbacks, his wife and manager Aruna Anand gave a glimpse into the player that Anand was. In a 2023 interaction with CNBC TV18, Aruna opened up about an incident in Argentina when Anand lost due to "silly mistakes." "Anand was playing in a tournament in Argentina. He was winning. He was in contention but he went and lost two games. Both the losses were 'silly' mistakes. I was really angry at him. So, I said, if you want dinner tonight, 50 pushups now. And the poor man did it. I think physical training is a very big game changer because everybody thinks chess is a mental game. More and more, it's becoming a physical game," said Aruna.

Experts affirm that breaking records requires mental toughness along with physical strength. "A determined mindset along with physical training helps push through mental fatigue. It's a blend of physical fitness, discipline, and a structured approach," said Dr Ravikumar Mukarthi, consultant orthopedic and joint replacement surgeon, SPARSH Hospital, Infantry Road. Adding, Dr Prashant Goyal, senior consultant, psychiatry, Sri Balaji Action Medical Institute, Delhi, said the body's fitness and health have close links with the person's mental well-being. "Activities like completing pushups bring several psychological ben-



efits. Performing such tasks stimulates the release of hormones like endorphins, the brain's natural mood enhancers, helping to reduce stress and anxiety. It also promotes a sense of accomplishment, strengthening self-esteem and building a resilient mindset," said Dr Goyal.

The mental focus required to complete push-ups encourages concentration and builds discipline, qualities that extend beyond exercise to other areas of life. "Moreover, the improved blood circulation resulting from physical activity improves cognitive functions, such as memory and decision-making," said Dr Goyal. However, maintaining proper form is essential to prevent injuries when doing push-ups.

## Irrfan Khan asked Nikkhil Advani not to make Airlift with him, cast Akshay Kumar instead: 'Mere saath mat kar, you won't get budget'



if Akshay featured in it. While talking to Galatta Plus in an interview, Nikkhil recalled the instance and said, "Airlift's director Raja Menon wanted Irrfan, which was fine for us because he was working on D-Day. I told them I would set up the meeting with Irrfan, and Irrfan overheard me. He told me, 'Boss, mere saath mat kar ye picture (Don't do this film with me). It is a fantastic film but don't do it with me because you will not get the budget. Go to Akshay. You know Akshay.'"

...After hearing about Airlift, Akshay was insistent about starring in it and even participated in the several workshops that Raja organised. Nikkhil further added, "So, I went to Akshay with another film, and he called that rubbish. Then I narrated Airlift and told him that Irrfan didn't want to do it. He asked me, 'Why have you come to me then?' I told him, 'You can't do it because it is a very serious film and you will have to memorise all the lines, and the director Raja Menon wants to do workshops.' He told me that he wanted to do it. I told him Raja doesn't want you, but Akshay did the film. He sat for workshops after workshops." Airlift was based on the true events of Iraq's invasion over Kuwait in August 1990. Akshay Kumar played the role of a callous Indian businessman who became the spokesperson for over 170,000 stranded countrymen. Along with the actor, it also starred Nimrat Kaur, Kumud Mishra, Prakash Belawadi, Inaamulhaq, and Lenaa in pivotal roles. It was praised by the critics and audiences, and was a commercial success.

## Sivakarthy on handling success and failure: 'I accept responsibility, but I have all the rights to...'

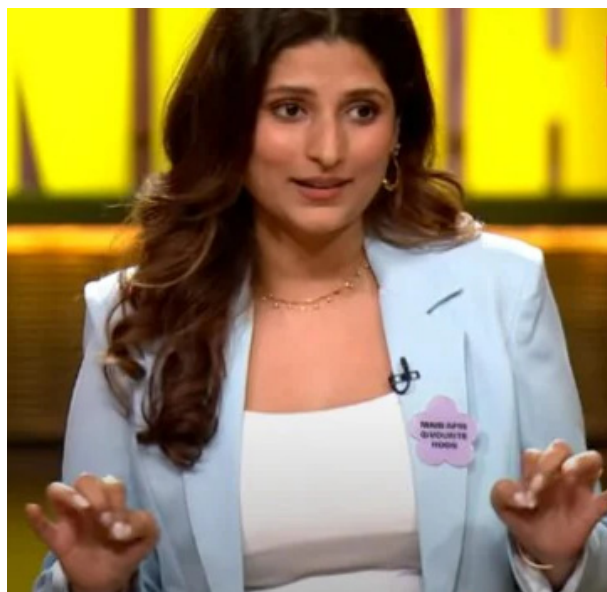
In many ways, Sivakarthy is seen as a role model for many acting aspirants who believe there is a space for outsiders in cinema. His rise from a comedy show contestant to a TV host to a hero's sidekick to a hero, and now a bonafide superstar is a journey that many would appreciate, and many more would love to emulate. But what really stands him apart is his clarity on the kind of films he wants to do, and the measured moves he takes to achieve the vision in his head. Understanding the various stakeholders of cinema has been one of his strengths that has endeared him to not just the masses but many cinema insiders too. Probably why, when Prince, his 2023 film with director Anudeep, didn't perform as expected in Tamil Nadu, he paid money to distributors who incurred losses. "I have to take responsibility for my failures. It is important to understand what went wrong," said Sivakarthy, in an interview with The Hollywood Reporter.



"I feel responsible," said Sivakarthy. However, this magnanimity doesn't come at the cost of not enjoying the success of his planning and hard work. "While I do understand that success is a collective effort, I don't stop myself from enjoying my success. I accept responsibility for my failures, right? So, I have all the rights to enjoy success," said the Doctor actor, who pointed out how many on social media have no qualms hating on him for the failures, but refrain from crediting him for his film's success.

"I am not okay with it," said Sivakarthy, pointing out this to be one of the reasons for him staying away from social media. "It was affecting me. It gives the illusion that everyone is against you. I just switched it off, did my work, and I'm seeing the result. Also, information reaches us even if we are not on social media, so why should I use it more often?" On the work front, Sivakarthy, who had the biggest success of his career in Rajkumar Periasamy's Amaran, has AR Murugadoss' next, and Sudha Kongara's upcoming biggie, which also features Jayam Ravi and Atharva in important roles.

## FAE Beauty founder Karishma Kewalramani turns down Anupam Mittal's Rs 1.5 crore offer even though he kept saying 'wow' at her pitch



But she was the only 'shark' to not make her an offer, saying that it doesn't make sense for her to invest in the company for such low equity. But that didn't stop the remaining four 'sharks' from engaging in a bidding war. Aman and Namita joined hands, and offered Karishma Rs 1 crore for 3% equity, which Peyush matched. Anupam, on the other hand, offered Rs 1 crore in exchange of 3.3% equity. Karishma was torn, because all three offers were similar. But she countered by asking for Rs 1 crore in exchange of 1.3%, because she didn't want to dilute herself further. Karishma said that four years ago, she suffered immense losses, but things turned around last year, when she became profitable for the first time. She took FAE from registering losses as high as Rs 2.5 crore in one year to generating Rs 1.2 crore in profits. Anupam offered her Rs 1.5 crore for 3%, and Namita and Aman countered by offering Karishma Rs 1 crore for 2%. After some further negotiations, Karishma agreed to Aman and Namita's offer, and the deal was finalised at Rs 1 crore in exchange of 1.5% equity. In her post-pitch interview, Karishma spoke about the massive losses that she was bearing, and said that for the first time, she is in profit. This empowered her to stand up for what she felt she deserved.

## Sreeleela reveals what her life looks like between 'jets and jetties'

Mumbai: South sensation Sreeleela has showcased what her life is like between jets and jetties. Sreeleela took to her Instagram stories, where she shared a picture of herself sitting on a jetty and pouting. The actor looks gorgeous in a maroon tank top paired with black ripped jeans and is sporting a no makeup look. For the caption, she wrote: "Life between jets and jetties? Be like ?? (sic)."

On January 6, Sreeleela said that she started the year with being grateful and that it felt nice. The actor took to her Instagram, where she shared a reel video dancing on the number 'Thank You God' by Dhvani Bhanushali and Shloke Lal. She is seen grooving along with her team members to the track, which came out in 2024. "For Well... Starting the year with being grateful. Felt new... It's good to flip at times (I meant your phone)," she wrote as the caption. The 23-year-old actor was recently seen grooving alongside Allu Arjun in the song 'Kissik' from 'Pushpa: The Rule', which has reportedly made Rs 1,208 crore in India.

## 'Ranveer Singh said I listen to your voice every morning': Harshdeep Kaur on performing 'Ik Onkar' at Deepika Padukone-Ranveer wedding



"It is a dream for any singer to meet AR Rahman," said Harshdeep Kaur. But the playback singer didn't just get a chance to meet the legendary music composer—she also got to sing for him in the Amir Khan-starrer Rang De Basanti. In a recent interaction, Harshdeep shared her journey of meeting Rahman for the first time, which happened during auditions for the 2005 film Kisna. Harshdeep recalled going to the auditions along with four other singers competing for the same part. To her surprise, Rahman called her to audition first. "Rahman told me he was working on the background music of Kisna and asked me to sing the chorus. I thought, 'This is my chance.' I sang three songs for

him. He was very patient," she said on The Music Podcast.

After giving her audition, Harshdeep left the outcome to fate. Two to three months later, her stars aligned when she received a call from Rahman, asking her to sing for Rang De Basanti. "They wanted a voice to sing a prayer that is sung at the Golden Temple," she revealed. Harshdeep prepared diligently for the opportunity, learning "Ik Onkar" and even bringing a book that explained the meaning of the prayer to ensure Rahman could understand its depth. Sharing a glimpse of Rahman's dedication, Harshdeep narrated an unforgettable moment. Rahman had asked her to sing the prayer at exactly 4 a.m., the time it is traditionally sung. "We reached the studio at 8 p.m. and waited as work went on. At 4 a.m., he looked at his watch and said, 'It's time. Sing the prayer.' It was like Amrit Vela. He asked me to sing it two or three times, encouraging me to keep going without worrying about making mistakes," she recounted. Harshdeep described the experience as deeply spiritual. "I felt as though Rab (God) was standing with me. I can't forget that moment," she said. Harshdeep calls "Ik Onkar" a very significant prayer in her life, not only because it marked her collaboration with Rahman but also because it led her to perform at Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh's wedding at Lake Como. "Ranveer is a huge fan of this prayer. He called me and said, 'I listen to your voice every morning, and on the most important day of my life, I want you there, singing "Ik Onkar."'"

## Marco won't 'influence a person to go on a killing spree', says actor Unni Mukundan as he defends 'Malayalam cinema's most violent film'

Marco, starring Unni Mukundan, has been making money all over the country but while the Malayalam film is collecting fans and money at the box office, it is also collecting some criticism because of the excessive violence shown in the film. In a recent interview, Unni said that they do not want to take the intelligence of the audience for granted and implied that the audience has the ability to not get influenced in real life, even if they were watching extreme violence on screen. Marco has been termed the most violent Malayalam film in recent times. In a chat with India Today, Unni said that the audience is "quite mature" and added, "Everybody's educated, everybody knows. I don't want to take the intelligence of the audience for granted. I know it's a film, it's for entertainment purpose." He insisted that the film had an 'Adults Only' certificate and said, "It will definitely not influence a person to go about on a killing spree and enjoy life in a certain way. That's my take on it."

Unni said that even he had heard that people were getting uncomfortable watching the film but said that this was the idea behind creating the experience of the film. "I have been told that people had a tough time watching it but that was it. That was the whole idea of giving a certain kind of experience," he said and added that the sequels of the film will be on similar lines. "We will have a Marco 2, Marco 3 coming up, but it will be on the same lines. It will be a brutal action film. Because it's a film, people will see it as a film." Talking about action films that showed violence, Unni mentioned that he watched Sholay when he was growing



up and said, "Nothing has affected me in a way that I got influenced and started doing something which is not cool for the society." In another chat with India Today Digital, Unni shared that the excessively violent film used almost 250-300 litres of fake blood and mentioned that the composition of the fake blood was "too sweet." "It was a chemical with a lot of sugar in it. So, if you are diabetic, you should not be a part of a film with such bloodshed," he said.

## Kareena Kapoor-Saif Ali Khan return with Jeh-Taimur from their Swiss vacation, she shares their mood.



To ring in the New year 2025, Kareena Kapoor Khan was vacationing with her family in Switzerland. The actor celebrated the holiday season in Gstaad, Switzerland, with her husband and actor Saif Ali Khan and sons Taimur Ali Khan and Jehangir Ali Khan aka Jeh. Now, she has returned back to the bay, as paparazzi spotted her with the fam at Mumbai airport on Tuesday morning. Pictures and videos of the Pataudi clan arriving together have been doing rounds of social media. Meanwhile, over the weekend, the Crew actor had shared a sneak peek of her Swiss holiday. With a bunch of photos, she revealed how her son Taimur was doing 'maa ki seva' while beginning 2025. In the picture, he could be seen carrying Bebo's heels to the room after partying. Two days later, Kareena has posted more pictures from the trip. Donning a silver pleated dress

and red heels, with Saif complementing her in his black tux, bow tie and ponytail, the duo gave major couple goals with their New Year celebration photos. Not to miss was Jeh's 'toofan mail' photo-bomber glimpse in the picture. Their little one stole the spotlight in his cute tuxedo and sneakers. She dropped several snaps of the cozy moment and wrote, "Headed home with this mood for 2025". At the Mumbai airport on Tuesday, the actor couple was spotted with their kids Taimur and Jeh. Saif was seen holding his sons' hands as they walked happily with their little backpacks towards the car, with a neck pillow tied to Jeh's neck. On the professional front, Kareena Kapoor Khan was last seen in Rohit Shetty's Singham Again, alongside Ajay Devgn, Deepika Padukone, Ranveer Singh, Arjun Kapoor, Tiger Shroff and Akshay Kumar. It was a box office success.

## Rajinikanth reveals 70 per cent of 'Coolie' shooting completed

Tamil superstar Rajinikanth, who left for Thailand to commence shooting for director Lokesh Kanagaraj's upcoming film 'Coolie', has disclosed that around 70 per cent of the film's shooting had been completed and that the next schedule of the film was to take place from January 13 to January 28. Talking to mediapersons at the airport early on Tuesday morning, Rajinikanth, however, declined to entertain questions on politics. When a reporter still persisted and sought to know his thoughts on the problems being faced

by women in the State, Rajinikanth politely refused to comment, reminding the mediaperson of his request that no political questions be posed to him. 'Coolie', which is expected to be an action thriller, will feature a number of top stars including Telugu star Nagarjuna, Kannada star Upendra, Soubin Shahir and Sathyaraj. Bollywood star Amir Khan is also believed to be playing a cameo in the film. The film will also feature actors Shruti Haasan, Rebe Monica John, and Junior MGR in pivotal roles.

## Vantika Agrawal interview: Arjuna Awardee targets grandmaster title, top 10 spot in 2025



GNS News Agency, Jan 10

2500): she drew three players who were ranked in the Top 100 and then beat Indian grandmaster Prraneeth Vuppala. Vantika Agrawal contemplates her next move at Kolkata's Dhono Dhanyo Auditorium during the Tata Steel Rapid and Blitz tournament. Vantika Agrawal contemplates her next move at Kolkata's Dhono Dhanyo Auditorium during the Tata Steel Rapid and Blitz tournament. Not surprisingly, Vantika Agrawal was named for the prestigious Arjuna Award this year.

"Winning the Arjuna Award is just incredible. I feel on top of the world to receive such an honor. I'm glad that I could win by playing well and bring home two gold medals for India at the Olympiad," Vantika Agrawal said. "The Chess Olympiad was the main highlight for me of 2024: winning double golds, individual as well as the team gold. Then, the Tata Steel event was pretty good. I was the best performing Indian player there in both Rapid and Blitz. And Qatar was also pretty good. I could have actually won it after I started very well. In the first three games there, I drew with 2650+ players, who were all in the top 100." Talking about the Olympiad, where she started her run, Vantika Agrawal admitted there was some pressure of expectations in Budapest. The Indian women's team was the top seed in the women's section while the other Indian team competing at Budapest, the one with players like Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa and Arjun Erigaisi in their ranks, was seeded only second in the open section. There was also the baggage of history at the Olympiad, because the Indian women's team had come perilously close to winning the gold at the Chennai 2022 edition two years back, but had ended with a bronze. At that event, the young Vantika was with the second Indian team which ended 8th in the final standings. Since then, both Vantika and Divya have earned themselves a promotion into the main women's team, and fittingly both won golds on their individual boards at Budapest. "At the Olympiad, I didn't expect too much. I just wanted to give the best for my team and not take too much pressure. Of course we were the top seeds. So we were expected to win a medal and play very well. I didn't let that pressure come, the pressure did not affect my game. I'm glad that I could perform when the team needed me the most," said Vantika Agrawal. Among the turning points in her fledgling career, Vantika Agrawal counts an event from 2012 called the Swami Vivekananda Mahila Chess Mahotsav, where thousands of female chess players from India were invited. At that event in Gujarat's Gandhinagar, the nine-year-old Vantika was felicitated on stage by the then chief minister of the state Narendra Modi because she had won twin golds at the Asian Championships. "That was a massive event. I was just nine years old but when I was felicitated on stage, that was the moment which was the fuel to keep winning. Ab aur jeetna hi jeetna hai (I need to keep winning)," Vantika Agrawal recently recalled. In a few weeks' time when the 22-year-old Vantika accepts the Arjuna Award from President Droupadi Murmu, that feeling — ab aur jeetna hi jeetna hai — will be fueled even further.

## 'Will be terrible for countries who work hard to get Test match status': Clive Lloyd bashes idea of two-tier system

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Former West Indies captain Clive Lloyd was unimpressed by the suggestion of a two-tier Test system, saying that it would be "terrible" for the West Indies and countries who have worked hard to get Test-match status. "I think it will be terrible for all those countries who work so hard to get to Test match status and now they'll be playing among themselves in the lower section," Lloyd was quoted saying in the Trinidad & Tobago Guardian.

Reacting to former ICC chairman Greg Barclay's suggestion that the West Indies should be disbanded and play as individual countries, Lloyd said, "We (West Indies) have a great history and now you're going to tell us because of a monetary situation, (we should be disbanded)." "You could imagine they're talking about dismantling the West Indies, that is not the way to go. The way to go is to give them (West Indies and other teams) the same amount of money so they can improve their facilities, get better systems in place so that they can improve their cricket," he added. The 80-year-old also slammed the World Test Championship cycle saying it was not well organized. The International



Cricket Council (ICC), in collaboration with cricket boards of India, Australia and England, is exploring the possibility of a two-tier Test system to facilitate more series between these three nations. The Age had reported that Jay Shah, the new ICC chairman, is set to meet Cricket Australia chair Mike Baird and his England counterpart Richard Thompson later this month to discuss the finer points.

## 'We were talking about him being India's best batter...then you saw the failures again': Manjrekar on KL Rahul's Australia tour



Despite being snubbed several times since making a Test debut on Boxing Day in 2014, Rahul has made comebacks only to find himself in the line of fire again. The recent Border-Gavaskar Trophy had Rahul win over the Indian fans and pundits after replacing captain Rohit Sharma at the top of the order in the first Test. Opening with Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rahul's stoic resistance with a second-innings 77 in Perth was crucial to set up a 295-run win. However, the 32-year-old's shares dwindled considerably in the four subsequent matches.

Rahul only achieved one more 50-plus score on the tour, scoring 84 in the third Test in Brisbane. Manjrekar lamented that Rahul missed the opportunity to make a career-defining impact in Australia. "I think now we know what KL Rahul is about. We were talking about him being India's best batter at the start of the series. He looked so compact, then got that 80 in Brisbane as well. We thought this might just change his career in the right direction. Then you saw the failures again," Manjrekar was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

Rahul completed his 100th Test innings in his 58th appearance in India's five-wicket defeat in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy finale in Sydney last week. His 33.57 average for 3257 career Test runs is the lowest among all Indian Test batters to have played at least 100 innings in the top six. He finished the series as India's third-highest run-getter with 276 runs, averaging 30.11. Despite the inconsistency, Manjrekar said that India will persist with Rahul when they return to Test cricket in England later this year. "I don't see him being left out for England considering that India still are looking for an opener. They don't want to go to [Abhimanyu] Easwaran and KL Rahul, the last time he was there, played well. So, I see that opening combination continuing, unless Rohit Sharma comes in and throws spanner in the works," said Manjrekar.

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

KL Rahul finished the Border-Gavaskar Trophy tour with only two fifties in Australia. (AP) KL Rahul finished the Border-Gavaskar Trophy tour with only two fifties in Australia. KL Rahul's decade-long Test career has been a repetitive tale of talent and unfulfilled potential and former India batter Sanjay Manjrekar was not pleased with how the recent Border-Gavaskar Trophy ended for the Karnataka batter after a promising start.

## 'Seems legit': Hikaru Nakamura roasts Daniil Dubov's excuse of falling asleep to avoid Hans Niemann clash



GNS News Agency, Jan 10

At the recently-concluded FIDE World Rapid and Blitz Championship, there was plenty of drama to go by, most of it centred around world no 1 Magnus Carlsen. But there was one incident — which did not directly involve Carlsen — that raised eyebrows: Daniil Dubov missed the game against American GM Hans Niemann. That miss meant that Daniil Dubov very narrowly missed out on qualifying for the knockout of the FIDE World Blitz Championship, where the top 8 players, including Magnus Carlsen and Hans Niemann, made the cut. Daniil Dubov, who has been a second to Magnus Carlsen in the world chess championship, later said in an interview with Levy Rozman (Gotham Chess) for the Take Take app that he had missed the game because he had fallen asleep.

"Well, what happened, happened, yeah? I mean I went to the hotel and I mean I came back and I said I was sleeping, yeah? What do you want me to say?" Daniil Dubov said when asked about the incident. He then added: "Unless you're an idiot you know what happened. It's my first time in the US. It's very hard to control the jet

lag here. That's life." Nakamura chuckled aloud at that defence and poked holes in it in a YouTube video. The American GM pointed out that Daniil Dubov's hotel room was about four or five minutes walking distance away from 55, Wall Street, where the FIDE World Rapid and Blitz was happening. He said that blitz games are spaced every half hour and that a game takes about 15 minutes.

"So that means you walk out and take five minutes to go back to your room. And then decide to fall asleep when your next game is in 10 minutes. I don't know. I don't know, you guys! You go back to your hotel and say I'm going to take a nap? It seems legit," Nakamura said with a grin. After the dust had settled, both Daniil Dubov and Hans Niemann had feuded on the internet with challenges and counter challenges. Hans Niemann first tweeted: "Cowardice is the absence of character." Niemann then followed that up with: "Happy to play Dubov in a blitz match under ANY conditions. I will pay for his travel/accommodation and offer a 10k reward to a charity of his choice if he wins."

Later, he upped the offer, posting: "I have no intention of entertaining immature shenanigans and accusations. It's been 2 years of insanity and my continued success makes the chess mafia look more corrupt than ever. Happy to play Dubov a 24 game Blitz at 20,000 USD per point. BTW I will extend the same offer to EVERY single chess player on planet EARTH. DMs are open, awaiting any and all challenges..." Dubov, who is not on X, responded on Instagram: "Now that you're out we can talk. I'm ready to play, under the following conditions: You agree to a lie detector test with a trained professional, I'm certain we can find a trusted independent authority (maybe Demis Hassabis could help?) to pick the company/person to run it. Test to feature only questions about cheating, with the results to be communicated to the community at large. If the test comes out clean, I will accept my decision was rash, and I'm ready to play a 24-game blitz match against you, 8 games a day, 2000\$ per point."

## People forget what Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli have achieved, says Yuvraj Singh

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Former India all-rounder Yuvraj Singh has come out in support of stalwarts Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli after the duo was at the receiving end of a lot of criticism after India's 1-3 loss to Australia in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. "We are talking about our greats, Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma; we are saying very bad things about them," Yuvraj told PTI. "People forget what they have achieved in the past. They are one of the greatest cricketers of this time. Okay, they lost; they did not play good cricket. They are getting hurt more than us," he added. Rohit and Virat Kohli couldn't find form in the five-match Test series against Australia, which ended on Sunday. Virat Kohli played all five matches and scored 190 runs, whereas Rohit could only manage a paltry 31 runs in five innings of the three Tests he played. The result of the poor performance meant that former greats, experts, and fans questioned their place in the Indian Test side and even went ahead to suggest that the duo should quit playing red-ball cricket for India. Yuvraj, who was the star of India's 2011 ODI World Cup triumph, said he has full faith in not just Rohit and Virat Kohli but also new head coach Gautam Gambhir and is hopeful that India will bounce back strongly.

"I feel that Gautam Gambhir as a coach, Ajit Agarkar as a selector, Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, and Jasprit Bumrah are the best minds in cricket right now. And they



have to decide what the way for Indian cricket in the future is," he said. The legendary left-handed batter also praised Rohit for dropping himself from the Sydney Test. "I think it is a big thing. I have never seen in the past that the captain's form is not going well, and he himself has gone out. And this is Rohit Sharma's greatness that he has kept the team ahead of himself," Yuvraj said. "I think he is a great captain. Win or lose, he will always be a great captain. And in his captivity, we have played the (ODI) World Cup final. We won a T20 World Cup. We have achieved a lot," he stated.

## Stadium roof leaks as Prannoy match stopped in Malaysia

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

The match between HS Prannoy and Brian Yang was stopped due to leak from the roof at the venue in Kuala Lumpur. The match between HS Prannoy and Brian Yang was stopped due to leak from the roof at the venue in Kuala Lumpur. In bizarre scenes at the Malaysia Open Super 1000, first-round matches on Court 2 and Court 3 were halted after splashes of water drops fell from the roof at the Kuala Lumpur venue of the year's first big badminton event. One of the matches to be affected involved HS Prannoy who saw water pooling up on his left front court near the net on Court 3. The Indian was leading Canadian Brian Yang 21-12, 6-3 in the second set at that stage. Earlier there had been problems when Yang played on the farther side too, but court-side officials had mopped up the court. However, in the second set, Prannoy gestured to the chair umpire that the court had gotten risky as larger splashes formed on the court, typically where a right handed would play his backhand lunge. Coach Gurusaidutt also warned the player of the risk.



The referee arrived on the court soon after and both players left the court after 25 minutes. Two other organising members inspected the leak but play was still held up 30 minutes later. Court 2 had more pressing problems as officials were seen logging in multiple towels to mop up the court. Chinese Jia Yi Fan and Zhang Shu Xian led home pairing Go Pei Kee and Teoh Mei Xing 11-10 on that affected court at the 12th minute.

## Viktor Axelsen, An Se Young, Shi Yuqi to be in action at India next week; Sindhu, Satwik-Chirag headline Indian challenge

GNS News Agency, Jan 10

Olympic champions Viktor Axelsen and An Se Young will headline the Yonex-Sunrise India Open 2025 next week in the national Capital. Also taking the court at the event will be World No 1 Shi Yuqi besides some of India's top shuttlers like Lakshya Sen, PV Sindhu and Chirag Shetty-Satwiksairaj Rankireddy. The BWF World Tour Super 750 event will be played at the KD Jadhav Indoor Hall at the Indira Gandhi Stadium in New Delhi from January 14 to 19.

With a combined prize pool of \$9,50,000 and 11,000 points for the champions on offer, this edition of the India Open Super 750 will see the host nation fielding 21 entries: three in men's singles, four in women's singles, two in men's doubles, eight in women's doubles and four in mixed doubles. In the last two Super 750 editions, India had a total of 14 entries each with Asian Games men's doubles gold medallists Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy reaching the men's doubles final and Asian Games bronze medallist HS Prannoy making it to the men's singles last four stages in 2024. Apart from Chirag-Satwik and Prannoy, India will be looking at 2022 men's singles champion Lakshya Sen, and two-time Olympic medallist and former



The BWF World Tour Super 750 event will be played at the KD Jadhav Indoor Hall at the Indira Gandhi Stadium in New Delhi from January 14 to 19.

world women's singles champion PV Sindhu to challenge for the prestigious title. Only two players from the top-20 ranked men's singles players will be missing in action in New Delhi while the women's singles draw will have 14 of the top-20 players competing.