

INDIAN CHRONICLE

17 January, 2025 | Friday | Volume No:12 | Issue No:289 | Pages: 8+8

www.indianchronicle.com

Published from : Ranga Reddy (Telangana State)

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Hyderabad: Get ready for an immersive journey into the world of literature, ideas, and creativity as the Hyderabad Literary Festival (HLF) returns for its highly-anticipated 15th edition from January 24 to 26. Organised by the Hyderabad Literary Trust with support from various literary and cultural organisations, the festival will, once again, take place at Sattva Knowledge City, Hitec City, marking its second consecutive year at this vibrant venue. With an exciting array of events, including lit stream, Kaavya Dhaara, stage talks (audio-visual track), science and the city, climate conversations, indigenous.

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PM Modi set to inaugurate Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

New Delhi: In a bid to unite the entire mobility value chain under one umbrella, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to inaugurate the 'Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025', the largest mobility expo in the country, on Friday at Bharat Mandapam in the national capital. The Expo, to be held from January 17-22 across three separate venues -- Bharat Mandapam and Yashobhoomi in Delhi, and India Expo Center and Mart in Greater Noida -- will host over nine concurrent shows, over 20 conferences and pavilions. In addition, the Expo will also feature states sessions to showcase poli-

cies and initiatives in the mobility sector to enable collaboration between industry and regional levels, Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said in a statement.

The event this year will have a special emphasis on the global significance with participation from across the globe as exhibitors and visitors. It is an industry-led and government-supported initiative and is being coordinated by Engineering Export Promotion Council (EEPC) of India with the joint support of various industry bodies and partner organisations.

The automobile sales in the country surged by a robust 11.6 per cent in 2024 to scale the highest-ever mark of 2.5 crore units compared to the corresponding figure of 2.3 crore units in the previous year, according to wholesale data by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM). With this, India remained the world's third-largest car market last year. The growth has been primarily driven by the two-wheeler segment which grew by 14.5 per cent in 2024 as compared to the previous year, posting sales of 1.95 crore units. In addition, passenger vehicles and three-wheelers posted their highest ever sales in a calendar year. In the October-December quarter, passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles and three-wheelers posted their highest ever growth, according to the SIAM data.

Telangana CM seeks fair allocation of Krishna River water



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

New Delhi: Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy suggested for making strong arguments before the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II (KWDT-II) to secure fair allocation of Krishna River water under Section 3 of the Interstate River Water Disputes Act, 1956. He also emphasised the need for water allocation must be project-specific as mandated by Section 89 of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act (APRA), 2014.

During a review meeting on irrigation projects at his

official residence in New Delhi on Wednesday, the Chief Minister said the Apex Council under APRA also supports water allocations based on the ISRWDA, and noted that the Supreme Court has not stayed the tribunal's Further Terms of Reference, despite Andhra Pradesh's legal challenge. Revanth Reddy directed officials to raise objections regarding Andhra Pradesh's Godavari-Banacharla link project, which is being pursued without necessary approvals. He wanted them to write letters to union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, and the Krishna and Godavari River Management Boards (KRMB, GRMB) in this regard. He reiterated that as per APRA, both successor States require prior intimation and permissions from neighboring States and the respective river management boards for such projects.

The Chief Minister also called for expediting studies by IIT-Hyderabad on the impact of the Polavaram project on Bhadrachalam flooding, and urged swift action to secure clearances for the Sammakka-Sarakka barrage and the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme. Ministers N Uttam Kumar Reddy, D Sridhar Babu, and Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, along with senior officials, participated in the meeting.

After Telangana, Revanth Reddy trying to cheat Delhi voters, says Vemula Prashanth Reddy

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Hyderabad: Former Minister Vemula Prashanth Reddy said on Thursday that after betraying the people of Telangana, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy was now trying to cheat the people of Delhi with false promises. He said none of the promises made by Revanth Reddy were fully implemented in Telangana, even 13 months after he assumed office.

Citing the Congress' poor performance in Maharashtra, Prashanth Reddy said Revanth Reddy's campaign had no impact, leading to the party's defeat in all constituencies he visited. He predicted a similar fate for the Congress in Delhi, asserting that the people would see through Revanth Reddy's deception and propaganda. Addressing the media at Telangana Bhavan here on Thursday, the senior BRS legislator said Revanth Reddy was full of false promises and betrayals, apart from being known for his double-speak.

"Revanth Reddy, who called Sonia Gandhi the sacrificial goddess, is now terming her a great leader of the nation. He is only concerned with his posts and filling his pockets, but not in fulfilling promises made to the people," he added. On BRS working president KT Rama Rao appearing before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with the Formula E case, Prashanth Reddy blamed the Congress government for filing baseless cases.

"Despite being aware of the false case, Rama Rao is extending his cooperation with investigative agencies as a



law-abiding citizen who has faith in the legal system," he said. The former Minister criticised the Congress government for cancelling the Formula-E event, stating that it caused significant financial losses to Telangana. He dismissed the allegations of corruption, asserting that all expenditures for the event were transparent and accounted for. He suggested that the ED and the ACB also should investigate Revanth Reddy for the cancellation of the event. Prashanth Reddy said both the Congress and BJP have been targeting the BRS, including Rama Rao, for questioning their policies, which is evident from the cases registered by the ACB and ED within a short span. Further, he pointed out that both the Congress and BJP leaders were speaking alike, targeting the BRS working president.

Bollywood Actor Saif Ali Khan Attacked At Bandra Residence



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

The Mumbai Police reported that Bollywood actor Saif Ali Khan was attacked at his Bandra residence around 2:30 AM on Thursday. CCTV footage from two hours before the incident did not reveal any unauthorized entry into the housing society. Authorities suspect the attacker

may have been inside the premises prior to the attack. Alongside the actor, a female team member at his home was also stabbed. She was admitted to a hospital and is reported to be in stable condition.

Deputy Commissioner of Police Dixit Gedam confirmed the incident to the media, stating, "At around 3 AM, we received information about the attack on Saif Ali Khan at his residence. A police team, including senior officials, promptly arrived at the scene. The actor was taken to Lilavati Hospital, where he is currently undergoing treatment." Forensic experts have collected evidence from the site, and police have been recording statements from local residents. While there is speculation about a potential robbery attempt, investigators have not confirmed this angle.

Seven police teams have been deployed to probe the incident thoroughly and apprehend the attacker. Additionally, five members of the actor's staff are being questioned, as the society's security guard did not report any unusual activity or entries during the critical hours.

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Hyderabad: The success of SpaDeX, Indian Space Research Organisation's first ever docking mission, on Thursday has a Hyderabad connection. Ananth Technologies (ATL), which as a trusted partner of ISRO, played a crucial role in the mission, had delivered critical components, including Rendezvous Processing Units (RPU) and DC-DC converters for SDX01 and SDX02, among others. On Thursday, Ananth Technologies extended congratulations to the ISRO on the remarkable achievement of a successful docking mission.

Dr. Subba Rao Pavuluri, Chairman & Managing Director of Ananth Technologies, said, "We are proud to be a major contributor in another landmark program in India's space journey. ISRO's success inspires all of us in the space ecosystem to continue striving for excellence and innovation." A statement said Ananth Technologies has been a trusted partner of ISRO for over three decades, contributing cutting-edge solutions in satellite systems, launch ve-



hicle components, and mission-critical technologies. Headquartered in Hyderabad, ATL operates advanced facilities in Thiruvananthapuram for the fabrication, assembly, and testing of launch vehicle subsystems and satellites. To date, it has contributed to the success of 102 satellites and 82 launch vehicles for India's space programs.

NEET-UG not in online mode but pen and paper mode only: NTA



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

New Delhi: The Centre has decided against conducting the medical entrance exam NEET-UG in online mode for now, and announced on Thursday it will continue to be conducted in pen and paper mode. The decision comes after detailed deliberations between Education and Health Ministries on whether to conduct the NEET-UG in pen and paper mode or online mode. "As decided by the National Medical Commission (NMC), the NEET-UG shall be conducted in pen and paper mode (OMR based) in a single day and shift," a senior National Testing Agency (NTA) official said on Thursday. The Na-

tional Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) is the largest entrance exam in the country in terms of number of candidates appearing for the test. In 2024, a record more than 24 lakh candidates took the exam. The NTA conducts the NEET every year for admission into medical colleges. A total of 1,08,000 seats are available for MBBS course.

Of the seats available for the MBBS course, approximately 56,000 are in government hospitals and about 52,000 in private colleges. Admissions to undergraduate courses in Dentistry, Ayurveda, Unani, and Siddha also utilise the results of the NEET for admission. The idea of switching to Computer-Based Test (CBT) mode for NEET is not new and has been deliberated several times before. However, the push for the exam reforms came following the paper leak controversy last year. In the line of fire over alleged irregularities in NEET and PhD entrance NET, the Centre had in July set up the panel to ensure transparent, smooth and fair conduct of examinations by NTA.

According to the high-level panel headed by former ISRO Chief R Radhakrishnan, multi-stage testing for NEET-UG could be a viable possibility that needs to be followed up. While NEET was under the scanner over several irregularities, including alleged leaks, UGC-NET was cancelled last year as the ministry received inputs that the integrity of the exam had been compromised. Both matters are being probed by the CBI.

12 Maoists gunned down by security forces in Chhattisgarh; January toll rises to 26

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

As many as 12 Maoists were killed in a fierce encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Thursday (January 16, 2025), a senior police official said. The gunfight broke out at around 9 a.m. in a forest of south Bijapur when a joint team of security personnel was out on an anti-Maoist operation and the intermittent exchange of fire lasted till late in the evening, he said. Personnel belonging to the state police's District Reserve Guard (DRG) from three districts, five battalions of CoBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action - an elite jungle warfare unit of the CRPF) and the 229th battalion of CRPF were involved in the operation, he said. "As per preliminary information, 12 Naxalites were killed in the gunfight. Further details were awaited as a search operation was still underway in the area," the official informed. No harm was reported to security forces, he



said. With this, 26 Maoists have been gunned down in separate encounters in the State so far in January 2025. On January 12, five Maoists, including two women, were killed in an encounter with security personnel in the Madded police station area of Bijapur district. n 2024, 2

CM Revanth Reddy Pays Tribute to Sudini Jaipal Reddy on His Birth Anniversary

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy paid floral tributes to the late Sudini Jaipal Reddy on his birth anniversary at his official residence in Delhi. Remembering the leader's significant role in the formation of Telangana, the CM highlighted Jaipal Reddy's steadfast commitment to ethical values throughout his political journey, which spanned from the rural landscapes of Telangana to the national stage in Delhi. Accompanying the Chief Minister were Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, MP Suresh Kumar Shetkar, government advisor Shabbir Ali, MLAs Gaddam Vinod and Ram Mohan Reddy, and several other leaders who gathered to honor the



memory of Jaipal Reddy, recognizing his invaluable contributions to the state and nation.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Weakening rupee

The rupee's plunge to a record low, breaching the critical 86-per-dollar mark, has intensified concerns about a potential economic slowdown, widening trade deficit and straining of external balances. Driven by a strong dollar and surging crude oil prices, the rupee's steepest fall since early 2023 has, as expected, put pressure on stocks and bonds. The rupee remains one of Asia's most stable currencies, but the slide poses inflationary risks by driving up import costs. A combination of global and domestic pressures, the rupee has declined over 2 per cent since December. For importers, it spells an imminent challenge in managing inflation. Conversely, for exporters, it's an opportunity to be more competitive. As the world prepares for Donald Trump's presidency, his actions are likely to add uncertainty to global markets.

The depreciation of the rupee could defer expected rate cuts by the Reserve Bank of India. This despite the decline of retail inflation to a four-month low of 5.22 per cent in December, mainly on account of easing of prices in the food basket. It would be in national interest to not let politics dictate the future course. The message to remain calm should have accommodative space for contesting views on how to go forward to tackle the economic challenges. A wait-and-watch approach is on desired lines, along with a candid discussion about the state of the economy and the potential pitfalls.

A US-based firm has forecast that the rupee could weaken to 88 in the near-to-medium term. For the Opposition, it would be the most appropriate talking point as the Union Budget nears. Political contestations are far for the course, but the focus must be on working towards a broad consensus on how to withstand the ensuing strong winds of economic slowdown.

The distance between you and yourself: understanding depersonalisation disorder

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Imagine waking up one morning to find the world around you feel unreal. Your hands move, but they don't feel like yours. The sounds of daily life seem distant, as if coming from another room, even another world. The world, once vivid and textured, appears distant and dreamlike. For many with a particular mental health condition, this isn't just an abstract idea — it's their reality.

Depersonalisation and derealisation disorder (DPDR) is a mental health condition where individuals experience persistent feelings of detachment from themselves or their surroundings. DPDR often emerges during periods of acute stress, trauma, or anxiety, says Thomas John, a psychiatrist in Kochi. "Individuals with DPDR often describe feeling as if they are watching themselves from outside their body. There is a sense of estrangement from one's thoughts, and the surrounding environment may appear distorted or unfamiliar," he says. Although fleeting sensations of depersonalisation are not uncommon — many people experience a sense of disconnect after long or stressful days — persistent symptoms that interfere with daily life indicate a deeper concern. The disorder is estimated to affect 1 to 2% of the population, predominantly youngsters.

Tip of the iceberg According to U. Vivek, consultant psychiatrist, Renai Medicity, Kochi, DPDR rarely occurs in isolation. "The condition is just the tip of the iceberg. It often signals an underlying mental health condition, such as depression, borderline personality disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder. DPDR can also be triggered due to severe stress, trauma, anxiety disorders, depression, and substance use. The disorder is a symptom, not a standalone diagnosis," he adds.

Dr. Vivek recalls a case of a young woman who reported feeling increasingly disconnected from herself over time. "She described looking in the mirror and feeling as though she was seeing a stranger. On the surface, her life appeared stable — she had a steady marriage and a comfortable home. However, familial tensions, particularly with her in-laws, created an undercurrent of stress. During arguments, her symptoms worsened. Medication and behavioural management helped her understand how unresolved emotional conflict contributed to her condition," says Dr. Vivek. In another case, a teenage girl sought help for persistent feelings of detachment. Later, it emerged that she had been silently enduring sexual abuse. "Her mind had created a psychological barrier as a means of coping with trauma," says Dr. Vivek. "Dissociation became her refuge, but with careful intervention, she began to reconnect with herself and the world around her."

Neuroscientific research attributes DPDR to disruptions in brain regions responsible for emotional regulation and sensory perception, including the prefrontal cortex and amygdala. These areas govern how we process stress and interpret reality. Symptoms of DPDR include a sensation of being in a dream or fog; the world appears flat, colourless, or artificial; distortions in visual perception, with objects appearing either blurred or unusually sharp; sounds that seem either amplified or muted; and an altered perception of time, which may seem to move too fast or too slow. The condition has featured in a few movies too. In the 2007 film *Numb*, the protagonist — a screenwriter — played by actor Matthew Perry, suffers from the disorder. Similarly, Jonathan Caouette's documentary *Tarnation* delves into his encounters with depersonalisation. "Despite its unsettling nature, DPDR is neither a specific sign of psychosis nor insanity. However, those affected by the disorder often feel isolated. Friends and family may dismiss the symptoms as mere overthinking or stress, which can worsen the individual's sense of alienation," says Dr. Thomas.

According to experts, DPDR is treatable. "Treatment often involves addressing the root cause — whether it be anxiety, trauma, or depression. Medication and behavioural management is effective in treating the condition," says Dr. Vivek. Simple exercises designed to re-anchor individuals to their environment are helpful during episodes. These can include: holding textured objects, breathing exercises, and describing immediate surroundings aloud. In some cases, medication may be prescribed to manage co-occurring anxiety or depression.

For those experiencing DPDR, timely intervention is crucial. "Seeking professional help can make a significant difference. With the right treatment, individuals can regain a sense of connection and fully engage with life," adds Dr. Thomas.

ED expands probe to cover roadworks worth Rs46,000 crore taken up in Bengaluru



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

The raid by the Directorate of Enforcement (ED) at the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike's (BBMP) headquarters, continued for the second day on Wednesday. While the ED is probing alleged irregularities in the drilling of borewells and installation of reverse osmosis (RO) plants in 2016, it is also examining documents about roadworks totalling to 46,000 crore. Asphalting works in December 2024, former BJP councillor N.R. Ramesh filed a complaint with the ED in connection with alleged irregularities in the asphaltting of arterial and sub-arterial roads between 2013-2014 and 2023-24. The BBMP had released ₹46,300 crore for the works during this period. The complainant had submitted a 4,113-page document to the ED, accusing 18 IAS-rank officials, including BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Giri Nath, of involvement.

'Cornerstone of Mumbai's cinematic heritage': Juhu's iconic Chandan Cinema demolished



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Chandan quickly became a landmark in Juhu, a magnet for middle-class moviegoers who liked its accessible ticket prices and immersive experience. Chandan quickly became a landmark in Juhu, a magnet for middle-class moviegoers who liked its accessible ticket prices and immersive experience. At the Vile Parle Railway station, if you ask an autorickshaw driver for directions to a destination near Chandan Cinema, you might hear a warning, "Chandan toh tod diya hai (Chandan has been demolished)." For many Mumbaikars, this simple reply evokes a bittersweet reminder of a bygone era — one where the iconic single-screen theatre stood tall, connecting generations of cinephiles.

Fifty years after its inauguration in 1973 with Raj Kapoor's *Bobby*, Chandan Cinema in Juhu has now been reduced to rubble. Developed by businessman Baijanath Joshi and named after his wife Chandrakanta, whom he lovingly called Chandan, the theatre held a special place in the hearts of Mumbaikars. During its prime, Chandan was not just a movie theatre, but an integral part of the city's culture — a place where families, friends, and strangers came to laugh, cry, and cheer together, through the magic of cinema. A landmark in Juhu

Chandan was one of the last single-screen theatres in Mumbai, standing strong in an age when multiplexes dominated the cityscape. When it opened, Mumbai had just one multiplex, the G7 complex in Bandra. Chandan quickly became a landmark in Juhu, a magnet for middle-class moviegoers who liked its accessible ticket prices and immersive experience.

"In the 1970s, the movie landscape of suburban Mumbai was defined by three theatres: Navrang, Ambar-Oscar-Minor, and Chandan. Of these, Chandan was the dearest to me. An exciting mix of rural and urban audiences, yummy eatables and lots more," says Ajit Ramchandran, Mumbai-based senior writer and researcher. Besides Bollywood, Chandan also was a hub for Hollywood cinema, hosting special morning screenings that introduced international films to Indian audiences at a time when they were not widely available. Longtime cinema enthusiast Amit Dadhich recalls the evolution of Chandan from the wooden seats in the 1990s to its more modern cushioned seating and balcony sections in later years. "Chandan was more

'It's poetic justice': Pallavi Parab after Ratnagiri's first self-help group for transgender people gets Maharashtra govt nod

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Until a few years ago, Pallavi Parab (in pink) had to face backlash, including physical violence, for deciding to work for the uplift of her community. (Express Photo) Until a few years ago, Pallavi Parab (in pink) had to face backlash, including physical violence, for deciding to work for the uplift of her community.

Last week, when Pallavi Parab got the registration from Maharashtra Social Welfare Department for the Kinnar Asmita Self Help Group — the first Self Help Group (SHG) for transgender community in Ratnagiri district — life came full circle for her. Parab's SHG, which has 10 members as board of directors, aims to start training courses for the community. "The Municipal Council provides land to SHGs. We will soon be applying for such land allocation to start our training institute," she said. Until a few years ago, Parab had to face backlash, including physical violence, for deciding to work for the uplift of her community. "It was poetic justice. But when the people who criticised me saw the whole government supporting our work and endorsing the SHG, they came to me to apologise and expressed their desire to work with me," she said. When Parab started her work as a Community Resource Person, the picturesque town of Ratnagiri was not quite welcoming.

"The outlook here is that there are no gays or transgender persons in this town. So when I started work I faced a lot of discrimination. There were attacks on me both physical and verbal, it was not easy. But soon I found support in fellow transgender people who did not want to beg

No FIR was registered in the case by any other agency. However, the ED was examining documents pertaining to this complaint as well on Wednesday, multiple sources in the BBMP said. A senior official said that the Road Infrastructure Department and other allied departments were co-operating with the agency and providing documents. Borewell scam In 2016, ₹970 crore was released for the same. The BBMP claimed that it had completed the work. But in the complaint, it was alleged that merely 20% of the work was completed and for the rest fake bills to the tune of over ₹400 crore were raised. The ED had earlier raided the BBMP headquarters in 2023, in connection with the alleged borewell and RO plants' scam. Following this, the BBMP started to dig borewells in the geographical coordinates mentioned in the bills. However, on the directions of the ED, the works were stopped and materials were seized. This reportedly occurred in the R.R Nagar zone. According to a source in the BBMP, ED officials were stationed in the office of B.S. Prahallad, Engineer-in-chief, BBMP, on Wednesday. The ED is collecting and verifying the documents pertaining to works related to the digging of borewells and installations of RO plants at Dasarahalli, Mahadevapura, R.R. Nagar, Yelahanka, and Bommanahalli. Deputy Chief Minister and Bengaluru Development Minister D.K. Shivakumar told reporters that the raid by the ED was owing to infighting in the BJP. "It's due to an internal fight in the BJP. A BJP leader had given a complaint against his own party MLAs because he was denied the ticket to contest the Assembly elections," he said, adding that he had asked civic officials to prepare for a raid as he had anticipated the same.

than a theatre; it was a witness to the making of Bollywood superstars and the industry dynamics," he says. Dadhich reminisces about the "Hollywood mornings" and the Salman Khan euphoria that swept through the theatre during the release of his films. "It was a place where you could truly enjoy cinema, with an audience that celebrated movies with whistles, claps, and cheers." However, as multiplexes emerged, the charm of single-screen theatres like Chandan began to wane. The theatre, which once hosted a strong audience of 1,100, struggled to fill even 50 per cent of its seats during its last few years. Dadhich's last visit to Chandan was to watch *Simmba* in December 2017, marking the end of an era for him and many others.

Costume designer and celebrity stylist Rima Mathew Melwani shares a special bond with Chandan, as it was inaugurated in the same year she was born, 1973. She notes that Chandan made a bold start by screening *Bobby*, the film that revolutionised Indian cinema with its youthful and romantic theme at a time when serious movies dominated the landscape. "Often, I watched movies in the Upper Stall just to get a high from the rural cine-goers who thronged Chandan. During *Bobby* I witnessed people dancing like crazy during the *Jhooth Bole Kauwa Kate* number," adds Ramchandran.

"More than being just a theatre, Chandan was an experience. Unlike multiplexes, which feel fashionably formal, Chandan allowed people to be themselves. You would see someone stepping out of an expensive car but blending right in once inside. The claps, cheers, and even dances made watching a movie at Chandan unique," says Melwani. She fondly remembers spotting Rekha, disguised with a covered face but unmistakable due to her iconic eye makeup, watching a film to witness the audience's reaction to her work. For many Mumbaikars, the theatre's samosas and wafers were as iconic as its movies, offering an alternative to the popcorn culture of modern multiplexes. "Greasy samosas, made from palm oil and packed in super-white packets. Sinfully delectable! Masala Milk. A crummy wafer brand. This was what I always munched on even as I watched films," Ramchandran remembers.

Curtains closed The single-screen theatre shut down in 2017 after the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) declared the structure unsafe. Plans to redevelop it into a multiplex-cum-mall were stalled due to regulatory hurdles, including the need for a no-objection certificate (NOC) from the Defence Ministry, as the site is near a Signal Transmitting Station. The demolition began this month to make way for a retail space, marking the end of a cultural landmark cherished by generations of Mumbaikars. The walls of Chandan Cinema may have come down, but its legacy remains forever in the hearts of countless Mumbaikars. As Melwani puts it, "Old gives way to new, but some things are irreplaceable." Chandan's legacy will always be remembered as a cornerstone of Mumbai's cinematic heritage, a place where the city's love for movies came alive.



for a living," she said. Another place where Parab found support was working with the government machinery. "The police, the college and the social welfare department helped me to set up my work," she said.

Due to odd circumstances, Parab could not complete her school education. When most of the people in her community are pushed to beggary, often due to social taboos, Parab chose to gain access to dignified livelihood sources. Working closely with the government, Parab managed to ensure she and other like-minded people in her community got their necessary documents like ration cards, Aadhaar cards etc. "For us transgender, sources of livelihood are few and far between. The government schemes which we qualify for, do not reach us and it is to plug this gap. This SHG would be the first step towards realising this," she said. An SHG, is a grassroots-level organisation which allows its members to access organised finance from banks.

Woman dies by suicide in Delhi's Loni Chowk; husband kills himself in UP



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

The body of a woman suspected to have died by suicide was found near the Loni Roundabout in Delhi on Friday. Her husband, too, reportedly died by suicide at their residence in Jawahar Nagar in Uttar Pradesh the same day. The police were alerted about the woman's death on Friday afternoon after a crowd spotted her body. A mobile phone was discovered in her pocket, which led to the deceased's identification. The police said the deceased woman was Shivani, 30, wife of Vijay Pratap Chauhan.

According to the police, the couple was married for two years and had a one-year-old daughter. "They had marital issues since the beginning and would regularly have loud and violent fights," said a police source. On Friday, the couple had a raucous fight which escalated into an exchange of blows, the police source added. "The husband apparently called his sister-in-law and told her he couldn't bear it any longer. He then asked her to take his wife away," the police source further said. Meanwhile, the woman stormed out of the house and called her brother once she reached Saboli Fatak.

"The brother asked her to wait there for him... but she kept walking till Loni Gol Chakkar and died by suicide," the source said. The woman's body was shifted to Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital for a post-mortem examination. Initial observations showed no other visible injuries on the deceased, said the police. The suicide spot was examined by a Forensic Science Laboratory team.

BJP rolls out campaign song for Delhi Assembly polls



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva alleged that the people of Delhi are fed up of Kejriwal's party looting them and they want to bring BJP into power (File Photo) Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva alleged that the people of Delhi are fed up of Kejriwal's party looting them and they want to bring BJP into power

The BJP rolled out a campaign song for Delhi Assembly polls "Bahane Nahi Badlav Chahiye..," rendered by party MP Manoj Tiwari on Saturday. The song "Bahane Nahi Badlav Chahiye, Delhi Mein BJP Sarkar Chahiye" (need change not excuses, Delhi requires BJP government) reflects the mood of the city to oust the Aapda (AAP) government that "cheated" people with false promises and set record of corruption, charged Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva. The song was launched officially during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Parivartan Rally" last week in Rohini, now it has been rolled out extensively for the poll campaign, he said at a press conference. Sachdeva alleged that the people of Delhi are fed up of Kejriwal's party looting them and they want to bring BJP into power.

Tiwari, a three-time BJP MP from North East Delhi and a popular singer-actor, said that there are times one is required to give voice to the people's feelings. This song represents that for him. "The theme song summarises the manifesto," said Tiwari humming a few lines at the press conference. The BJP has yet to come up with its manifesto for the elections to the 70-member Delhi Assembly scheduled on February 5. The party has so far released a list of 29 candidates and the next list is expected soon. The ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has announced its candidates in all 70 seats and recently launched its campaign song "Phir Layenge Kejriwal" in the run-up to the polls.

Bombay HC deprecates Maharashtra govt's inaction to form law against use of nylon manja, seeks strict action

Raising concerns over 'nylon kite strings (manja)' causing injuries to people, the Aurangabad bench of the Bombay High Court recently 'deprecated' the Maharashtra government's inaction to form a law or policy to curb the menace. Citing the upcoming Makar Sankranti festival, it directed the police machinery and civic bodies to take strict action against the use of nylon manja. The bench directed the authorities under its jurisdiction to be 'alert' and 'on guard' for at least a month so that "use of Nylon Manja can be averted".

It also said that establishments engaged in selling kites and manjas shall be kept under vigil and appropriate actions be initiated as per law against those supplying, selling, and even using nylon strings. It asked the police and civic authorities to maintain a record of the steps taken during the said period and report its compliance during the next date of hearing.

A bench of Justices Mangesh S Patil and Prafulla S Khubalkar on January 8 passed the order on a suo motu PIL initiated after taking cognisance of injuries and deaths due to the use of nylon manja. Government Pleader A B Girase provided a progress report from a few districts indicating that steps were taken to curb the use of synthetic or nylon manja to fly kites. He added that offences had been registered, combing operations had been undertaken and awareness camps were held in educational institutes, and dedicated cells to deal with the problem were also set up.

Tulsi Gowda, the 'Encyclopaedia of Forest'



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Tulsi Gowda, an environmentalist from Karnataka known for her dedication to nature conservation, passed away at her residence in Uttara Kannada district on Monday evening. She was 86. Gowda, known as the Encyclopaedia of Forest, had been bedridden for the past few months after suffering a stroke. Her last rites are expected to be conducted at her native village of Honnali in Ankola on Tuesday. During her 60-year career, Gowda, a Padma Shri awardee, was credited with planting and nurturing over 1 lakh trees across Karnataka. Despite being illiterate, she demonstrated extraordinary knowledge of forests, particularly her self-taught ability to identify mother trees—old, dominant trees that nurture saplings and seedlings through underground networks by exchanging vital nutrients. Her contributions have strengthened one community reserve, five tiger reserves, 15 conservation reserves, and thirty wildlife sanctuaries, ensuring the preservation of diverse ecosystems.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah have condoled the death of the legendary tree planter. Modi said Gowda would remain a guiding light for environmental conservation. In a post on X, PM Modi said, "Deeply saddened by the passing of Smt Tulsi Gowda Ji, a revered environmentalist from Karnataka and Padma Awardee. She dedicated her life to nurturing nature, planting thousands of saplings, and conserving our environment. She will remain a guiding light for environmental conservation. Her work will continue to inspire generations to protect our planet. Condolences to her family and admirers. Om Shanti."

CM Siddaramaiah recalled her continued commitment to the environment even after her retirement from Forest Department. "I am deeply saddened by the passing of Tulsi Gowda, the renowned environmentalist from Honnali, Ankola taluk, who dedicated her life to planting and nurturing lakhs of trees. Despite working as a daily wage labourer in the Forest Department to earn a living, her unwavering commitment to the environment continued even after retirement. Her tireless efforts were rightfully recognized with the prestigious Padma Shri award. As we remember Tulsi Gowda's profound love and dedication to nature, I pray for eternal peace for her departed soul," the CM said on X. Born in Honnali village, Gowda grew up in a region renowned for its rich biodiversity, eco-tourism, and extensive wildlife sanctuaries. However, her life began under challenging circumstances. Born into the Halakki Vokkaliga tribal family in 1944, Gowda lost her father when she was just two years old. Raised in poverty, she started working as a daily wage labourer alongside her mother at a local forest nursery at a young age, forgoing any opportunity for formal education. At the nursery, Gowda was entrusted with caring for seeds meant for the Agasur seedbed, a project of the Karnataka Forest Department. Over time, her deep connection to nature and her ability to identify and care for various species of plants became evident. Her expertise in seed collection, extraction, and regeneration contributed significantly to afforestation projects, where she helped restore degraded landscapes using traditional methods. For 35 years, she worked as a daily wage worker at the nursery until her dedication and unmatched knowledge earned her a permanent position at the Karnataka Forest Department. She continued in this role for another 15 years, directly supporting afforestation efforts, preventing poaching, and mitigating forest fires that threatened local wildlife. Her efforts also fostered sustainable livelihoods and education for local communities, showcasing the role of indigenous knowledge in modern conservation practices. Gowda's work has earned her widespread recognition. In 2021, the Government of India honoured her with the Padma Shri, the country's fourth-highest civilian award, for her exceptional contributions to environmental conservation. Revered as the 'Tree Goddess' by her Halakki tribal community, she remains an icon of the deep, matriarchal connection between indigenous traditions and nature.

Rs 263-crore tax refund 'fraud': special court rejects bail plea of IPS officer's husband

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

The agency has claimed that Tanaji Adhikari, a former senior tax assistant, was allegedly involved in fraudulently generating and issuing TDS refunds from the I-T Department to the tune of Rs 263.95 crore, along with other accused. The agency has claimed that Tanaji Adhikari, a former senior tax assistant, was allegedly involved in fraudulently generating and issuing TDS refunds from the I-T Department to the tune of Rs 263.95 crore, along with other accused.

A special court dealing with cases under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) on Monday rejected the bail application of Purushottam Chavan, the husband of a senior IPS officer arrested in the Rs 263 crore Income Tax Refund 'fraud' case, stating that there is prima facie evidence that he received the proceeds of the crime. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested Chavan in May this year. The agency has claimed that Tanaji Adhikari, a former senior tax assistant, was allegedly involved in fraudulently generating and issuing tax deducted at source (TDS) refunds from the Income-Tax Department to the tune of Rs 263.95 crore, along with other accused. In his bail plea, Chavan said he was not named in the First Information Report (FIR) or the first chargesheet and the only evidence cited against him is the statement of a co-accused. He also submitted that he was not given a chance to explain himself and there is no evidence to show his involvement in the layering of the funds.

ED has claimed that a co-accused Rajesh Batreja had paid Chavan Rs 10.40 crore from time to time, received from Adhikari, and that they had helped in laundering the proceeds of crime. The central agency also alleged that



Chavan set up a company in Dubai and that money was withdrawn from a bank account of Batreja, which ED claimed, showed that there was a motive to divert and conceal proceeds of crime.

Special Judge A C Daga said other than the statement of co-accused there was prima facie proof against Chavan. "The statement of co-accused Rajesh Batreja recorded... goes to show that it was assured by the applicant/accused that he will get his case settled for Rs. 11 crore and he made payment of Rs. 10.40 crore to the applicant/accused," the court said in a detailed order made available on Tuesday. While Chavan also sought bail on the grounds of ill health, the court said nothing on record shows that he needs hospitalisation. "It is settled law that merely for asking no sick or infirm person is required to be released on bail. The nature of sickness, its effect on the accused has to be taken into consideration. In this matter, nothing before me which goes to show that the health of the applicant/accused has deteriorated because of incarceration," the court said.

Pune bizman loses Rs 10 lakh to 'Zudio franchise' scammers



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

A businessman in Pune was allegedly duped of Rs 10 lakh by cyber criminals on the pretext of giving him a franchise to start a Zudio outlet in the city, the police said on Tuesday. The fraudsters used deceptively similar websites and email addresses creating an impression that all the communications were from Zudio, they added. According to the police, the 66-year-old man, while surfing the internet earlier this month, came across an advertisement that provided a link to apply for the Zudio franchise. Since the complainant, who has a paint dealership, was looking for other business opportunities, he clicked on the link, filled up the form which sought his personal, professional and financial details, the police said.

"A while later he received a call from a fraudster who identified himself as a representative of Zudio. He told the complainant that his application had been approved and that senior company officials will soon get in touch for further process. A few hours later he received another call from a man who identified himself as a senior functionary and again sought the complainant's income tax, business and bank details," said an officer. As instructed, the complainant paid Rs 49,000 and Rs 10 lakh as 'registration fees,' and 'agreement fee' respectively on separate occasions. He was told that the agreement papers between the complainant's business entity and Zudio would be sent for his signature, the police said. The businessman grew suspicious when another person called him demanding Rs 25 lakh to stock

Zudio's clothing items. After a preliminary inquiry by the Cybercrime police station, the officials at Khadak police station registered a case.

In July last year, a 35-year-old director of an engineering company in Pune was cheated to the tune of Rs 1 crore by online fraudsters on the pretext of offering him the franchise of a multinational pizza chain during the Cricket World Cup. In a similar case last year, a 50-year-old tour operator in Pune was conned Rs 30 lakh by fraudsters who offered him the franchise of a well-known restaurant in the city. In October last year a 33-year-old man from Pimpri Chinchwad was cheated to the tune of Rs 10 lakh by online fraudsters who offered the ownership of a franchise of a renowned bakery chain.

Terrai, a deeply rooted Telangana cuisine restaurant, opens in Hitech City

Hyderabad: To propagate the deeply rooted culinary culture of Telangana State and with an aim to become synonymous with Telangana food, Terrai, a 12,000 square feet dining destination offering luxurious and unique ambience for 250 guests, has been launched at Sattva Knowledge Park, Hitech City. Terrai is homage to the rich heritage, culture, and culinary prowess of Telangana. At Terrai, every dish serves as a resplendent tribute to the land, celebrating local women farmers and tribal chefs. Taking immense pride in our roots, our thought and vision behind Terrai is to spotlight showcase the tradition and history behind the food from our State, designed for the modern diner," Rohit Kasuganti, Founder, CEO, TSK Food Works, said. Terrai is a creative canvas where we weave the rich cultural and artistic elements of Telangana into every detail. From collaborating with local artisans on Dokra art to sourcing textiles for our ikat-inspired decor.

Group seeks reopening of temple 'locked for 70 years' in Varanasi, police deployed at site as 'precaution'



GNS News Agency, Jan 16 The temple's wall is adjacent to a house owned by a businessman, said Pramod Kumar Pandey, Station Officer of the Dasaswamedh police station. He said the temple has not suffered any damage. The temple's wall is adjacent to a house owned by a businessman, said Pramod Kumar Pandey, Station Officer of the Dasaswamedh police station. He said the temple has not suffered any damage. The Varanasi district administration is gathering details about a temple in the Muslim-majority Madanpura area after a group called the Sanatan Raksha Dal claimed it was a two-century-old Shiva temple that has remained locked for 70 years. Police have been deployed at the location to ensure law and order, officials said Tuesday. The issue surfaced after a photograph of the locked temple gate was shared on social media. Members of the Sanatan Raksha Dal then arrived at the site and brought it to the administration's attention. The group has

sought the opening of the temple for prayers.

"The district administration has been informed about the temple, and they are reviewing records to make a decision. All legal procedures will be followed before arriving at any conclusion," said Varanasi Deputy Commissioner of Police Gaurav Banswal. The DCP said a police team was deployed at the site as a precautionary measure. The temple's wall is adjacent to a house owned by a businessman, said Pramod Kumar Pandey, Station Officer of the Dasaswamedh police station. He said the temple has not suffered any damage. Local resident Yasir Jamal, a cloth merchant, said the temple has been locked for a long time as no one has visited it for prayers. Ajay Sharma, the state president of Sanatan Raksha Dal, said the organisation requested the district administration and public representatives to grant permission to open the temple and allow prayers. "After the temple is opened, it will become clear whether any statues of deities remain inside," he said, adding that the group has also urged Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to intervene and issue directions on the matter. Last week the Sambhal district administration had reopened an "ancient temple" that had reportedly been closed since 1978. The temple was reportedly discovered during an ongoing drive against power theft. It is located near the Shahi Jama Masjid, where a court-ordered survey was conducted last month. The mosque has been at the centre of tensions, with some groups alleging that it was built after demolishing a Hindu temple. Violence over the survey on November 24 had resulted in four deaths.

Wroughton's free-tailed bat, a highly rare species, spotted in Delhi's Yamuna Biodiversity Park

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Wroughton's free-tailed bat, a highly rare species of molossid bat, has been spotted at the Delhi Development Authority (DDA)'s Yamuna Biodiversity Park, marking a unique sighting. This bat species is primarily found in the Western Ghats, where there is only one known breeding colony. Small colonies have also been recorded in Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya, and a single individual was noted in Cambodia. "It is a unique sighting for Delhi, which we found during the routine visit to the corridor of the Yamuna Biodiversity Park," said Faiyaz A Khudsar, biodiversity expert and incharge scientist under the Biodiversity Parks Programme.



A statement by the DDA Biodiversity Park states that the species is easily recognisable to bat researchers. It is characterised by its large size, huge ears extending beyond the muzzle, and bicoloured velvet fur. The statement added that it typically roosts in caves or dark, damp, and slightly warm places in moderate colonies. bat in yamuna biodiversity park Wroughton's free-tailed bat is ecologically important for regulating insect populations and is also known to assist in pollination. Wroughton's free-tailed bat is ecologically important for regulating insect populations and is also known to assist in pollination. Until 2000, the species was considered critically endangered because of a single known population in the Western Ghats. Later, with discoveries in three different localities, the bat species was placed on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List as data deficient. According to Khudsar, despite its

discovery a century ago, very little is known about the bat's feeding ecology. The bat species has powerful flying capabilities, allowing it to forage long distances.

The sighting is significant for Delhi because it is known to be home to around 14 species, four of which have been considered locally extinct: the Indian false vampire, the black-bearded tomb bat, the Egyptian free-tailed bat, and the Indian pipistrelle. According to the statement, "two decades of ecological restoration" have contributed to the establishment of "very specialized niches". It also noted that the restored forest of the Aravali Biodiversity Park, managed by the DDA, has become the only known roosting site for the Blyth's horseshoe bat in Delhi. "This is a testimony of a long scientific interventions facilitates rewilding of many species reclaiming their historical geographical ranges," the statement added.

Delhi man finds wife with her lover, beats him to death; arrested

GNS News Agency, Jan 16 The Delhi Police on Monday arrested a man for allegedly killing his wife's lover after he reportedly found them together in a compromising position in his house in North East Delhi's Shastri Park in the morning. The victim was identified as Ritik Verma, 21, and the accused Ajmat, a labourer. "The victim was beaten up with sticks, and he later succumbed to his injuries during treatment at GTB Hospital," said Rakesh Paweriya, Deputy Commissioner of Police, North East district. "At around 11 am, when Ajmat reached home, he saw his wife in a compromising position with Verma. The accused, in a fit of rage, physically assaulted both his wife and Verma, leaving the man with a blunt force injury to his forehead," the officer said.



Another officer said Verma was held hostage at the accused's home and beaten up by Ajmat and his associates. A few sources claimed that the accused pulled out the victim's nails. The police, however, denied the claims or any instances of "torture". Verma was allegedly in a relationship with the accused's wife for several months, the police said, adding that the motive behind the murder was "an act of revenge". According to the police, the assault was reported on Monday morning through a control room call.

On the spot, the investigation officer found that the victim was initially taken to JPC Hospital by his relatives after sustaining severe injuries. He was later transferred to GTB Hospital, where he died at around 9 pm, the police said. A case was initially filed under sections 115(2) [voluntarily causing hurt], 127(2) [Wrongful confinement], and 110 [attempt to commit culpable homicide] of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Following Verma's death, Section 103(1) (murder) was added to the FIR, a police officer said.

On way to surrender, AAP MLA Chaitar Vasava detained in Gujarat

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Gujarat AAP working President and Dediapada MLA Chaitar Vasava was detained at Navagam in Narmada district, just a few kilometres from the Bharuch district entry point, on Tuesday. Vasava, along with his supporters, was on his way to surrender at a police station in Bharuch, as part of a Jail Bharo Andolan following the two FIRs registered against him last week. Early on Tuesday morning, a cavalcade of police vehicles blocked the road leading from Narmada to Bharuch district at Navagam, intercepting Vasava's convoy. Vasava, who was booked in two cases on December 8 and 10 for allegedly violating prohibitory orders and obstructing police on duty while endangering the lives of people respectively, had announced the Jail Bharo Andolan, lashing out at the BJP for "using the police machinery" to run the state. After he refused to return from the spot where police intercepted him, Vasava and his supporters got into a heated argument with the Narmada District police led by Rajpipla Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) Sanjay Sharma and attacked the ruling party for "creating an environment of fear". "The way the BJP is using the administration, police, ED, and other agencies to run the show, they want to create an atmosphere of fear.



The Constitution is under threat and people will have to step out of their homes to save democracy," Vasava said. While officials of the Narmada police said Chaitar had no permission to undertake a rally to Bharuch district, passing through Narmada, Bharuch District Superintendent of Police Mayur Chavda told The Indian Express that the MLA was "trying a stunt" to "pressurise the police". Chavda said, "The Bharuch district police has neither called Chaitar or any of his supporters for any questioning or recording statements in the two cases lodged against him.

New study of supernovae calls dark energy's existence into question



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

The Crab Nebula, the result of a bright supernova explosion seen by Chinese and other astronomers in the year 1054, 6,500 light-years from Earth, is seen in an image taken by the James Webb Telescope on June 3, 2024. At its center is a neutron star, a super-dense star produced by the supernova. This image shows the X-ray data from Chandra along with infrared data from the Webb space telescope.

The Crab Nebula, the result of a bright supernova explosion seen by Chinese and other astronomers in the year 1054, 6,500 light-years from Earth, is seen in an image taken by the James Webb Telescope on June 3, 2024. At its center is a neutron star, a super-dense star produced by the supernova. This image shows the X-ray data from Chandra along with infrared data from the Webb space telescope. By looking at light from distant exploding stars called supernovas, in 1998 astronomers discovered the universe isn't just expanding — its expansion is speeding up. But what's behind this acceleration? Enter dark energy. It's one of the most debated and intriguing missing puzzle pieces of modern physics — a mysterious form of energy believed to uniformly permeate all of space. In the current most accepted model of modern cosmology, dark energy is what drives the accelerated expansion of the universe. But what if there's another explanation that doesn't involve dark energy? A recent study using data from supernovas hints there might indeed be one, and it's called the Timescape model. The backbone of modern cosmology is the Lambda-Cold Dark Matter (Lambda-CDM) model. It describes a universe where a dark energy — denoted with Λ , the Greek letter Lambda — is the driving mechanism behind the universe's accelerating expansion. Under this model, galaxies are dancing together under the effect of an invisible dark matter web made of heavy particles that don't interact with anything. The effects of this cold dark matter can only be observed through gravity. Dark energy accounts for nearly 70% of the universe's total energy budget, but its exact nature remains one of the greatest mysteries in physics. Some interpretations suggest dark energy could be linked to the energy of the vacuum, while other studies have attempted to describe it as a new, evolving energy field spread across space. And a recent study from the international DESI collaboration that traces the universe's expansion hinted dark energy may be weakening over time. It's also possible that our current theory of gravity (Einstein's theory of general relativity) is incomplete. Perhaps it requires an extension to describe gravitational interaction at cosmological scales — distances on the order of millions to billions of light-years.

What is the Timescape model?

Matter — dark matter, gas, galaxies, star clusters and

super clusters — is not uniformly spread throughout cosmos. But for the Lambda-CDM model, we assume the universe is homogeneous and isotropic. This means that, on cosmic scales, the distribution of matter appears smooth and uniform. Any clumps and gaps we might find can be considered insignificant due to the grand scale of the entire thing. By contrast, the Timescape model takes the uneven distribution of matter into account. It suggests our intricate cosmic web — made up of galaxies, clusters, filaments and vast cosmic voids — directly affects how we interpret the expansion of the universe. This would mean the universe isn't stretching out evenly. According to the Timescape model, the universe's expansion rate varies across different regions, depending on how dense they are. The key parameter in the Timescape model is the "void fraction": it quantifies the proportion of space occupied by expanding voids. Gravity dictates that voids expand faster than denser regions — they have less matter to hold them back, allowing space to stretch more freely. This creates an average effect that can mimic the accelerated expansion attributed to dark energy in Lambda-CDM. In short, the Timescape model suggests it might only appear to us that the universe's expansion is speeding up. The expansion speed depends on where you are in the universe.

What did the study find?

The authors of the new study looked at one of the biggest collections of Type Ia supernovas, called the Pantheon+ dataset. These supernovas are a reliable standard used to test cosmological models. The team compared two major models: the standard Lambda-CDM (our "vanilla" recipe of the universe), and the Timescape model. When looking at nearby bright supernovas, the Timescape model explained things better than our standard model. This was only statistical though, with the statistical analysis showing a "very strong" preference. Even when they examined more distant supernovas, where things should be more evenly spread out, Timescape still held up slightly better than the usual model. The takeaway? The Timescape model, which focuses on how cosmic "clumps and gaps" change the way we see the universe growing, might be better at capturing the true nature of our universe's expansion. This would be especially so for the nearby universe — we have a lot of voids and filaments near us, which would affect how we see the expansion.

How strong is the evidence, then?

There are important caveats. The analysis doesn't account for peculiar velocities — small, random motions of galaxies that can affect supernova measurements. They also don't account for Malmquist bias, when brighter supernovas are more likely to be included in the data simply because they're easier to detect. These potential sources of error could badly affect their results. Additionally, the study didn't use the latest DES5yr dataset of supernovas. It's more consistent and uniform in its data collection than Pantheon+, potentially making it more reliable for comparison. There are other things besides supernovas currently propping up the Lambda-CDM model, most notably baryon acoustic oscillations and gravitational lensing. Future work would need to integrate those into the Timescape model. But with this new study, the Timescape model offers an intriguing alternative to Lambda-CDM. The bottom line is that our universe's acceleration is an illusion due to the uneven distribution of matter with large cosmic voids expanding faster than denser regions.

India's journey so far on the AI military bandwagon

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

'One of the biggest challenges that must be addressed, even when India is at the stage where technologies are ready to be widely deployed, is the historically siloed nature of the armed forces.' As the world has begun utilising and developing artificial intelligence (AI) for military purposes amidst debates of ethical concerns, India also appears to have hopped on the bandwagon. Last year saw a defence Budget of ₹6.21 lakh crore (\$75 billion), with an emphasis on modernising and upgrading India's military. India has begun to make strides towards integrating AI systems with their military and using them across various systems. Products such as the Indrajal autonomous drone security system have been developed. India has also attracted investments from numerous foreign tech giants for its AI ecosystem — Microsoft, for example, has committed approximately \$3 billion to building data centres in Telangana.

On track but there are hurdles. Multiple government figures have made statements about the utility of AI for military purposes, including Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, who remarked that "artificial intelligence or AI has the potential to revolutionise military operations, from predictive analytics to autonomous decision-making systems". Additionally, India is a part of multiple joint initiatives internationally that focus on AI. All these steps indicate the pouring of money and manpower into developing AI systems for military purposes. India is on track to fully utilising the potential of AI. However, there are some obstacles. Once addressed, they will ensure that India's adoption of AI will be even better.

A lack of digitised data to train systems on as well as a dearth of funds are the obvious factors. The biggest issue is the fact that the data centres required to run AI systems are expensive. India's military already has to focus on replacing legacy systems such as older aircraft with newer models, which is an expensive endeavour in itself. India's legacy hardware is no longer competitive in the global sphere, and significant resources are being directed towards replacing and upgrading it. However, more general hurdles which are harder to overcome exacerbate the problem. One such issue is that India's policies on AI are still fragmented or lack guidelines for implementation. For instance, the National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence outlines India's vision for deploying AI. However it provides little insight on actual mechanisms for deployment.

Similarly, the responsible AI for All paper outlines the importance of accountability and transparency and puts forward principles for responsible AI use, but falls short in making military-AI-specific recommendations. Major strides have been made through these documents, but, as of now, arguably more robust frameworks need to be put in place for the deployment and the regulation of AI in the military. The Defence Artificial Intelligence Council (DAIC) and the Defence AI Project Agency (DAIPA) have been set up, and their objectives will bridge these gaps. However, there have not been any recent updates available to the public from these bodies.

The international picture AI is also a technology that is a must based on the alacrity with which other countries have been focusing on integrating it with their militaries. Israel and China have focused on rapidly developing and deploy-



ing military AI and their technologies are already far ahead. India needs clarity of vision in its attitude towards AI, to make it possible to roll out AI systems faster and catch up with the global AI wave. There appears to be some degree of inconsistency within the government regarding sentiments towards military AI. This is reflected in remarks made by notable figures that underscore resistance or mistrust regarding the new technology. For example, the Minister of External Affairs compared AI to nuclear weapons — "AI will be as dangerous for the world as nuclear bombs once were" — in terms of their potential dangers to the world.

During the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) in 2023, the Prime Minister also remarked that there must be a focus proceeding with extreme caution and warned of the darker sides of AI. While there is clarity on the fact that AI will be critical in the coming years, especially military AI, there appears to be less clarity on how to roll it out.

The specific problems in India One of the biggest challenges that must be addressed, even when India is at the stage where technologies are ready to be widely deployed, is the historically siloed nature of the armed forces. The Indian Army, Indian Navy, and Indian Air Force have separate doctrines, systems and communication practices. This will likely significantly hinder interoperability and the procurement of systems for joint operations.

Finally, when it comes to the procurement of systems themselves, one of the issues with developing AI for defence is the reliance on public sector units (PSU), which has prevailed in India for many decades. Despite the misconception that most of India's defence manufacturers are public sector companies, many private entities and startups produce advanced, high-quality systems. To equip the military with the best systems at a large enough scale, there will have to be public-private partnerships (PPPs) or an introduction of private competition. As seen with the space sector, this can significantly change the state of affairs. India has already begun harnessing AI's potential to bolster its defence ecosystem. However, these multiple impediments serve as a reminder of the measures that need to be taken. Strategic alignment is paramount, and robust frameworks and policies are necessary to ensure AI's effective and ethical deployment. India needs to make systemic changes to tackle issues such as the inter-service silos and an overreliance on PSUs. Finally, collaboration and innovation internationally and in terms of PPPs will accelerate AI adoption and innovation. With a cohesive strategy, India will be able to maximise the utility of AI.

'Need political fire extinguishers': In Bengaluru, V-P Jagdeep Dhankhar voices concern over polarised political climate



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday expressed concern over the divisive nature of Indian politics, saying that "a vitiated political climate" was "far more dangerous" than climate change and called for "political fire extinguishers" to calm the situation. He also spoke about how Public Service Commission (PSC) members should not be "wedded to a particular ideology or an individual". Dhankhar made these remarks while delivering the inaugural address at the 25th National Conference of Chairpersons of All State Public Service Commission at Bengaluru on Saturday and stressed that the weakening of any institution is a threat to the nation.

"Weakening of institutions... any institution, if it is weakened, the damage is to the entire nation. Weakening an institution is like a prick on the body. The entire body will be in pain. I would therefore urge, we must have strengthening of institutions. States and Union must work in tandem. They must be in synergetic mode. They must be in sync with one another when it comes to national interest," he said. Dhankhar also emphasised that a harmonious political environment is crucial for the nation's progress, calling for open communication and dialogue across political organisations. "Our polity at the moment is too divisive, too polarised. Interaction is not taking place at the premium level in political organisations," he said. "When it comes to nation, when the world is in a transformative phase, it is India's century. That century can be fully fructified for people's gain only when we have a calm political atmosphere.... We need political fire extinguishers. A political divisiveness, a vitiated political climate is far more dangerous than the climate change we are facing," Dhankhar added, urging political leaders to prioritise consensus-building and address national challenges without delay. In view of increasing reports on exam paper leaks, Dhankhar said such incidents have sparked a new fear among candidates. "This is a menace. You have to curb (it). Your fairness of selection will have no

meaning if paper leakages are there. And paper leakage has become an industry, a commerce. People, young boys and girls, used to have a fear of examinations. How difficult the question will be? How will we address it? Now they have two fears. One is fear of examination. Second, fear of leakage. So when they are giving their very best for several months and weeks to prepare for an examination, they receive the setback of leakage," he said.

The vice-president also stressed that PSC members should not be "wedded" to a particular ideology. "It is with utmost restraint I am reflecting on an aspect. Public Service Commissions, the appointment cannot be driven by patronage, by favouritism. There are trends that are visible. I do not wish to reflect on them but some of them are very painful. We must account ourselves to our conscience. We cannot have a Public Service Commission chairman or a member wedded to a particular ideology or an individual. That will be undoing the essence and spirit of the framework of the Constitution," he said. Dhankhar also underlined that extensions in service were a setback to those who were in line. "It defies the logical principle of expectation. We have a doctrine of expectation. People devote decades to be in a particular groove. Extension indicates that some individual is indispensable. Indispensability is a myth. Talent abounds in this country. No one is indispensable. And therefore, it lies in the domain of Public Service Commissions at the state and the central level that when they have a role in such kinds of situations, they must be firm," he said. Drawing attention towards post-retirement assignments, Dhankhar said, "Post-retirement recruitment is a problem. In some states, it has been structured. Employees never retire, particularly those in the premium services. They get a number of ad-hoc nomenclatures. This is not good. Everyone in the country must have due and that due is defined by law... Any largesse of this kind is antithetical to what was visualised by framers of the Constitution." Highlighting the role of intellectuals, he criticised their tendency to align with political interests and urged them to remain objective and act as "fire extinguishers" during social disharmony. He emphasised that governance must embrace diverse ideologies, rooted in India's ethos of dialogue and inclusivity. "I find intellectuals are formed into groups. They sign representations they may not have read. They think signing representation is a passport for getting a position if a particular dispensation comes to power. Now look at intellectuals, former bureaucrats, former diplomats. You earned a level of public service, which others must emulate. You must be objective in making representations. You cannot create a group to subservise your interest with change of political alignments," he said.

Tension in Mekhliganj, Baishnabnagar along Bangladesh border over attempts to erect fencing

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Tension has been brewing in the Indo-Bangladesh border area in West Bengal for the last few days over attempts by villagers to erect fences in some areas. While fencing work has been paused at Sukdevpur in Malda district's Baishnabnagar, similar work has caused issues in Cooch Behar district's Mekhliganj. Villagers in Mekhliganj on Friday began fencing parts of the boundary of the lone Bangladeshi enclave of Dahagram-Angarpota. While armed jawans of the neighbouring country's paramilitary force Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) argued with them, trying to stop them from erecting the four-foot-high barbed-wire fencing, the Border Security Force (BSF) stood guard and facilitated the process.

A narrow 178-metre by 85-metre road called the Tin Bigha Corridor connects the Dahagram-Angarpota enclave with the Bangladesh mainland. The area is completely unfenced and sees heavy troop deployment by both countries. Villagers said they were erecting the fence with the help of BSF to prevent cattle from Bangladesh from grazing on their fields and eating up crops. A BSF team rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control after ground-level dialogue with BGB officers. "It isn't permanent fencing (in Mekhliganj), rather an improvised one locally, very close to the zero line," a BSF official said on condition of anonymity.

Just three days ago, nine people, including seven Bangladeshi infiltrators and two Indians, were arrested by BSF jawans for illegally crossing over to the Indian side of the border. Those arrested included a tout Mithun Ray from Mekhliganj. Before that, on Monday, tensions flared up between the BSF and BGB over single-row barbed wire fencing at Sukdevpur, with the latter objecting to it. Work began for a short while on Tuesday but was stopped in the afternoon following a flag meeting between the two sides. It has not been resumed since. As per BSF officials, a commandant and sector-level meeting was held to resolve issues and pacify the situation.

In Malda, permanent fencing was being erected by the BSF, while in Mekhliganj it was temporary fencing close to the zero line. "When fencing is permanent in nature, it has to be erected at a distance of 150 yards from the international border (IB). If there are some physical constraints and fencing cannot be done maintaining 150 yards distance and has to be done at a lesser distance due to population and villagers staying too close, then a decision is taken after discussion," said BSF officials. BSF officials blamed mala fide intentions of some people behind the issue. "The status quo is maintained. There is no change on land, and fencing work will restart soon," said BSF officials. They also appealed to people not to believe the videos being circulated on social media. "Since the fencing work is not urgent, we are keeping it suspended for some time to avoid unnecessary tension and confusion. It will start soon, but we are not setting any deadline," said a senior officer, BSF South Bengal Frontier.

Sources said BSF deployment has been intensified in the areas concerned in the last two days, with round-the-clock patrolling and surveillance. "We reiterate that the border situation is under control at Baishnabnagar and that we have temporarily suspended work to avoid more tension," the BSF officer said. Bengal has a 2,216-km boundary with Bangladesh, 50 per cent of which remains unfenced, making it vulnerable to illicit cross-border activity. In Malda, of the 172 km of the border, around 27 km lacks proper fencing. The current dispute is over attempts to put barriers on 1,200 metres of unfenced area in Baishnabnagar village. Officers at BSF South Bengal Frontier said the work at Baishnabnagar started last year but was put on hold when the monsoon hit. "It is not new work. It was suspended for a few months because of unfavourable weather. Just as we



resumed the work, we faced opposition from BGB. But we will resume work," said the officer.

The situation has also fuelled political reactions. BJP leader Amit Malviya criticised TMC leader Firhad Hakim for condemning slogans like 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' raised during a recent anti-infiltration operation. Malviya alleged that Hakim's stance favours illegal immigrants. In response, TMC leader Kunal Ghosh criticised the BSF's failure to secure the border, highlighting the vulnerability of the long border with Bangladesh. He also questioned the BJP's focus on West Bengal while ignoring similar issues in BJP-governed states.

2BHKs built during BRS regime distributed under Indiramma housing scheme in Khammam

Khammam: Double bedroom houses sanctioned and built during the BRS regime have been distributed to beneficiaries under the Indiramma housing scheme in Khammam.

Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy handed over the house pattas to 80 beneficiaries on Saturday. The double bedroom houses were built at Mallemadugu village of Khammam urban mandal by ITDA, Bhadrachalam at a cost of Rs 43.56 crore.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister informed that four new welfare programmes would be implemented for the poor from January 26. He said 80 double bedroom houses were being provided to the poor as a Sankranti gift. The Minister said that in the last 10 years, the previous rulers had failed to fulfill the dreams of the poor in the State. Schemes such as Rythu Bharosa, new ration cards, Indiramma House and financial assistance to farm labourers would be implemented from January 26 for eligible beneficiaries.

Srinivas Reddy said that Indiramma houses would be sanctioned from January 26. In the first phase, 3,500 houses would be allotted to each Assembly segment. The survey of 90 per cent beneficiaries has been completed. In the presence of village committees and Gram Sabhas, deserving people would be selected and houses would be given to them. Road and park construction works would be launched in the coming days and steps would also be taken to solve the drainage problem at the double bedroom house complex, he said.

District Collector Muzammil Khan informed that the Minister has sanctioned Rs 2 crore for constructing roads in the house complex at Mallemadugu. An Anganwadi centre would also be set up before January 20 as per the request of the people, he added.

President Joe Biden extends time in U.S. for 800,000 Venezuelans, Salvadorans as Donald Trump readies immigration crackdown



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

About 600,000 Venezuelans and more than 230,000 Salvadorans already living in the United States can legally remain another 18 months, the Department of Homeland Security said Friday, barely a week before President-elect Donald Trump takes office with promises of hardline immigration policies. Biden's administration has strongly supported Temporary Protected Status (TPS), which he has broadly expanded to cover about 1 million people. TPS faces an uncertain future under Trump, who tried to sharply curtail its use during his first term as president. Federal regulations would allow the extensions to be terminated early, although that's never been done before.

Homeland Security also extended TPS for more than 103,000 Ukrainians and 1,900 Sudanese that are already living in the U.S. For José Palma, a 48-year-old Salvadoran who has lived in the U.S. since 1998, the extension means that at least for now he can still work legally in Houston. He is the only person in his family with temporary status; his four children were born U.S. citizens and his wife is a permanent resident. If TPS was not extended he could be deported and separated from the rest of the family. "It brings me peace of mind, a breath of fresh air," Palma said. "It offers me stability".

Palma, who works as an organizer at a day laborer organization, sends about \$400 a month to his 73-year-old mother, who is retired and does not have any income. The TPS designation gives people legal authority to be in the country but it doesn't provide them a long-term path to citizenship. They are reliant on the government renewing their

status when it expires. Conservative critics have said that over time, the renewal of the protection status becomes automatic, regardless of what is happening in the person's home country. Friday's announcement, which came as Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro took office for a third six-year term in Caracas amid widespread international condemnation, is "based on the severe humanitarian emergency the country continues to face due to political and economic crises under the Maduro regime," the department said. Homeland Security cited "environmental conditions in El Salvador that prevent individuals from returning," specifically heavy rains and storms in the last two years.

Congress created TPS in 1990 to prevent deportations to countries suffering from natural disasters or civil strife, giving people authorization to work in increments of up to 18 months at a time. About 1 million immigrants from 17 countries are protected by TPS, including people from Venezuela, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Sudan, Ukraine and Lebanon. Venezuelans are one of the largest beneficiaries and their extension runs from April 2025 to Oct. 2, 2026.

Salvadorans won TPS in 2001 after earthquakes rocked the Central American country. TPS for Salvadorans was to expire in March and was extended until Sept. 9, 2026. Trump and his running mate, JD Vance, suggested they would scale back the use of TPS and policies granting temporary status as they pursue mass deportations. During his first administration, Trump ended TPS for El Salvador but was held up in court.

In recent months, advocates have increased pressure on the Biden administration to ask for TPS extensions for those who already have it, and to protect people from other countries like Guatemala and Ecuador. "This extension is just a small victory," said Felipe Arnoldo Díaz, an activist with the National TPS Alliance. "Our biggest concern is that after El Salvador, there are countries whose TPS are expiring soon and are being left out" like Nepal, Nicaragua, and Honduras. Victor Macedo, a 40-year-old Venezuelan, arrived to the U.S. in 2021 after receiving death threats back home for being an activist with the political opposition. He couldn't believe the news about the extension, as his TPS was set to expire in April. "It is a very big relief. I was afraid," said Macedo, who works remodeling houses in Davie, Florida. "TPS helps me have legal status, work, and be able to drive."

Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai attends Muslim girls' education conference snubbed by Taliban



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai said she was "overwhelmed" to be back in her native Pakistan on as the prime minister launched a global summit on girls' education in the Islamic world. The summit has brought together education leaders from Muslim-majority countries, but has been snubbed by Pakistan's neighbour Afghanistan — the only country in the world where girls are banned from school. "The Muslim world including Pakistan faces significant challenges in ensuring equitable access to education for girls," Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said at the opening of the summit, backed by the Muslim World League.

"Denying education to girls is tantamount to denying their voice and their choice, while depriving them of their right to a bright future." Education Minister Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui told AFP that the government "had extended an invitation to Afghanistan but no-one from the Afghan government was at the conference". Ms. Yousafzai, who was

shot by Pakistan Taliban militants in 2012 when she was a schoolgirl, is due to address the conference on Sunday. "I'm truly honoured, overwhelmed and happy to be back in Pakistan," she told AFP as she arrived at the conference in the capital Islamabad with her parents. Earlier on Friday, she posted on social media that she would speak about "why leaders must hold the Taliban accountable for their crimes against Afghan women & girls". Since returning to power in 2021, the Afghan Taliban government has imposed an austere version of Islamic law that the United Nations has called "gender apartheid".

"At last" Pakistan is facing its own severe education crisis, with more than 26 million children out of school, according to government figures, one of the highest numbers in the world. Mr. Sharif said "inadequate infrastructure, safety concerns, as well as deeply entrenched societal norms" were barriers to girls education. Zahra Tariq, a 23-year-old studying clinical psychology, who attended the opening of the summit, told AFP: "At last we have a good initiative on Muslim girls' education," said "Those in rural areas are still facing problems. In some cases their families are the first barrier." Ms. Yousafzai became a household name after she was attacked by Pakistan Taliban militants on a school bus in the remote Swat valley in 2012. Militancy was widespread in the region at the time as the war between the Afghan Taliban and NATO forces raged across the border in Afghanistan. The Pakistan and Afghan Taliban are separate groups but share close links and similar ideologies, including a strong disbelief in educating girls. Ms. Yousafzai was evacuated to the United Kingdom after her attack and went on to become a global advocate for girls' education and, at the age of 17, the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner.

Powerful winter storm dumps heavy snow, causing flight delays, slick roads and school closings

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

A powerful winter storm that dumped heavy snow and glazed roads with ice across much of Texas and Oklahoma lumbered eastward into Southern U.S. states Friday, making for dicey travel and a rare snow day for many students. Arkansas and North Carolina mobilized their National Guards for tasks such as helping stranded motorists, as governors in multiple states declared states of emergency. The school was cancelled for millions of children from Texas to Georgia and as far east as South Carolina.

The storm piled up more than a year's worth of snowfall on some Southern cities. As much as a foot (about 31 centimeters) fell in parts of Arkansas. There were reports of nearly 10 inches (about 25 centimeters) in Little Rock, a city that averages 3.8 inches (9.7 centimeters) a year. More than 7 inches (about 18 centimeters) fell at Memphis International Airport in Tennessee since late Thursday. The city usually sees 2.7 inches (6.9 centimeters) a year. In some areas where snow tapered off, such as Memphis, the worry was that wet roads would freeze overnight.

Farther south and east into Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia, a wintry mix of sleet, snow and ice made travel treacherous. The sleet and snow that fell over parts of Atlanta into South Carolina and North Carolina was changing to freezing rain, and forecasters warned that if the ice accumulation gets heavy enough, power lines and trees could topple. The number of people without electricity in Georgia rose sharply in the evening to more than 100,000 customers, mostly around metro Atlanta. More than 30,000 lost power Friday night in northeast Texas and neighboring southwest Arkansas. For kids home from school, the heavy wet stuff also packed into a pretty good snowball.

In Atlanta, Mikayla Johnson, 12, was out making snow angels and snowmen on her day off. "My first thought was, 'Wow!'" said Mikayla, who was outdoors with her father, Nate. "We haven't had snow since I was, like, 4 — good snow, at least. So I was really happy." The storm dumped as much as 7 inches (about 18 centimeters) in some spots in central Oklahoma and northern Texas. And in the Kansas City area, students were back at school in several districts Thursday after three straight snow days, only to see classes called off again Friday because of more snow.

Snow began falling in metro Atlanta before dawn, leading to hundreds of flights being cancelled and hundreds more delayed at the world's busiest airport, according to flight tracking software FlightAware. Controllers declared a ground stop before 8 a.m., meaning no planes could land or take off. Four passengers were injured after a Delta plane bound for Minneapolis aborted takeoff Friday morning, according to the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. One passenger was hospitalized, while three people were treated at the scene for minor injuries.

The incident contributed to further delays, although Delta said it was unclear whether the weather had anything to do with the flight aborting its takeoff. The airline said there was an indication of an engine issue. Airports with significant delays and cancellations included those in Charlotte, North Carolina, Dallas-Fort Worth and Nashville. Fifty-five passengers on three American Airlines flights that were diverted from Dallas-Fort Worth spent the night at the Bill and Hillary Clinton National Airport in Little Rock. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott urged residents to avoid driving if possible.

FBI must be independent, above partisan fray, outgoing director says in farewell address

The FBI must remain independent, above the partisan fray and "committed to upholding the rule of law," outgoing Director Christopher Wray said in a farewell address just days before his expected retirement at the conclusion of the Biden administration following more than seven years on the job. "No matter what's happening out there," Mr. Wray said, "in here, we've got to stay committed to doing our work the right way every time, with professionalism, with rigor, with integrity. That means following the facts wherever they lead, no matter who likes it or doesn't — because trust me, if there's anything I've learned in this job, there's always someone who doesn't like you." The remarks at the packed farewell ceremony at FBI headquarters steered clear of any direct political reference, with no overt mention of President-elect Donald Trump's scathing criticism of him or the turmoil the bureau has encountered amid a spate of highly charged investigations into both Trump and President Joe Biden. But the backdrop was unmistakable, coming amid concerns that Mr. Trump — who last month forced Wray's departure by naming loyalist Kash Patel to the job — could seek to use the FBI's law enforcement powers to exact retribution against adversaries. Adhering to the rule of law,



Some 75,000 fans were expected Friday at AT&T Stadium in Arlington for the college football championship semifinal between Texas and Ohio State in the Cotton Bowl.

The polar vortex of ultra-cold air usually spins around the North Pole, but it sometimes ventures south into the U.S., Europe and Asia. Some experts say such events are happening more frequently, paradoxically, because of a warming world. The cold snap coincided with rare January wildfires tearing through the Los Angeles area. As much as 8 inches (about 20 centimeters) of snow was forecast in parts of Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee and West Virginia through Saturday, the National Weather Service said.

More than 1 million public school students in metro Atlanta and north Georgia got a snow day or were at home learning online. After a disastrous winter storm in 2014 left thousands of Atlanta-area workers and schoolchildren stranded overnight away from home, officials in Georgia were quick to cancel in-person classes and close offices Friday. In the Atlanta area, multiple freeway interchanges were temporarily closed or paralyzed by stalled trucks. Having learned a lesson from past storms when that was a massive problem, this time around emergency crews were towing stalled vehicles, said James Stallings, director of Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security. Officials urged drivers to give plows space after a semitrailer hit a Tennessee Department of Transportation truck in Smith County. In Nashville, Joe Feliciano tromped over snowy sidewalks to deliver the mail Friday. A Florida native who moved to Tennessee in 2023, he said he isn't used to driving in the snow but the U.S. Postal Service trained him, so now he's "nervous, but confident" and knows: Just go slow, and be careful.

"This is like, 'Wow!' This is a lot of snow," Feliciano said. Parts of South Carolina were seeing their first winter weather in three years. The state Department of Transportation treated interstates and other major highways from Columbia northward, but vehicles were slipping off icy Interstate 95 south of the city. Some schools closed. With snow, sleet and freezing rain expected across North Carolina, a public outdoor inauguration ceremony Saturday in Raleigh for Gov. Josh Stein and other elected officials was cancelled. The storm's trajectory overlapped with much of the western North Carolina area impacted by Hurricane Helene last year. The snowstorm was expected to arrive Friday night in Richmond, Virginia. Mayor Danny Avula said officials brought in extra resources to monitor the city's water treatment facility, which suffered a multiday outage following a snowstorm earlier in the week, including a new backup battery and additional water filters.

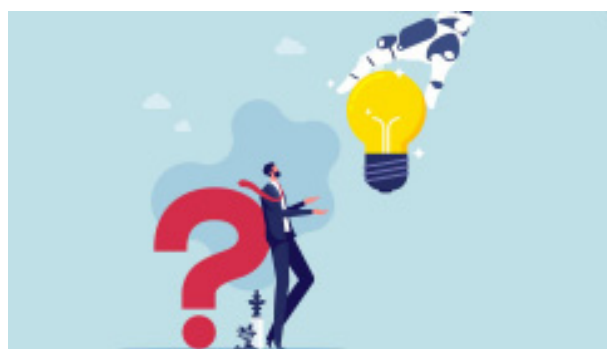
Diverse scope of work in Artificial Intelligence

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

There has seldom been as crucial a juncture in human history as right now. The phenomenon that is Artificial Intelligence (AI) has completely transformed human lives in the last few years. The growing emphasis on AI has been further supplemented by its role in promoting innovation in the global business space. As this paradigm shift takes place, AI is being increasingly used in Large Language Models (LLMs), through its innovative generative capacity, for content creation. However, the true potential of AI extends to more complex procedures, as this new-age technology's foundational objective has always been to streamline how humans operate, and offer solutions that not only reduce timeframes but also enhance quality of life. Catalyst of growth

In 2023, worldwide spending on AI-centric systems was estimated at \$154 billion, with the banking and retail industries making the largest investments. A major part of this push was focused on Generative AI (GenAI), highlighting the growing emphasis on GenAI-related operations such as content creation. However, the overall scope of AI extends beyond this to complex work in sectors like healthcare, manufacturing, science, research, environment, transportation and more. For example, AI has transformed customer engagement, an aspect that is being extensively used by retail companies in Customer Relationship Management (CRM) to help customers choose, customise products, services, payment methods and so on. In the electronics industry, manufacturers are integrating AI as part of appliances, computer accessories, and white goods to enhance the output, streamline processes, reduce expenses and amplify affordability.

Expansive scope The growing emphasis on AI in all paths of life opens up a unique opportunity for students to develop innovative models that can help in various sectors. As a direct result of the increased infusion of capital in the space, corporations are hiring more talent to develop state-of-the-art AI models, highlighting the increased demand for skilled professionals. For example, the scope of AI in the healthcare domain includes diagnosis, medical image analysis, virtual health assistants, predictive analy-



sis, remote monitoring, drug adherence, research, treatment planning and patient care. The integration of AI-powered medical assistants can not only help future-proof medical science but also increase the chance of new drug discovery, personalised medicine, genomics and new advancements. In the manufacturing and industrial sector, AI can lead to streamlining processes, predictive maintenance, quality control, mitigating inefficiencies, inventory management, supply chain optimisation, reducing production costs and more. In education, AI is already leading to personalised learning, natural language processing (NLP) for language learning, smart content recommendations, virtual classrooms, automated tutoring, and innovative features like speech-to-text and vice versa for distinct learning requirements. Finance, research and development, transportation, smart cities, defence and numerous other sectors are increasingly witnessing AI integration. This widespread effort is leading to more relevance for algorithmic methodologies, including assessments, new developments and other aspects. As a result, many companies are investing significant capital, time and expertise to create new-age solutions, with these efforts further supplemented by governmental participation. This comprehensive push is also being powered by a population that prefers more streamlined and efficient ways to completing tasks. As we step into a new age of innovation, today's students must look at new ways to design and sustain a new world.

Son found working on behalf of mother during Lokayukta surprise inspection of BBMP offices arrested

A Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) employee's son was found working on her behalf with her login credentials on the office system at South End Circle BBMP office when Upa Lokayukta B. Veerappa landed at the office for a surprise inspection on Friday afternoon.

"It is shocking how in this day and age in Bengaluru, the employee's son is working on her behalf. When asked, the son claimed that since his mother did not know how to operate computers, he helped her out regularly. When asked where his mother was, he said she was cooking at home. This is completely unacceptable. We will take up a suo motu case and Chief Commissioner Tushar Giri Nath must answer for this," said Justice Veerappa.

Following directions from Justice Veerappa, an FIR was registered against Second Division Assistant Kavita, her son Naveen, who accessed BBMP's systems using her login credentials and was working on her behalf, and the concerned Assistant Revenue Officer (ARO) Sujatha at Siddapura Police Station. The police have also arrested Naveen, who was illegally working at the BBMP office when Justice Veerappa conducted a surprise inspection on Friday. The Karnataka Lokayukta, who carried out surprise inspections of multiple BBMP offices, in a statement said there had been several complaints of obstacles from Revenue Officers (ROs) and Assistant Revenue Officers (AROs) for citizens to get e-khatas, prompting the inspec-



tion. In August 2023, the Lokayukta had filed eight suo motu cases, one for each zone of the civic body, following complaints of corruption and maladministration. The inspections on Friday were also carried out under these cases, the Lokayukta office said. Lokayukta Justice B.S. Patil and Upa Lokayuktas Justice B. Veerappa and Justice K.N. Phaneendra also visited multiple offices themselves.

Other offices When Justice Patil visited the BBMP office of the Hebbal sub-division, he found that the attendance register, cash register and travel register were not maintained. While 21 personnel of 22 in the office had signed the attendance register, only three were found to be in the office.

Iraq, UAE gain as India's Russian oil imports slip to 12-month low in Dec amid Moscow's high domestic demand



India's crude oil imports from West Asia—specifically Iraq and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—surged in December with Indian refiners looking to replace the shortfall in supplies from their largest source market Russia, which cut exports to meet heightened oil demand from its domestic refineries, shows an analysis of oil tanker data. Saudi Arabia, however, was unable to capitalise on the opportunity due to its barrels being priced higher than Iraqi and Emirati oil. According to industry watchers, domestic oil demand in Russia jumps towards the end of the year as the country's refineries come out of the autumn refinery maintenance season and start clocking high capacity utilisation levels. The seasonally high demand for crude in Russia is expected to continue in January and a couple of subsequent months, which is likely to cap Russian oil exports and push India towards other key suppliers to bridge the supply gap.

In December, India's imports of Russian crude dropped nearly 17 per cent sequentially to 1.48 million barrels per day (bpd), the lowest monthly level in 2024, per vessel tracking data from commodity market analytics firm Kpler. Russia's market share in India's import basket in December contracted to 31.5 per cent from 38 per cent in November. India's total oil imports in December were at 4.71 million bpd, up 0.5 per cent month-on-month. "The lack of Russian medium sour (crude) grades has been a boon for Iraq as India needed to find grades that would be similar in quality to Urals (Russia's flagship crude grade) and could be tapped into relatively quickly. As a consequence, Iraqi imports hit their highest since March," said Viktor Katona, head of crude analysis at Kpler.

India's Iraqi oil imports jumped nearly 29 per cent sequentially in December to 1.13 million bpd, accounting for 24 per cent of India's overall oil imports during the month. In November, Iraq's market share was 18.7 per cent, the data shows. The other big winner was the UAE with oil imports from the country at almost 530,000 bpd, the highest in as many as 32 months. UAE oil flows to India grew throughout 2024, with imports in December up 22.1 per cent from November levels. Abu Dhabi's share in New Delhi's oil imports in December grew to 11.2 per cent from November's 9.2 per cent. "Interestingly, the fact that Russia preferred to keep its crude at home for refining didn't help Saudi Arabia, which posted another lukewarm monthly number, fairly in line with October-November. The relatively higher price of Saudi crudes versus Iraqi crudes has kept (India's) incremental demand at bay (for Saudi Arabia)," Katona said.

Indian refiners cumulatively imported nearly 649,000 bpd of Saudi Arabian crude in December, up 4.4 per cent sequentially. Riyadh's market share in New Delhi's oil imports for the month expanded slightly to 13.8 per cent from November's 13.3 per cent. Trade sources indicated that the average landed price of Saudi Arabia's key Arab Light grade of crude at India's west coast was around \$2.5 per barrel higher than the regional benchmark Dubai crude, while Russia's Urals was priced \$3 per barrel lower than Dubai. This suggests that Urals was cheaper by \$5.5 per barrel than Arab Light. On the other hand, the price gap between Urals and Iraq's comparable grade Basrah Medium was significantly lower as the latter's landed price at India's west coast was just around \$0.80 higher than Dubai crude. Industry insiders and experts expect India's Russian oil imports to continue to be relatively weak in January and even beyond as Moscow's domestic demand is expected to constrain its oil exports in the immediate-to-near term. Consequently, Indian refiners are likely to persist with higher purchases from suppliers in the Middle East, and even some other geographies. Top suppliers' share in India's oil imports

"Compared to October when Russian seaborne exports were 3.6 million bpd, in December they only shipped 3.15 million bpd. So, there is no upside from the Russian side and Indian refiners would need to buy more Middle Eastern barrels in the interim. Come March-April when the Russians hit spring refinery maintenance season, the previous 2 million bpd pace of buying (by India) could resume. But until then, Russian refiners would concentrate on their domestic refining more than on crude exports," Katona said. Prior to the war in Ukraine, Iraq and Saudi Arabia were the top two suppliers of crude oil to India. But as the West started weaning itself off Russian energy supplies following Moscow's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Russia started offering discounts on its crude and Indian refiners started snapping up the discounted barrels. As the world's third-largest consumer of crude oil with a high import dependency level of over 85 per cent, India is extremely sensitive to oil prices. Although trade sources have indicated that discounts on Russian crude have shrunk over time, Indian refiners have evidently remained keen on buying Russian oil as given the high import volumes, even lower discount levels lead to significant savings.

Fund raising from capital markets may rise 21% to `14.7 lakh cr in FY2025: SEBI Chief

Madhabi Puri Buch said fund raising through Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT), Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) and municipal bonds is currently low, but the potential to raise money through these instruments is high over the next few years. Total capital market fund raising is likely to increase by 21 per cent to `14.7 lakh crore in the financial year 2025, from `11.8 lakh crore in the previous fiscal, Securities and Exchange Board of India Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch said on Friday. In the first nine months (April-December) of the current fiscal, total resources mobilised from the domestic capital market stood at `10.7 lakh crore, which included `7.3 lakh crore through the primary debt market and `3.3 lakh crore from equity.

"If we project for the next quarter (Q4), we will probably end somewhere over `14 lakh crore raised for the year (FY2025), in terms of capital, both equity and debt," Buch said at an event organized by SEBI and National Institute of Securities Markets (NISIM). She said in the January-March quarter, another `1 lakh crore is expected to be raised through equity, taking the overall fund raise via equity to `4.3 lakh crore by the end of March 2025.

To scale up fund raising through rights issue, Buch said the regulator has come up with a system in which the total end-to-end time for a rights issue has been reduced to 26 days from 317 days. Rights issue is an offer given by the company to its existing shareholders to buy additional shares at a specific date and at a reduced price.

Buch said fund raising through Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT), Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) and municipal bonds is currently low, but the potential to raise money through these instruments is high over the next few years. In the first nine months, resources mobilised



through InvITs and REITs stood at `10,000 crore. While an InvIT raises funds by issuing units to investors and invests those funds primarily in assets in the infrastructure sector, a REIT raises funds by issuing units to investors and invests those funds primarily in assets in the real estate sector. Underscoring the importance of the domestic bond market, Buch said that it has significantly contributed to the capital formation in the country. "The bond market contributes almost `60 for every `100 that the banking system gives to corporate India. It plays a vital role in capital formation," she said. The primary market for bonds in the country is very strong. However, the traction in the secondary market is moderate because most of the investors in the segment are buy-and-hold investors, she said. Highlighting the role of domestic institutional investors (DIIs), Buch said these investors have lent a countervailing force in times of volatility in foreign flows. This has given a tremendous resilience to the domestic market.

Private insurers show 239% jump in motor commission payouts to Rs 16,578 crore

Despite concerns raised by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), private sector general insurers reported a 239 per cent jump in commission expenses in the motor insurance segment in fiscal ended March 2024. Interestingly, private insurers lagged behind public sector counterparts with a low claims ratio.

Private insurers shelled out a whopping `16,578 crore to motor insurance service providers (MISPs) as commission during the fiscal ended March 2024 as against `4,890 crore in FY2023 while securing fresh businesses. Interestingly, public sector insurers kept away from the 'commission game' and reported only 31.59 per cent rise in commission expenses at `3,099 crore in FY2024 as against `2,355 crore in FY2023, according to the Annual Report of the IRDAI. When it comes to incurred claims ratio, public sector insurers led with 99.57 per cent while private players were far behind with a figure of 73.30 per cent, according to the IRDAI report. Incurred claim ratio refers to the total claim amount paid by the insurance company in ratio to the total premium amount collected in a financial year. For instance, if the incurred claim ratio of an insurance provider is 75 per cent, then it means that the insurer pays `75 towards claim payment for every `100 of premium collected and the remaining `25 is considered as profit for the insurance company.

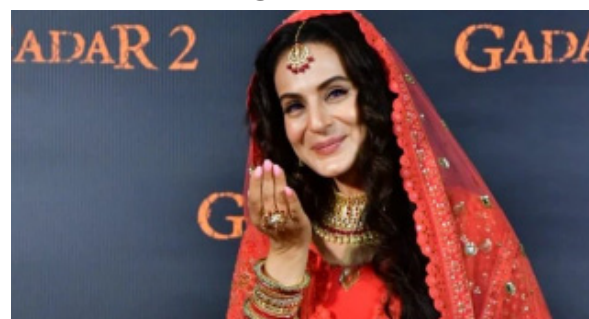
Meanwhile, earlier this year, IRDAI had repealed its guidelines capping the commission for long-term motor insurance policies, aligning these policies with the standard one-year motor insurance policies. Insurers can now offer commissions within the expense of management for long-

term policies. Total commission expenses incurred by private players for all categories, including health, motor, marine and fire, were at `26,235 crore in FY24 as against `10,192 crore. PSU players' expenses were at `7,359 crore (`6,340 crore).

MISPs were reportedly charging high commissions of over 50 per cent for new private car insurance policies. What is significant is that high commission to MISPs will inflate the insurance premium being paid by the car buyers. If an MISP charge `45,000 insurance on a `12 lakh car, the same policy could cost just Rs 20,000 if taken from the market. One MISP was fined `3 crore for denying cashless claims to customers who didn't buy/renew their car insurance through them. IRDAI had recently expressed concern over high commission paid to MISPs during a meeting with officials of non-life insurance companies. Car buyers have been complaining about MISPs pushing them to purchase specific policies at inflated prices. The issue has raised regulatory concerns, as some dealers have been pushing vehicle sales along with the purchase of insurance from affiliated MISPs, thereby denying customers their right to choose their insurers. The Bima Sugam platform promises to change this landscape by facilitating a comprehensive digital marketplace where customers can compare offerings from various insurers.

By promoting competition and transparency, Bima Sugam is expected to lower commission rates, ultimately leading to savings for policyholders. With its launch imminent, the platform is poised to revolutionise the insurance industry, empowering consumers and fostering a more competitive market.

Ameesha Patel recalls being unconscious for four hours during 'Gadar 2' shoot: 'People thought I was dead'



Actor Ameesha Patel recently opened up about "extreme physical and mental" exhaustion while shooting a water sequence for *Gadar 2* in Himachal Pradesh. Patel, 49, recalled her near-death experience. She revealed that she lost consciousness due to the freezing temperatures and cold water showered on her; she was wearing only a salwar-kameez for the sequence.

"The first time the water was showered, I was shocked. It was freezing cold. After I finished the scene, they had to lift me, and take me to my make-up van. I was unconscious. I did not wake up for three to four hours. People thought I was dead. I had reached a stage where people said, 'She won't survive.' They had wrapped me in woolen blankets. When I finally woke up after four hours and opened my eyes, I wondered where I was. I had zoned out. I had no recollection of what I had gone through in those four hours. My team and the people on the unit sighed in relief when I was up," said Patel in a chat with Jarp media on YouTube.

What does cold water do to the body and how can it prove detrimental?

Dr Manisha Arora, director, internal medicine, CK Birla Hospital (R), Delhi, said that initially, exposure to cold can cause a shock to the body, stimulating the sympathetic

nervous system and resulting in an increase in heart rate and blood pressure. Dr Muzamil Sultan Koka, senior registrar, of critical care and emergency, Marengo Asia Hospital, Gurugram, said, "Sudden cold water exposure can be dangerous for individuals with heart disease or other health conditions. Potential hypothermia risk increases with prolonged exposure to very cold water which can lower body temperature dangerously." Understanding hypothermia

Calling hypothermia the "biggest threat," consultant neurologist Dr Sudhir Kumar, Apollo Hospitals, Hyderabad, said that the condition occurs when core body temperature drops below 95 degree Fahrenheit (35 degree Celsius). "It is a medical emergency. The initial symptom is shivering, the body's attempt to warm itself. If the exposure to extreme cold continues, other symptoms such as slurred speech, shallow breathing, weak pulses, confusion, and clumsiness can occur. Drowsiness and loss of consciousness can also occur in severe cases, and after exposure to extreme cold for a longer duration. It can even kill," said Dr Kumar. The treatment of hypothermia is rapid warming of the body. Remember to warm the body core before the extremities.

"A wind chill of -20 degrees Fahrenheit will cause frostbite in just 30 minutes. Frostbite causes numbness and a white or pale appearance in extremities, such as fingers, toes, ear lobes, or the tip of the nose. Treatment, again, is rapid warming of the affected areas," Dr Kumar said.

Other health hazards after exposure to extreme cold include respiratory infections, worsening of asthma, worsening of joint pains, urticaria (itching of skin), and an increase in blood pressure, especially in older people. It's essential to approach cold showers cautiously. "If you have any health concerns, consult a healthcare professional. Start slow, and gradually decrease the temperature to allow the body to adjust to the cold," said Dr Koka.

Your dog's bathing schedule should actually depend on these factors

How often should you bathe your dog? Dr. Ishan from Pune Petcare Pro Clinic shares insights on the risks of daily bathing and expert-approved hygiene tips for dogs. How often should you bathe your dog? Dr. Ishan from Pune Petcare Pro Clinic shares insights on the risks of daily bathing and expert-approved hygiene tips for dogs. (Source: Freepik) In a world where hygiene is a priority, pet owners often wonder if daily bathing is necessary for their furry companions. However, according to Dr Ishan, consultant at Pune Petcare Pro Clinic, while cleanliness is important, daily baths might not be ideal for dogs. Unlike humans, dogs have a unique skin composition and grooming needs that require careful consideration to avoid unintended harm.

The risks of daily bathing

1. Over-Stripping Natural Oils

Dogs' coats are naturally coated with oils that protect their skin and fur. Dr Ishan says frequent washing can strip away these oils, resulting in:

Dry and itchy skin

A dull, lifeless coat

2. Disruption of Skin pH Balance

The pH level of canine skin is vastly different from humans. Regular exposure to shampoos and soaps can alter this balance, leading to:

3. Loss of Beneficial Bacteria

A dog's skin microbiome plays a critical role in maintaining overall skin health. Daily bathing can remove beneficial bacteria, making the skin vulnerable to conditions like dermatitis. Dogs To avoid skin dryness and pain caused by repeated bathing, dogs should be bathed less regularly in the winter, ideally once a month or as needed.

When is daily bathing necessary?

According to Dr Ishan, while regular bathing isn't advised for all dogs, certain situations may require more fre-



quent washing Skin Allergies or Conditions: Veterinary-prescribed shampoos may necessitate daily use to manage skin problems. Flea or Tick Infestations: Dogs battling parasites might need more frequent baths for effective treatment. Working or Outdoor Dogs: Dogs exposed to excessive dirt or hazardous substances, like search-and-rescue animals, may benefit from daily baths. General bathing guidelines Dr Ishan recommends the following schedule for most dogs. Normal Skin: Once every 1-2 weeks. Sensitive Skin: Once every 1-2 months or less, depending on tolerance. Dogs with Skin Conditions: As per veterinary advice. It's crucial to use dog-specific shampoos and ensure that grooming practices align with your dog's individual needs. Here are some tips for maintaining canine hygiene without overbathing, according to Dr Ishan. Regular Brushing: Removes dirt and reduces the need for frequent baths. Spot Cleaning: Wipe muddy paws or clean dirty fur areas instead of a full bath. Proper Diet: A balanced diet supports healthy skin and coat. Each dog is unique, and factors such as breed, activity level, and health status influence their grooming needs. Always consult your veterinarian to tailor a bathing routine that ensures your dog's well-being.

A walk through Dastkar's annual winter bazaar in Delhi

Held in Delhi's Andheria Mor every year during crisp winter, Dastkar's annual winter bazaar celebrates India's arts, crafts, and culinary traditions. The fair brings together artisans from across the country, supporting sustainable livelihoods and showcasing a diverse array of handmade goods. This year's edition had an eclectic mix of handlooms, fabrics, paintings, Christmas decorations, and sustainable products like herbs, spices, honey, and forest produce. Millet-based treats, inspired by the Government of India's 2023 millet initiative, were another highlight, with unique offerings like millet chocolates, namkeen, and laddoos. Here's a glimpse into some standout crafts and stories from the Dastkar Winter Bazaar 2024: Shila from Gujarat's Kutch, with her husband, set up a beautiful stall with shawls, bags, potlis, and jackets. A graduate traveling all the way from Gujarat, she engages in the historical art of "Soof embroidery," which translates to suvayavasthi or perfect, and has an Instagram page to popularise the rare craft form.

Physical and mental agility are vital as the craft uses very minute needle and thread work. Geometric patterns using mirrors and a reverse method of stitching are deployed. The work is very similar to other Kutchi embroidery work, except it is very fine and delicate. The embroidery form also has a Geographical Indication (GI) tag and is slowly gaining popularity in women's entrepreneurship. Millet entrepreneurship in urban and rural areas has thrived since 2023 was declared the International Year of the Millets. Delhi-based Urmie's bakery started making vegan, millet-based recipes last year. Delectable chocolates made with bajra, barley, hemp seeds, ragi and sattoo laddoos, vegan and lactose-free recipes, millet biscuits, and chickpea savouries are some of the most sought-after products that the home-based startup creatively makes and packs. One of the challenges they face is the scalability and cost-effectiveness of the products. "Millets are expensive, and their short shelf life makes scaling challenging," said Urmie Gill, the bakery's founder. The Zenzula, a therapeutic musical instrument, was a unique find at the bazaar. Created by Mumbai-based Roots Production, the instrument is made from recycled sardine cans and wood. Its soothing sounds and sustainable design have made it a hit among music enthusiasts.

Shri Balaji Dhurrie Udyog, a family business from Rajasthan's Barmer, employing 300 people, displayed handwoven carpets, dhurries, door mats, and wall hangings. Featuring symmetric and geometric designs in earthy



tones, these Dhurries from Rajasthan help fight the harsh desert of the winter and, therefore, are always in demand from the West. "This is all handmade work, which is why it's expensive. Machine-made dhurries dominate the market now, leading to a decline in indigenous skills," said Jerupara, 60, an artisan who has been exhibiting these across the country for over four decades. Avacayam: of circularity and entrepreneurship by persons with disabilities. A rickshaw with beautiful jhallars and newspaper decor is always on display at Dastkar. Set up by the Avacayam Foundation, which works on empowering persons with disabilities, the rickshaw has a wide array of products on display with sustainability and recyclability in focus. Natural agarbattis, eco-friendly diaries made of recycled paper, bags made of used textiles and fabrics, and newspaper bags – the stall uses circular economy principles while promoting ecological livelihoods.

Shalini Passi's son Robin rescued a runaway girl during the pandemic: 'There was a situation in some family...'



Robin, and shared stories about his personality. She said, "I am very proud of him. During the pandemic, certain things happened. There was a situation in some family, where the girl had run away. My son went and got her back." She added, "So many times, it has happened that a couple has fought, and there has been a situation, and my son has taken care of it all, dropping the girl home safe. This makes me proud."

She continued, "When he returned after completing his education (before the pandemic), his flight was the last flight to land in Delhi. He could have got out of the airport, but he didn't because he was accompanied by several of his college mates that included both girls and guys. He stayed back with them. He didn't leave them alone."

In the same interview, Shalini was asked whether her son shares his relationship status with her. She jokingly said, "My son doesn't share his relationship details with me as he fears I will end up talking to them and sending them weird emojis." Shalini also shared that Robin can take care of himself, despite coming from a privileged family. She said, "Whenever we travel, or at home, he does take part in the household chores. He knows to cook. He washes his own clothes." When the interviewer praised him for this, Shalini quickly stopped him and said, "There is nothing special about this. Everyone should do basic things. People should be capable of doing their own things, it gives you confidence."

Socialite Shalini Passi became an overnight star after the release of the Netflix show *Fabulous Lives vs Bollywood Wives*. She joined the cast, which also included Maheep Kapoor, Neelam Kothari, Seema Sajdeh, and Bhavana Pandey, in the show's third season. Shalini stole the spotlight with her unique personality and YOLO attitude. Her one-liners, outfits, bags, lifestyle, diet, and other quirks amused audiences, and invited more scrutiny into her life.

Shalini Passi, 49, has a 28-year-old son. She gave birth to Robin when she was 21. In a recent conversation with *Hautterfly*, Shalini said that she is extremely proud of

Tiku Talsania suffers brain stroke, wife Deepti denies reports of heart attack

It was reported that actor Tiku Talsania, famous for his roles in the 1997 film *Ishq* and 1993 film *Kabhi Haan Kabhi Naa*, suffered a heart attack and was in critical condition in hospital. Now, the 70-year-old actor's wife, Deepti Talsania, has spoken to NDTV and clarified the actor suffered a brain stroke. Deepti shared, "He suffered a brain stroke, not a heart attack. He had gone to attend a film screening and started feeling unwell around 8 pm. He was immediately admitted to the hospital." Tiku is currently receiving treatment at Mumbai's Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital.

The actor is known for his comic roles in several films, including *Aamir Khan's Raja Hindustani* (1996), the 1994 film *Andaz Apna Apna* and the 2007 film *Dhamaal*, among others. The veteran actor has two children with Deepti. His son, Rohaan Talsania is a music composer. His daughter, Shikha Talsania, is an actress. She has been part of films like *Satyaprem Ki Katha*, *Veere Di Wedding*, and *Potluck*, among others.

Tiku recently attended a movie premiere with his wife. A video of the same has surfaced online. In the video, the actor was seen exchanging words with Rashami Desai and posing for the cameras with a smile. Rashami Desai, who met the actor last night, spoke to *Money Control* and said the veteran actor was perfectly fine at the movie premiere. She said, "The meeting was very good. Sir (Tiku Talsania)



is a wonderful person, actor. It was very unfortunate whatever happened yesterday. He looked absolutely perfect when he came. I was busy meeting people. He reached on time and things are better now. He is better now, we pray for his speedy recovery."

Vineeta Singh accuses Shark Tank India pitchers of manipulating their sales figures, says they're being duped by their family: 'Daal mein kuch kaala hai'



their product shouldn't be as high as it is; they are selling something that costs less than Rs 200 for Rs 2000. She speculated if the pitchers are being taken for a ride by their cousin, who manufactures the products for them. "Cousin aapko loot raha hai," she said, giving them the benefit of the doubt. But Vineeta also didn't shy away from implying that the pitchers are fudging numbers. Determined to prove her wrong, they offered to show her their Shopify dashboard. They insisted that they use the 'drop' model, and make customers wait for new product launches, which explains the jump in sales on specific days in the month. But Vineeta still wasn't convinced. She said, "From what I know, consumers don't wait for one specific day in three months to shop. I feel they are entering sales themselves, that can either be genuine or they can be fake. They could also be taking orders on calls on launch days. It's impossible to show 100% increase in sales for an online business." The pitchers left without striking a deal.

A confrontation broke out between Vineeta Singh and a couple of sibling entrepreneurs on the latest episode of *Shark Tank India*, which returned for a fourth season this week. Vineeta sensed 'daal mein kuch kaala hai' in the figures that the pitchers presented to the 'sharks', which telling them about their skincare brand *Personal Touch*. Vineeta was joined on the episode by Aman Gupta, Kunal Bahl, Azhar Iqbal and Ritesh Agarwal. The entrepreneurs, Aditi and Ashish Jawa, asked for Rs 1.2 crore in exchange of 1% equity, valuing their company at Rs 120 crore.

Ashish said that he has no background in the pharmaceutical sector, but launched a pharma company some years ago. The business shut down shortly afterwards. A second business shut down as well. But *Personal Touch* took off. They increased sales from Rs 1.5 crore to over Rs 20 crore in just a year. They also organised a concert with B Praak, which resulted in Rs 2.7 crore in sales. But after just a little digging, the 'sharks' found holes in their stories. Vineeta wasn't convinced by the authenticity of their social media numbers. The pitchers showed the 'sharks' a Reel that accumulated 2 million hits, but had only 700 likes. Azhar said that this isn't possible, while Vineeta and Aman said that the post has been boosted. The pitchers stressed that it wasn't.

Later, Azhar didn't get a satisfactory response when he asked them what percentage of their sales are organic. "How do you not know attribution analysis of your marketing?" Azhar asked. Kunal was shocked that the pitchers didn't have this information at the ready. "I'm very disappointed that you don't know the details," Aman said, backing out of the deal. Kunal and Azhar backed out as well, while Ritesh offered to give them some tips over a meeting at a later date. Vineeta however, said that the others were being too kind.

"I'm struggling to give you credit," she said, noting that "daal mein kuch kaala hai." She pointed out that the cost of

Jayam Ravi 'copied' habit of putting heroine's name first from Shah Rukh Khan



name in the credits. They asked me what gives me this kind of confidence. I can only say 'self-confidence'. There is nothing else. I mean, I have broken stereotypes. At least, that is what I believe. Be it making a zombie film, a space film, I have done it all. I wondered, 'Can only this be broken?'," he said.

"We all thought we should break this (the process of putting the hero's name always first) too. When I see that this has changed, as a human, I am very happy. I copied this from Shah Rukh Khan. He was the first person who wished to have his heroines' names first. Similarly, whenever I work in a film directed by a woman director, I want to follow this practice. I thank all my fans who have been supporting me. We have created a mirage here as men and women. Without women, men don't make sense and without men, women don't make sense. This is the truth," added the actor *Kadhalkka Neramillai*, which has been directed by Kiruthiga Udhayanidhi, features Niethya Menen and Jayam Ravi in the lead. The film, a relationship drama which looks to touch upon certain important social issues, also features actors Vinay Rai, Yogi Babu, T.J. Banu, John Kokken, Lal, Lakshmi Ramakrishnan, Singer Mano, Vinodhini and Rohaan Singh, among others. Music for the film is by AR Rahman and cinematography is by Gavemic Ary. Editing for the film is by Lawrence Kishore and choreography is by Shobi Paulraj, Sandy, Leelavathi. The film has been produced by Red Giant Movies.

Actor Jayam Ravi, who plays the lead along with Niethya Menen in director Kiruthiga Udhayanidhi's upcoming romantic drama *Kadhalkka Neramillai*, has said that he copied the habit of putting his heroine's name ahead of his in this film's credits from Bollywood Baadshah Shah Rukh Khan. The actor, while participating at a pre-release event on Friday evening, began by saying, "I am very happy to be a part of this film. 'Kadhalkka Neramillai' is the title of a classic and to think that they have got that title for this story which is very apt, makes me happy."

He then sought to answer a question that he has been constantly facing about the film. "A lot of people have asked me about why Niethya Menen's name appears before my

Sakshi Tanwar's father made a phone call to Ram Kapoor ahead of kissing scene in *Bade Achhe Lagte Hain*

Ram Kapoor and Sakshi Tanwar's 2011 television show *Bade Achhe Lagte Hain* was a major hit on Sony TV. However, an intimate scene featuring the two lead actors, garnered a lot of attention. This was hyped as the 'first kissing scene' on television and now, in a recent interview, actor Ram Kapoor opened up about the making of the scene and what went behind the scenes. During a conversation with Siddharth Kannan, the actor shared that show's producer Ekta Kapoor 'had to apologise' for the scene. He said, "Ekta had to apologise, I never did. My job as an actor was only to act. I don't owe any explanations to anybody. As a professional, I signed the dotted line and took money from the producers. My work is to follow the script. The kissing scene was in the script, I can't say no to it, then I am not an actor, I am only a star who throws tantrums. I did nothing wrong."

Ram further added that he confirmed with Ekta twice, but she was pretty confident about it. "Ekta is the one who wrote the scene and wanted us to do it. I told Ekta, 'Are you sure that you want to do this on television?' We were the first kiss of television, no one had ever done it, it was a big thing. Three generations watch it together - your in laws, husband, and children. But, Ekta was very confident that we had to do it and she trusted us, so I said okay. I firstly wanted to get a go ahead from my wife, she said that it's up to me," he revealed.

The actor also revealed talking to Sakshi's father before going ahead with the scene. He said, "Then, I told



Sakshi, 'I will handle Ekta, if you have a problem, you tell me'. I can never think of getting romantically involved with my co-stars because they are on a different level for me. Sakshi's father called me and said the most amazing thing to me. He said, 'Ram, tu hai toh sab theek hai (If you are there, then it's fine)' and Sakshi was also okay with it. So, they trusted me." "We shot that scene for two full nights. Whatever uproar happened after that, Ekta had to face it. It wasn't our idea, it was her idea and we just followed it. Sakshi and I were never awkward with each other despite that. We have a tremendous amount of respect for each other, we have another level of bond," Ram concluded. Soon after Ram's interview, Ekta shared a message on social media and netizens implied that it was meant for Ram. "Unprofessional actors giving interviews about my shows shud shut up! False information N skewed stories. Can only last till. I talk'..... but there is dignity in silence," she wrote.

Anurag Kashyap cries uncontrollably, rests his head on ex-wife Aarti Bajaj's shoulder as daughter Aaliyah Kashyap ties the knot.

Exactly a month after her wedding, Anurag Kashyap's daughter, Aaliyah Kashyap shared her wedding video on her YouTube channel. The nineteen-minute-long video was the combination of the couple's haldi, mehendi, cocktail party, wedding, and a grand wedding reception. Aaliyah's wedding festivities were nothing less than a fairy tale. The video opened with Aaliyah's Haldi festivities on their terrace, which was attended by their close family and friends. The video featured an emotional Anurag Kashyap hug his daughter.

The video then showed Aaliyah's mehendi festivities at her house along with her family and friends. Aaliyah got the pictures of her cute pets in her mehendi design. The frames shifted to the cocktail party that saw the presence of Kalki Kochlin, Aaliyah's mother Aarti Bajaj, and Imtiaz Ali, dancing with the couple and enjoying the night. It was finally the D-day, when the couple was seen talking about each other. Shane got emotional as he said, "Aaliyah is the girl I was looking for all my life. She is my soulmate without a doubt. I am overjoyed." An emotional Aaliyah then said: "I feel so lucky that I met someone who loves me so much. I just think he is my best friend and I want to spend all my life with my best friend." Speaking about Aaliyah, Shane's mother said, "I have felt comfortable around Aaliyah since day one. She has a beautiful heart and a lot of respect for us and she



is so much fun. I love her like my daughter."

The video then featured Aaliyah and Shane tie the knot in traditional attires and taking part in various rituals. The last part of the video gave a glimpse of their wedding reception with the family and friends. The video showed an emotional Anurag Kashyap hugging his daughter at various instances. He was also seen crying and resting his head on his ex-wife, Aarti Bajaj's shoulders. The couple's reception was attended by many celebrities Manoj Bajpayee, Bobby Deol, Naga Chaitanya, and Nawazuddin Siddiqui among others. Aaliyah Kashyap is the daughter of Anurag Kashyap with his first wife Aarti Bajaj. She was in a relationship with Shane for over four years, before the couple decided to tie the knot.

'Starboy' hitmaker The Weeknd opens up about suffering 'mental breakdown'

Singer-songwriter The Weeknd opened up about experiencing a "mental breakdown" and how it led to him re-considering how he presents in his music career. The singer, whose real name is Abel Tesfaye, seems to be doing away with his public persona, reports *'People'* magazine.

During what was supposed to be his final tour date in 2022 at the SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles, The Weeknd lost his voice and ultimately had to reschedule his show while he was already on stage, an experience that made him feel "defeated". As per *'People'*, that moment, which he called "the last straw", stuck with him and the "self-imposed pressure" became crushing.

He told *'Variety'*, "I knew that I really needed to sit the f*** down and figure out my life. To understand what happened, face it, learn something new and start again. I had had a kind of a mental breakdown, which is pretty much what this new album's about." The experience at SoFi also contributed to his desire to retire his public persona. He said, "Part of me actually was thinking, 'You lost your voice because it's done; you said what you had to say. Don't overstay at the party, you can end it now and live a happy life.' You know? Put the bow on it: 'Hurry Up Tomorrow'? Now we're here." He added, "When is the right time to leave, if not at your peak? Once you understand who I am too much, then it's time to pivot."

However, he clarified that he's not planning to quit music, as he said, "I don't think I can stop doing that. But everything needs to feel like a challenge. And for me right now, the Weeknd, whatever that is, it's been mastered."

Aamir Khan calls himself an 'absent father', says his 'kids navigated childhood on their own': 'I used to be in my own world'

Aamir Khan's Junaid Khan is gearing up for the release of his first theatrical film, *Loveyapa*, alongside Boney Kapoor-Sridevi's daughter Khushi Kapoor. On Friday, the makers organised a grand trailer launch event in Mumbai, which was also attended by Aamir Khan, who was an "absent father" to his kids during their childhood. At the event, the actor said he was proud of his son and the way he has been conducting himself. Junaid is the son of Aamir and his first wife Reena.

At the event, an overwhelmed Aamir Khan shared, "As a father, I have been quite absent. I used to be in my own world, while my kids navigated their childhood on their own." He added, "Today, I am extremely proud for how Junaid chose a career path for himself on his own terms. I have been in the industry since 1988. It has been over 36 years. Now that my son has also stepped into the same industry, it is a very emotional moment for me. I really wish him well."

Aamir Khan further shared how he and his first wife tried to pass on the learnings his mother taught him when he was a kid. A joyful Aamir Khan said, "I am very proud and happy with the way he is conducting himself. Reena and I, we passed on the same discipline to Junaid and Ira,



that was given to me by my mother." Before praising his son, Aamir also shared some kind words for Khushi, who too will mark her big screen debut after her Netflix film *The Archies*. He said, "Sri must be proud of you. I really wish she was here to see you today." At the same event, the actor revealed that he gave up smoking for his son. He said, "I'm very happy to say that I've quit this bad habit. And whoever is watching or listening, I want to tell them too to please quit it. It's not a good habit. I felt I wanted to quit, my son's career is starting too. I made a resolve in my heart. I'm quitting, whether it (Junaid's next film) works or not,

Afghan women just wanna 'Bend it like Bumrah' but the world failed them



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Gurinder Chadha's much-acclaimed and charmingly funny 2002 movie Bend It Like Beckham starts with the football-crazy teen Jess imagining herself as David Beckham while watching England's set-piece superstar on television. But then, that's not what girls in families with Indian roots settled in Hounslow, West London are "supposed to do". They can't play ball, it's Barbies for them. Not training partners, they are supposed to look for life partners. Good Indian girls also don't get coached to master free-kicks, they are taught to get that perfect brown on their alabaster.

Jess's elder sister is getting engaged, her mother, the highly-inflammable Mrs Bhamra, is in a tizzy. Losing her lid over her daughter's indifference to festivities at home, she shouts: "Football, shootball! ... Your sister's getting engaged and you're watching this skinhead boy!" That's when Jess says something very important but is lost on her mother — and might have gone over the head of most parents of a girl-child across the globe, world leaders, especially the Taliban. "Mum, it's Beckham's corner!" Jess says in helpless exasperation, underlining what the sport and the sporting star mean to her — the world. It's a short dialogue that captures the essence of the film, explains why one sees more boys than girls on sporting fields and also the staggering male-female gap in athletic endurance that gets used to undermine women's sport. A Beckham corner, even for a girl, can be an event to switch off from the world around her and get inspirationally transfixed. Jess and other sporty girls too can have what are viewed as unreasonable sporting dreams and work towards making them come true.

The fact that young girls, like boys, too want to rush out of their homes, run in their lanes, allow the breeze to hit their faces and have dirt on their feet, is surprisingly lost on those who set the rules, and make the big calls. If half of this world is encouraged to kick a ball, jump over a hurdle, shoot an arrow and wrestle on the mat, why can't the other half do the same? It's elementary and thus fundamental to any human's right to equality. Afghanistan's captain Rashid Khan, centre, walks from the field with his players following their nine wicket loss to South Africa in their men's T20 World Cup semifinal cricket match at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy in Tarouba, Trinidad and Tobago, Wednesday, June 26, 2024. (AP Photo) Afghanistan's captain Rashid Khan, centre, walks from the field with his players following their loss to South Africa in their men's T20 World Cup semifinal at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy in Tarouba, Trinidad and Tobago, Wednesday, June 26, 2024. In Afghanistan, women have historically been systematically ostracised. Things got worse when the Taliban returned to power in 2021. Among the many tribal doctrines they put in place was to ask women to cover themselves from head to toe and keep away from sports, besides education. It was a blow for the many Jesses in Afghanistan. If shattered dreams made a sound, Afghanistan could have heard their loudest blast around the time the Taliban were settling in Kabul.

Those defying the rules would be arrested, imprisoned or stoned. Of late, things have turned worse. Under the new bizarre infra policy, no new building can have windows through which a passer-by can see women. The windows of existing buildings needed to be bricked or permanently covered. "Seeing women working in kitchens, in courtyards or collecting water from wells can lead to obscene acts," the Taliban government spokesperson is said to have announced. The Afghan women cricketers had seen it coming and that's why they fled their homeland.

Nahida Sapan was the Afghanistan team's all-rounder

He's (Mayank Yadav) only played one FC game...Once they get that IPL contract, everything falls out of the window: Brad Hogg



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When Mayank Yadav burst onto the scene for Lucknow Super Giants he did rattle the batters with his high pace. However, his career has been curtailed by injuries. In the recently concluded Border Gavaskar Trophy India did not have the same venom once Jasprit Bumrah was done with his spells. Former Australian spinner Brad Hogg would say once the bowlers get the IPL contract "everything falls out of the window."

"He's [Mayank Yadav] is injury-prone because he's young. I'm looking at his first-class stat, he's only played one FC game. So, he hasn't played too much of the longer format as well. I think it's just sheer pace with Mayank Yadav. There are a couple of other bowlers that are very similar to him that bowl 145-150-plus but I think with young Indian bowlers coming through they bowl that pace. Sometimes, they are thinking right, just bowl sheer pace, if I can get an IPL contract, I'm happy. The end," Hogg said on his YouTube channel. "Once they get that IPL contract, everything falls out of the window. They don't learn how to play the longer form of the game. They don't know how to bowl within themselves, they don't have that endurance factor. They haven't been trained for that endurance factor," he added.

and would also do scoring duty during games. Days after the Taliban takeover, when she was at the university, her professor told them the class was over and they all needed to go home for good. On the depressing trip back, the girls would see Kalashnikov-toting Taliban guarding the streets. Sapan knew that her days of playing cricket were over. In a matter of days, women's cricket was reduced to ashes. That wasn't enough for the Taliban, they wanted to track down each woman cricketer. "If we catch one, we will catch all of them," they would proclaim. Sapan and other cricketers changed houses for days before deciding to cross the border to Pakistan, hiding behind their face-covering burqas. From Pakistan, with international support, the brave sporty Afghan women would fly to Australia. Afghanistan women cricketer Benafsha Hashimi.

Since then, the "runaway" women cricketers from Afghanistan have been in Australia as refugees. While covering the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, The Indian Express reporter Sriram Veera would meet one of them — 21-year-old Benafsha Hashimi. Her heart-rending story of courage is about Hashimi going to impossible lengths and breaths, to keep the cricketer in her alive. Not very different from Sapan's moment of panic, Hashimi too got an overwhelming scent of fear within days of the regime change. Her family sent her out to withdraw cash where the teenager would hear gunshots fired by Taliban soldiers near the bank. She knew it was time to leave, there was no chance she could play the sport her late father encouraged her to play with his brothers in the street. Hashimi's home in Kabul was very different from the Bhamra household, the one created by Gurinder in her movie. The feisty Afghan girl proudly shared how her father wasn't like most Afghan males who longed for sons. "He treated me like a little princess. ... distributing laddoos when I was born. He wanted me to study. 'I am a special one I could do whatever I want' — he would tell me." Not just the family, it takes a village to raise a child with sporting dreams. But not in a country with regressive anti-women decrees and a world not truly committed to wiping out gender discrimination. That's why Afghan sports women couldn't do what they willed all their life and though the blame falls squarely on the Taliban this time, there are broader issues. Women only have seasonal and not fully committed backers who mostly offer lip service and practice double standards.

Afghanistan players celebrate the dismissal of Australia's Tim David during the men's T20 World Cup cricket match between Afghanistan and Australia at Arnos Vale Ground, Kingstown, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saturday, June 22, 2024. (AP Photo) Afghanistan players celebrate an Australia wicket during the men's T20 World Cup cricket match at the Arnos Vale Ground, Kingstown, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Once again "Support Afghan women cricketers" is trending. International cricket will come to Pakistan with the Champions Trophy and this is another chance for the world leaders to launch into the chorus of hollow moral support. The other day UK prime minister Keir Starmer appealed to the ICC to follow the book and ban Afghanistan cricket. Next was South Africa's Sports Minister Gayton McKenzie adding his two bits. "As a man who comes from a race that was not allowed equal access to sporting opportunities during Apartheid, it would be hypocritical and immoral to look the other way today when the same is being done towards women anywhere in the world," he would say.

It's a valid and timely shout out for the Afghan women but why have the influential global leaders allowed the Taliban government to implement anachronistic policies, starting with barring education? And in a case of terrible timing, India, disregarding Afghanistan's gender apartheid, has extended a helping hand to the war-torn country and officially met the under-attack Taliban government. The irony is hard to miss. While the political class continues to remain blind to the Taliban way, it wants ICC to come down heavily on Afghanistan. It's a pity that we live in a complex world that is governed by many-layered geopolitics. It's a tragedy that the world's most powerful grown-ups can't sit together and allow little girls to play ball. The world has failed Afghan girls. All that the Sapans, Hashimis and their cricket sisters wanted was to run in their lanes, let the breeze hit their faces, dirty their feet and swing the ball like Megan Schutt. Or simply, "Bend it like Bumrah".

Why Mayank Yadav wasn't fast-tracked to Indian team after sensational IPL debut in a past cricket season, the sight of Mayank steaming down the run-up while forever threatening to bowl 150 kph in the IPL, would have fast-tracked him into the next team headed to tour Australia. But resisting that giddy temptation, the National Cricket Academy instead got him started on a roadmap where the pacer has to make a natural progression from white-ball to red-ball cricket. NCA's targeted programme, saw him undergo a complete scan to ascertain his proclivity to injury. For a bowler who isn't used to bowling long spells, based on his injury record and fitness, the workload was increased gradually with NCA trainers identifying the areas he had to build on. And after missing out on action for the last three months, Mayank is now in India's squad for the upcoming T20Is against Bangladesh. The NCA ensured that the shock of bowling in Tests won't precipitate a breakdown on the field.

Saikia, Bhatia to take charge as BCCI secretary and treasurer

Mumbai: Devajit Saikia and Prabtej Singh Bhatia will be officially elected as the BCCI secretary and treasurer respectively during the Special General Meeting (SGM) here on Sunday. Saikia and Prabtej were the only candidates in the fray for the vacant posts once BCCI electoral officer and former CEC of India, Achal Kumar Joti finalised the list on Tuesday. Saikia has been working as the BCCI interim secretary since Jay Shah took over as the ICC chairman on December 1. The BCCI constitution stipulates that any post lying vacant should be filled within 45 days by calling a SGM, and Sunday's meeting is well within that period, holding on the 43rd day.

Arshdeep Singh records highest professional score after taking 20 wickets in Vijay Hazare Trophy, strengthens Champions Trophy case



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Arshdeep Singh picked 20 wickets in the Vijay Hazare Trophy and finished the campaign with his highest professional score. (BCCI) Arshdeep Singh picked 20 wickets in the Vijay Hazare Trophy and finished the campaign with his highest professional score. Despite his side being knocked out from the Vijay Hazare Trophy with quarter-final defeat to Maharashtra, Punjab pacer Arshdeep Singh had a memorable campaign and capped it off with his highest score in professional cricket on

Saturday. Having played only a handful of 50-over matches and eight ODIs, the left-arm seamer strengthened his chances to cement a spot in India's Champions Trophy squad with the tournament due to begin in February. On Saturday, Arshdeep made the new ball talk with his impressive swing and accuracy. Arshdeep castled Maharashtra captain Ruturaj Gaikwad before picking up two more wickets in nine overs. Arshdeep finished with 20 wickets in seven innings, becoming the first Punjab bowler to pick 20 wickets in a Vijay Hazare Trophy season and leading the bowling charts. Having only featured in eight ODIs, Arshdeep took the spotlight when he tormented a stacked Mumbai line-up with a five-wicket burst (5/38), helping Punjab to a massive win. The 25-year-old's wickets included his India teammates Shreyas Iyer, Shivam Dube and T20I captain Suryakumar Yadav whom he dismissed for a duck. With an economy measure of 5.53, Arshdeep finished the group stage on the back of successive four wicket-hauls against Hyderabad (4/50) and Puducherry (4/19). Despite his team being knocked out with a 70-run defeat in a 276-run chase, Arshdeep put on a valiant effort with the bat. The left-hander smashed a quick-fire 49 off 39 deliveries with three fours and as many sixes before being dismissed in the 45th of the innings.

Gael Monfils becomes oldest player to win ATP tour title taking over Roger Federer



GNS News Agency, Jan 16

French Tennis player Gael Monfils became the oldest player in tennis by overtaking Switzerland's Roger Federer to win an ATP Tour title with Auckland victory. Monfils achieved the feat at 38 years and four months while Federer won his last tournament at 38 years and two months when he won a title at Basel in 2019.

"Age is a number, but we keep working," Monfils said on court. "I'm still striking a good ball. Hopefully, many more to come," he said after beating Zizou Bergs 6-3 6-4 in the Auckland Classic final on Saturday. "I love tennis. I love what I'm doing so of course all the sacrifices

you do, they are a little bit easier. When you love something, it's easier to keep pushing," he said. "I've been enjoying myself since the first day I played tennis and [at] 60 years old I will still have this joy. Practice, it's easy. It's in the DNA. Stay in shape, it's easy. It's more the travel."

After collecting the Auckland trophy, Monfils headed straight to the airport for a flight to Melbourne, where he will face Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard in the first round of the Australian Open. It was a 13th ATP title for Monfils, nearly 20 years after claiming his first in Sopot, Poland in 2005. Monfils is the oldest tour-level winner since Australian Ken Rosewall claimed the Hong Kong Open title in 1977 aged 43. The world number 52 will play fellow Frenchman Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard in the first round of the Australian Open.

An unwanted record Earlier Novak Djokovic advanced to the Brisbane International quarterfinals by defeating Monfils 6-3, 6-3, extending the most dominant head-to-head record in tennis history. After 20 years of playing against each other on the professional circuit, Djokovic's victory is his 20th career triumph over Monfils, who is still looking for his first victory over the Serbian. The second most-lopsided record in tennis is Rafael Nadal's 18-0 head-to-head with Richard Gasquet. "I like [Monfils'] style of play," Djokovic grinned.

Alex Hales on his heated exchange with Tamim Iqbal: 'He was asking if I was still taking drugs'

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

During a Bangladesh Premier League game between Rangpur Riders and Fortune Barishal, there was an altercation between former England player Alex Hales and former Bangladesh player Tamim Iqbal. The game went into the final over with Riders needing 26 runs in the last over and skipper Riders' skipper Nurul Hasan scored 30 to take his side for a win. It was after the game when both Tamim and Hales were seen having a heated exchange. "He was asking if I was embarrassed for getting banned for drugs for England and he was asking if I was still taking drugs and he was very, very rude. It's a real shame really because if anything happens on the field that just ends on the field, but to get personal and that too after the game, I think is pathetic, to be honest," Hales revealed Channel 24.

In 2019 Hales was dropped from all international squads by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) following his abuse of the recreational drug use aspect of the contract. It was the second time Hales had been suspended following his punishment and fine for an incident outside a Bristol nightclub in September 2017. He did not face any criminal charges while teammate Ben Stokes was cleared of affray during the trial. Meanwhile, Tamim too gave his version of the story speaking on Riasad Azim's YouTube



channel, "He abused Emon, and it was visible on TV. He mocked him again today. If you watch the celebration video, Rangpur players ran towards (Nurul) after the win, but Hales kept looking at me and mocking me. It seemed like he wanted a fight," explained Tamim. "Later, when he again insulted Emon, I had to stand up for my teammate, and I have no regrets about doing so. We both exchanged words." "I didn't even know about his ban or follow him that closely. But I do know there are many accusations against him in England. If anyone says something about me or my team, I will always stand up for us, regardless of how I'm portrayed on TV," he added.

Top Chinese player lashes out at FIDE after being fined for dress code violation

GNS News Agency, Jan 16

Grandmaster Zhu Jiner has slammed FIDE for being fined for a dress code violation in the recently-concluded World Blitz Championship in New York. The 22-year-old, who won a bronze in the previous edition lost to India's R Vaishali 2.5-1.5 in the quarterfinals of the FIDE Women's World Blitz Championship.

"The actions of the FIDE officials during this crucial stage disrupted my performance, and as a result of this interference, I lost the match, missing the opportunity to advance to the semi-finals—a deeply unfortunate outcome," Zhu wrote an open letter. In the same tournament, Magnus Carlsen has also been disqualified for violating FIDE dress code for the event. Magnus Carlsen was fined \$200 for wearing jeans before Chief Arbitrator Alex Holowczak disqualified him for repeated violation. But however, later the rules were tweaked and Magnus played in the Blitz competition. Here's the full text of Zhu Jiner's open letter "I am writing to express my deep anger and frustration regarding the incident that occurred during the World Blitz Knockout Stage of the 2024 FIDE Women's World Blitz Championship and the handling of the situation. The actions of the FIDE officials during this crucial stage disrupted my performance, and as a result of this interference, I lost the match, missing the opportunity to advance to the semi-finals—a deeply unfortunate outcome.

"First, I must address the completely inappropriate and unjust fine imposed on me during the tournament. As a

player, I have always believed that the utmost respect for the rules and for the players is essential. However, the way this official enforced the rules was neither fair nor respectful. The clothing I wore—a sweater, trousers, and boots—did not violate any official dress code guidelines. I wore these boots throughout the tournament without any objection from anyone. To suddenly face such interference in the middle of the match, especially when I was so close to reaching the semi-finals, is truly inconceivable. "If there were concerns about players' attire, these should have been addressed prior to the match, not during the match, particularly in a blitz format where time is incredibly precious. This situation highlights a lack of understanding of what athletes need and detracts from the very essence of chess. Such interference is unnecessary and weakens the fairness of the tournament. "As the third place finisher in the 2023 FIDE Women's World Blitz Championship, I had hoped to further improve my results in this competition. While I may not receive the same level of attention as Mr. Magnus Carlsen, all people are equal, and men and women are equal in every regard. The regulations must apply equally to all players. "I am deeply grateful to the sponsors who organized this event in the heart of New York City, providing an excellent platform for chess. However, the way the officials handled the incident overshadowed the positives of the tournament. This unwarranted interference directly distracted me and negatively impacted my performance.