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TGPSC to release Group-II exam preliminary key on January 18

ment exam comprising four papers on December 15 and 16, 2024, will release the preliminary keys and master question papers on its website https://www.tspsc.gov.in/ on Saturday.Candidates can access preliminary keys and question papers in their login up to January 22. The commission will accept objections, if any, on the preliminary keys through a link provided on its website from January 18 to 22 (5 pm). Candidates have been advised to submit their objections only in English, besides uploading proofs substantiating their claims.

Woman, three-year-old daughter killed in road mishap

injured when the bike they were riding on was hit by a rashly driven truck at Bandlaguda in Mailardevpally early on Friday.

As per available information, Ruksana Begum (35) and her husband, Waseem Ahmed (40), were heading on a bike along with their two children — son Mohd Muzamil (6) and daughter Shifa (3) — from Langar Houz to Falaknuma when the incident occurred. According to the police, when the family reached Bandlaguda main road, an unidentified truck, being driven in a rash and negligent manner, hit their bike from behind. All four fell on the road and sustained injuries.

Revanth fails to meet Rahul again in Delhi, sparks rumours of his diminishing influence in Congress



GNS News Agency, Jan 17

Hvderabad: A Revanth Reddy's failure to meet Congress MP Rahul Gandhi yet again in New Delhi has fuelled fire to the speculations in the party over the state of affairs between the Gandhi family and the Telangana Chief Minis-

Interestingly, Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee president YS Sharmila met Rahul Gandhi in New Delhi. She had a meeting with the Congress MP over the political affairs in Andhra Pradesh and discussed the measures being taken to strengthen Congress in the State. The Chief Minister, along with some of his Cabinet colleagues, was in New Delhi on Wednesday to participate in the AICC office

inauguration. Though, he was in the national capital on Thursday, he could not meet Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and this has left the State leaders dejected. Party sources claimed that Rahul Gandhi could not meet Revanth Reddy due to prior appointments. Accordingly, the State leaders, including the Chief Minister held a meeting with AICC general secretary KC Venugopal over a few aspects, including preparations for local bodies' elections and others.

After the meeting, the Chief Minister left the venue and TPCC president Mahesh Kumar Goud spoke to the media.Revanth Reddy has been to New Delhi quite a few times in the recent past but could not meet Rahul Gandhi or Congress Parliamentary Party chief Sonia Gandhi. And, this is not going well with the party leaders, triggering enough speculations on the widening gap between the Chief Minister and the Gandhi family.

More so, the State leaders are perplexed over the fact that other Ministers, including Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Minister D Anasuya met Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi in New Delhi on December 10 last year, but the Chief Minister could not. Prior to this on October 26, TPCC president Mahesh Kumar Goud met AICC chief Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi in the capital. He had also personally invited the Congress MP to participate in the State-level consultation on caste census held in No-

After being rejected in Maharashtra, Congress tries to showcase Telangana guarantees in Delhi



GNS News Agency, Jan 17

Hyderabad: The Congress seems to have not learnt lessons from the past. After being rejected in Maharashtra last year, Congress is making yet another attempt to win the voters' confidence in New Delhi by showcasing the 'implementation' of guarantees in Telangana and roping in State leaders to campaign for the party. Incidentally, a majority of electoral promises are yet to be implemented in Telangana, but the Congress leaders are claiming in Delhi that all promises have been implemented in Telangana. Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and his cabinet colleagues had campaigned for the Congress party extensively during the Maharashtra assembly elections held in November last. The Telangana ministers had campaigned vigorously in the constituencies bordering Telangana and with a high percentage of Telugu population. They had claimed that the guarantees assured to the Telangana people were being implemented 'successfully'.

However, save for the free bus travel for women, partial implementation of 200 units free power supply and Rs.500 gas cylinder supply under subsidy, many promises were yet to be implemented even after a year since the Congress came to power in Telangana. The party had prom-

ised to pay a monthly assistance of Rs.2500, under Rythu Bharosa, both land-owning farmers and tenant farmers were promised Rs.15,000 per acre annually, landless labourers were assured assistance of Rs.12,000 per annum, monthly unemployment allowance of Rs.4,000 to every unemployed youth, electric scooters were promised to all young women above 18 years of age and pursuing education. The list of such promises can go on but they have not been delivered.

The Congress leaders claim about waiving crop loans of Rs.2 lakh of 25 lakh families with Rs.21,000 crore but many farmers were still running from pillar to post to get loans waived. Further, farmers, who secured loans over Rs.2 lakh, are still clueless about the waiver of their loans. Similarly, the Congress government claims to fill up 55,000 vacancies within one year. However, the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) slams the Congress for claiming credit for the nearly 30,000 jobs notification issued during its tenure. The Congress had also promised to fulfill 2 lakh jobs within one year and it failed in delivering this promise.

Apart from the guarantees, the Telangana Congress leaders had stressed on the need to usher in change of governance. Since the Telugu speaking people in Maharashtra were very well aware about the 'successful' implementation of the guarantees in Telangana, they rejected the Congress in Maharashtra. Staying oblivious to these facts, the Congress has announced five guarantees in New Delhi and continues to stress on the need to appeal for a change in governance. Unlike in Telangana, this time the Congress is promising 300 units free power supply, Rs.8,500 monthly stipend to educated, unemployed youth for one year, Rs. 25 lakh health insurance for all, Rs.2500 monthly allowance for women and Rs.500 gas cylinder and ration kits. Telangana Chief Minister had even said that he would take the responsibility of fulfilling the promises made by the Congress to the people in New Delhi. He also assured that if need be, all support would be extended to the New Delhi government by the Telangana government in administration and governance.

BJP releases manifesto for Delhi polls, promises 21,000 for pregnant women and LPG cylinders for 500

GNS News Agency, Jan 17

Delhi BJP president J.P. Nadda, on Friday (January 17, 2025) announced the BJP manifesto 'Mahila Samriddhi Yojana' in New Delhi.In their manifesto, the BJP promised ?2,500 to women of Delhi through direct benefit transfers every month.Mr. Nadda said "We will provide LPG cylinders for ?500 to women from poor families, and one free cylinder each on the occasion of Holi Deepawali."He further added that "We will provide 6 nutritional kits and assistance of 21,000 to every pregnant woman under Chief Minister Matrivita Suraksha Yojana." Addressing a press conference while releasing the first part of the 'Sankalp Patra', Mr. Nadda said the party's manifesto is the foundation for a developed Delhi.

He also assured all existing public welfare schemes in Delhi will continue if the BJP is voted to power. Hitting out in Delhi will continue if the BJP is voted to power. Hitting out at the Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party, he said all corand also give additional health cover of ?5 lakh.



ruption charges in the existing public welfare schemes will be investigated. He promised that a BJP-led Delhi government will approve implementation of the

Telangana CM Revanth Reddy Visits Singapore's ITE, Signs Key MoU for Skills Development

GNS News Agency, Jan 17

Hyderabad: As part of the Telangana Rising initiative. Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, accompanied by Industries and IT Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu, visited the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) in Singapore. The delegation, led by the Chief Minister, explored various domains of technical skill development at the institution, which specializes in over 20 fields. During the visit, CM Revanth Reddy interacted with experts and staff from ITE Singapore to understand their best practices in skill development. The visit highlighted Telangana's commitment to enhancing technical education and creating a skilled workforce. A significant milestone of the trip was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between ITE Singapore and Telangana's Young India Skills University (YISU). The MoU, facilitated in the presence of CM Revanth Reddy, will foster collaboration in skill development programs, benefiting the youth of Telangana. V.L. VSS Subba Rao, Chancellor of YISU, signed the agreement alongside Parvinder Singh, Deputy Director of Academic and Admin Services, and Fabian Chiang, Deputy Director of Education Services at ITE Singapore. The discussions also included a campus tour,



where the delegation reviewed ITE's state-of-the-art facilities and curriculum. The Singapore-based institute expressed its willingness to support Telangana's initiatives, marking a step forward in global collaboration for education. In response to Telangana's invitation, a team from ITE Singapore is set to visit Hyderabad in the coming months to further the partnership and explore avenues for implementing skill enhancement programs. This collaboration underscores Telangana's vision for empowering its youth with world-class skills, aligning with the

Israel's security Cabinet recommends approval of ceasefire in Gaza; awaits full Cabinet's decision



GNS News Agency, Jan 17

Israel's security Cabinet recommended approval on Friday (January 17, 2025) of a ceasefire deal after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confirmed an agreement had been reached that would pause the 15-month war with Hamas in Gaza and release dozens of hostages held by militants there. Mediators Qatar and the U.S. announced the ceasefire on Wednesday (January 15, 2025), but the deal hung in limbo for more than a day as Mr. Netanyahu insisted there were last-minute snags he blamed on Hamas.

The militants maintained they were "committed" to the deal, while residents of Gaza and families of the hostages anxiously waited to see if it would materialise. The deal now goes to the full Cabinet of Ministers for final sign-off. It is expected to "OK" the ceasefire, which could start as soon as Sunday (January 19, 2025), even though it has drawn fierce resistance from Mr. Netanyahu's far-right coalition partners. However, their objections could destabilise his government. Hamas triggered the war with its October 7, 2023, cross-border attack into Israel that killed some 1,200 people and left some 250 others captive. Israel responded with a devastating offensive that has killed over 46,000 Palestinians, according to local health officials, who do not distinguish between civilians and militants but say women and children make up more than half of those killed. Beyond the death and destruction in Gaza, the conflict has also destabilised the Middle East and sparked worldwide pro-

On Thursday (January 16, 2025), Israeli strikes killing at least 72 people in Gaza. In previous conflicts, both sides have stepped up military operations in the final hours before ceasefires as a way to project strength.Mr. Netanyahu instructed a special task force to prepare to receive the hostages returning from Gaza, and said that their families were informed a deal had been reached. The Prime Minister's office said that if the deal passes, the ceasefire

could start Sunday (January 19, 2025) and the first hostages could be freed then too. Under the deal, 33 of some 100 hostages who remain in Gaza are set to be released over six weeks in exchange for hundreds of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel. Israeli forces will pull back from many areas, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians would be able to return to what's left of their homes, and there would be a

Tumukuru graduate to run for Canadian PM

GNS News Agency, Jan 17

Bengaluru: A MBA graduate from Tumukuru in Karnataka Chandra Arya has decided to run for the prime minister's post in Canada. After Justin Trudeau resigned, Chandra Arya, the Indian-origin Member of Parliament for Nepean, formally declared his intention to run for both the Liberal Party leadership and the prime ministership of Canada. Hours before the Liberal Party formally announced that it would elect a new leader on March 9, Arya made his

In a statement he posted on 'X' Arya has stated that "I am running to be the next Prime Minister of Canada to lead a small, more efficient government to rebuild our nation and secure prosperity for future generations" In a video posted on LinkedIn, Arya is seen addressing the Canadian parliament in chaste Kannada and quoted Rashtrakavi KV Puttappa (Kuvempu) stating 'Yelladaru Iru, Yenthadaru Iru, Yendendigu Kannada vagiru" (wherever you are and whatever you are, be always Kannadiga)

"We are facing significant structural problems that haven't been seen for generations and solving them will require tough choices. I have always worked hard for what is best for Canadians, and for the sake of our children and grandchildren, we must make bold decisions that are absolutely necessary. If elected as the next Leader of the Liberal Party I offer my knowledge and expertise to do so."

He had migrated to Ottawa 20 years back after graduating in MBA from Kousali Institute of Management Studies of Karnataka University in Dharwad. He worked as a technical officer of KSFC. Batchmate in the institute Shankargouda Pappannavar, who has posted a brief on Chandra Arya and remembered that "Later she became an entrepreneur and moved to Canada," Arya was elected three times to the Canadian parliament since 2015 from the Napean constituency.

Centre announces Rs 11,440 cr financial package for Vizag steel plant

GNS News Agency, Jan 17

In a significant move to boost the struggling Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, the Central Government has unveiled a financial package of Rs 11,440 crore. The announcement was made by Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnav following a recent meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, where Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu sought assistance for the plant. The allocated funds are intended primarily for operational payments, aimed at revitalizing the steel plant, which has faced ongoing financial challenges. Union Minister Rammohan Naidu expressed gratitude towards Prime Minister Modi and the Central Government for their support, emphasizing the package's importance in restoring the plant to full-scale production and profitability. This effort will be very useful in overcoming the losses and putting the plant on the path of profits with fullscale production," Naidu tweeted. He also highlighted the



NDA government's commitment to the development of Andhra Pradesh and the aspirations of its people, noting that the financial package is a testament to that dedication.

Arvind Kejriwal writes to PM Modi, seeks discount for students in Delhi Metro

GNS News Agency, Jan 17

New Delhi: Aam Aadmi Party convenor and former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to allow a 50 per cent discount to students travelling the Delhi Metro.In a letter to PM Modi, Kejriwal said that both the Centre and the Delhi governments should share the financial burden of the Metro services as a result.In the letter, which was posted on social media, Kejriwal wrote in Hindi, "I am writing this letter to draw your attention to an

important matter concerning the school and college students of Delhi. Students of Delhi largely depend on the Metro to reach their school or college. To reduce the financial burden on students, I propose to provide 50 per cent concessions to students in Delhi Metro."He further wrote, "Delhi Metro is a 50:50 collaboration project between Delhi government and Central government. Therefore, the expenditure on this should be borne half by the Delhi government and the Central government."

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Ace in space

Getting off to a flying start in the new year under a new chief, the Indian Space Research Organisation ISRO) has achieved yet another milestone by successully performing the docking of satellites as a part of the space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX). This exercise is expected to make the country better equipped for more ambitious and complex missions such as the Bharatiya Antriksha Station, Chandrayaan-4 and Gaganyaan. India's stature in space has gone up a few notches as it has become the fourth country — after the US, Russia and China—to accomplish the feat. It is remarkable that ISRO has bounced back from the Chandrayaan-2 heartbreak of 2019 o make rapid strides in the past couple of years, especially the Chandrayaan-3 soft-landing in 2023.

The strategic importance of the space sector cannot be overemphasised. The SpaDeX success comes amid a fierce race between the US and China, which are both going all out to send a crew to the moon — the first since NASA's Apollo programme conducted its final mission in 1972. Just a few weeks ago, China accused America of nitiating "dangerous actions" to jeopardise global strategic stability after the US Space Force stationed a unit in lapan. Beijing itself has been speedily expanding its miliary capabilities in space. President Xi Jinping's "eternal dream" of building China into a space power has an ominous ring to it. This is worrisome not only for the US but also for its ally India, whose relations with China continue o be uneasy despite recent signs of a thaw.

The Chinese challenge makes it imperative for India o develop cutting-edge capabilities to protect its space assets such as satellites and indigenous launch vehicles. This should go hand in hand with greater stress on research and innovation to ensure that the country's space programme remains on course for human spaceflight and other key missions.

Rescue operation at Kannauj railway station concludes as 28 trapped workers pulled out safely

GNS News Agency, Jan 17

KannaujRescue operation underway after an underconstruction building collapsed at the Kannauj railway station, trapping around two dozen workers under the rubble, in Kannauj,The rescue operation, following a building collapse at the Kannauj railway station, came to an end on Sunday morning with the rescuers safely pulling out 28 workers after a night-long hustle, news agency PTI reported.

On Saturday afternoon, a portion of an under-construction structure at the Uttar Pradesh's Kannauj station in Uttar Pradesh came crumbling down, trapping around two dozen workers under the rubble.

No casualties were reported and all the people rescued were admitted to a hospital, the officials told PTI. The rescue teams, comprising personnel from the national and state disaster response force and the railways, toiled through the cold winter night to remove the debris and pull out the trapped workers safely. District Magistrate Shubhrant Kumar Shukl, who visited the site on Sunday, expressed relief that no lives were lost in the accident.

A CCTV footage from the site showed the roof collapsed while a labourer was trying to fix the shuttering (a temporary structure used to support concrete). The clip suggested that a beam carried by the worker had hit the shuttering, resulting in its slip and ultimate collapse. A three-member high-level committee to investigate the incident, said Pankaj Kumar Singh, Chief Public Relation Officer (North Eastern Railway). The inquiry team will comprise Chief Engineer (Planning & Design), the Additional Divisional Railway Manager (Izzatnagar) and the Chief Security Commissioner (Railway Protection Force). "It will be part of the investigation to check under which plan the construction at the railway station was going on and also how the incident occurred." said Singh.

TN people keen to elect DMK once more, thanks to efficient administration, says CM Stalin



GNS News Agency, Jan 17

CM StalinCM Stalin greeted people and party workers on the occasion of Pongal, the first day of auspicious Tamil month 'Thai' which falls on January 14 and urged them to celebrate it with vigour, saying the festival signified unity. Notwithstanding the Centre 'ignoring' Tamil Nadu and political rivals trying to create rumours about the ruling dispensation, the DMK-led government was delivering efficient administration and the people of the state were therefore inclined to vote for the party once again in next year's elections, Chief Minister M K Stalin said

In a letter to party men extending his Pongal festival greetings, the ruling DMK President also exhorted them to sincerely work for people's welfare and be "true to their trust on us." "The people of Tamil Nadu are firm that the DMK government should come to the ruling saddle for the seventh time (in 2026), thanks to the Dravidian model government's transparent rule and efficient administration with clear-cut schemes that has resulted in various achievements, despite the Centre regularly ignoring Tamil Nadu and political rivals trying to spread rumours," Stalin said.

Delhi Police's annual crime data shows slight drop in murder, rape cases despite 35% rise in drug offences



GNS News Agency, Jan 17

Although crime rates in the national capital have generally declined, cases related to drugs and their supply have consistently risen over the past decade, according to data from the Delhi police.In 2024, the national capital experienced a 35 per cent increase in cases registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, compared to 2023. This surge is attributed to the Lieutenant Governor's office, which has placed a special emphasis on combating issues related to psychotropic substances. Data shared by the Delhi Police indicates that this trend is consistent with the past decade, as there has been a year-on-year rise in NDPS cases since 2015.

"Foreign cartels are now also getting involved in drug processing in Delhi. That has led to more seizures and raids throughout the year," a senior Crime Branch official said. The Crime Branch unit also busted several 'in-house' drug processing units across Delhi in 2024, with an officer claiming many of them involved foreign nationals.

In October 2024, the Delhi Police Special Cell made one of the largest drug seizures in recent years by recovering 1,289 kg of cocaine from locations in Delhi and Gujarat. This operation targeted a cartel allegedly led by Dubai-based businessman Virendra Basoiya. Police officers stated that the drugs originated in South America, primarily Colombia, and were transported via Dubai on cargo ships. The cocaine was intended for distribution across Delhi and Mumbai.In 2024, there was a 13.45 per cent increase in cases registered under all acts, continuing the trend established by the NDPS Act. However, during the same period, cases registered for crimes covered by the Indian Penal Code experienced a decline of 15.05 per cent. Heinous crimes such as rape and murder have shown a slight drop, according to data from the Delhi Police. In 2024, there was approximately a 3 per cent decrease in reported rape cases compared to 2023, reversing a trend where cases had increased by 2.7 per cent in 2023 compared to the previous year. Additionally, the number of registered murder cases in 2024 was 504, down from 506 the previous year. Street crimes experienced a slight decrease, with 1,510 robbery cases reported in 2024, down from 1,654 in 2023, representing a decrease of nearly 9.5 per cent. Additionally, there were 6,493 cases of snatching recorded in 2024, compared

Woman's death after childbirth: Bengal Govt bans 9 intravenous fluids in public hospitals

GNS News Agency, Jan 17

The Bengal Government Saturday asked public hospitals in the state to stop using nine intravenous fluids in the wake of the death of a new mother at the Midnapore Medical College and Hospital in Paschim Medinipur. Three more women were admitted to the Intensive Care Unit of the hospital after the alleged administration of an intravenous fluid following caesarean section operations. The nine intravenous fluids are Ringer Lactate – 500 ml, ?Ringer Solution – 500 ml, Dextrose 10%-500 ml, Mannitol Infusion – 100 ml, Paracetamol Infusion – 100 ml, Ofloxacin 100 ml, Levofloxacin – 100 ml, ?1/2 DNS – 500 ml 9, and ?Normal Saline – 3 L.

The government issued an order and stated, "All Heads of Departments are kindly requested to cease the administration of the above-mentioned fluids/infusion in their designated areas without delay. Any requests for the same should be directed to the Office of the Medical Superintendent and Vice Principal with effect from today, the 11th of January 2025..." Chief Secretary Manoj Pant also sought a detailed report on the issue from the Principal Secretary, Health, by Sunday night. Meanwhile, an expert team was formed to probe the Medinipur incident. According to sources, the expert team has not ruled out either human error or adverse chemical reactions from drugs. The 13-member team formed by the state health department visited the Midnapore Medical College and Hospital on Saturday to probe allegations of expired saline being administered to patients at the



hospital. The expert team has taken statements from patients, senior and junior doctors, and the nursing staff at the hospital. According to sources, the expert team was waiting for the post-mortem report of Mamoni Rui Das who expired on Friday, biopsy reports of the new mothers admitted to the ICU, and the reports of the samples taken of the Ringer Saline.

Dr Mausumi Nandy, Principal, Midnapore Medical College and Hospital, told media persons, "Treatment is on for the patients, the investigation is on, the saline came to the hospital store from Tamluk Drs." A high-level meeting of the state health department on the issue was being held at the SSKM Hospital in Kolkata on Sunday. According to reports, the three patients are stable but their haemoglobin count has fallen and dialysis was performed on them.

In challenge to Amit Shah, Kejriwal says won't contest Delhi polls if Centre assures houses for all slum-dwellers in court



GNS News Agency, Jan 17

AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday issued a challenge to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, saying he would not contest the Delhi elections if the central government withdraws all cases related to slum demolitions and give an undertaking in court that all displaced people would be rehabilitated on land they have been evicted from.

While calling himself the "protector of slums and slum residents", Kejriwal said the BJP remembered slum-dwellers only during elections. "We saw recently how BJP leaders spend a night in different slums. Why now? Why didn't you come here to sleep at night 10 years ago? All this jhuggi tourism is nothing but a drama to get votes. The BJP is a party of rich people. They think of jhuggi people as keeda makoda (insects). Do you think they are spending time here because they love jhuggi residents? No, they are showing love because they want votes from you," he said standing outside the Railway Camp in the Shakur Basti constituency. The AAP supremo further said the BJP would prioritise land over slum-dwellers after the polls, citing how the lieutenant governor changed the land use of the Shakur Basti slum area to facilitate demolitions on December 7. The AAP national convenor also accused the Railways of floating a tender to demolish the railway camp slum last September. "This railway camp here, people are thinking they will get a house under the Jahan Jhuggi Wahan Makan scheme, while the BJP already came up with a detailed plan to clear this area three months ago. If you vote for them and make them win, they will make you homeless in no less than two months," Kejriwal warned. "They don't love jhuggi people or care about anyone. They care only about their friends and political ambitions.

Attacking Shah, Kejriwal said, "In an event yesterday, Shah called people from several jhuggis and abused me. BJP says jahan jhuggi wahan makan. We also believe in this scheme. But jahan jhuggi wahan kiska makan? Jhuggi walon ke liye? Nahi. jahan jhuggi wahan inke dost ka makan, builders ka makan. Everyone knows who they are." "Withdraw all the cases you have filed against the people of jhuggis, and submit an affidavit in court that you will give houses to all those people on the same land where they lived earlier... I will not contest the elections. I give you this challenge, accept it. Otherwise, Kejriwal will not go any-

where, but will fight the elections, win and stand for the slum people like a pillar and will not let you demolish their houses,"

Kejriwal said the BJP had constructed only 4,000 houses for slum residents under the Jahan Jhuggi Wahan Makan scheme, while there are four lakh slums in Delhi, suggesting that it would take the saffron party at least a thousand years to provide housing for all these people. The reality is that they have no intention to construct houses for the poor. They are merely considering replacing slums with houses and commercial buildings for their rich friends," he added. "If you vote for BJP, it will be like signing your own suicide note. The BJP has plans to demolish all the ihuggis in Delhi. They will demolish all the slums within a year of forming a government. I was the one chief minister who woke up all the bureaucrats and reached the spot at midnight to stop the demolition process. I had saved several demolitions as CM," Kejriwal said. Reading out the names of slums that have been demolished, the former chief minister said, "I failed to save three lakh people's houses. I am not in politics for money; I am here to serve you. Aap nahi

Another sarpanch dies in Maharashtra's Beed, after being hit by fly-ash vehicle

sarpanch in beed diesThe police have arrested the driver of the fly-ash vehicle that hit the sarpanch's motorcycle.Amid the outrage over sarpanch Santosh Desmukh's murder, another sarpanch died in Maharashtra's Beed district after his motorcycle was rammed by a vehicle transporting fly ash from a thermal power plant on Saturday night.

The incident occurred at Mirwat Phata when sarpanch Abhimanyu Kshirsagar was heading towards his Saundana village in Parli tehsil. The Parli police said the impact of the hit was so strong that the motorcycle was completely crushed, leaving Kshirsagar severely injured. He was rushed to a nearby hospital but was declared dead on arrival. The police have arrested the driver of the fly-ash vehicle that hit the sarpanch's motorcycle.

BJP MLA Suresh Dhas, who has been raising the issue of Massajog sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh's murder, expressed doubts about whether the incident involving Kshirsagar was an accident or a pre-planned act, alleging that the fly ash mafia was behind it. "The ash tippers passing through the thermal station in Parli have not been stopped yet. These vehicles are still running and the administration is responsible for this. Illegal ash transportation is still going on, and due to this, a sarpanch of Saundana village died on Sunday.

Driver in fatal collision on Delhi's Ring Road arrested after 60-km chase: police



GNS News Agency, Jan 17

A day after a 28-year-old man died in a collision on Ring Road when an Audi car jumped the divider and crashed into his Ertiga, Delhi Police said on Sunday they arrested the man who drove the Audi during the incident.

Surendra Choudhary, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Southwest, said, "After analysing approximately 50 CCTV cameras, a police team made a route and chased for around 60 km and arrested the accused." The accused, Paras Pathaniya, 25, is a resident of Paschim Vihar and had fled the accident spot.

The victim, Sukhjit, a resident of Hisar in Haryana, was travelling from Dhaula Kuan towards South Extension when the Audi, coming from the opposite direction, veered off course, crossed the divider and collided head-on with Sukhjit's SUV around 6.30 am on Saturday. An ambulance rushed Sukhjit to the AIIMS Trauma Centre, but he was declared dead on arrival, said the police. Pathaniya has been arrested under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita sections 281 (rash driving) and 106 (death by negligence). He returned in April 2024 from Canada, where he had been living since 2018.

10 meat shop owners near Varanasi's Kashi Vishwanath Temple booked after civic body's shutdown notice



GNS News Agency, Jan 17

Varanasi Meat ShopMeat shop owners said they were being harassed by orders to close their shops without viable alternative arrangements. After the Varanasi Municipal Corporation issued notices to 26 meat shop owners within a 2-kilometre radius of the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in the Chowk area, directing them to shut down for allegedly "violating rules", the Varanasi police have registered an FIR against 10 of them.

The police said the case was filed at the Chowk and Dashashwamedh police stations based on a complaint by the municipal veterinary officer. "Ten meat shop owners have been named in three FIRs," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (Kashi Zone) Gaurav Banswal. The case has been filed under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) sections 223 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) and 325 (mischief by killing or maiming animal), he added. Meat shop owners said they were being harassed by orders to close their shops without viable alternative arrangements. To address this issue, a delegation of meat shop owners met with Varanasi Mayor Ashok Tiwari to seek his assistance. The mayor advised them to identify alternative locations for their shops and assured them that Nagar Nigam would allocate space accordingly. The delegation is scheduled to meet the mayor again next week to continue discussions.

Last year, the Varanasi Municipal Corporation unanimously passed a resolution to ban the sale of meat within a 2-kilometre radius of the temple premises. Although notices were issued to shop owners at the time, no action was taken. A few days ago, the municipal corporation reissued notices to meat shop owners. Meanwhile, meat shop owners claimed that they were being targeted, stating that no action had been taken against liquor shops operating within a two-kilometre radius of the temple despite a resolution that explicitly prohibited liquor shops in that area. They further claimed that the notices issued to them did not reference the resolution but instead cited inspections that found their shops operating without the necessary licenses or no-objection certificates.

The notices also pointed out unsanitary conditions in the shops, including the open sale of meat, which caused public unrest and posed a risk of spreading infectious diseases. Additionally, the notices highlighted violations of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) regulations. The notices instructed meat shop owners to immediately close their establishments and notify the department, warning that further action would be taken if they did not comply. The shop owners claimed that, despite applying for renewal, their licences had not been renewed since

Four injured in clash over land dispute in UP's Shamli

shalmi, land dispute, shalmi news, uttar pradesh news, After receiving reports about the incident, police rushed to the spot. Two groups clashed with each other over a land dispute in Shamli district of Uttar Pradesh, leaving four people injured, police said The injured have been hospitalised. On Saturday evening, Saddam and Intazar had an argument over a land dispute in Mandawar village in the Kairana police station area. It soon escalated into a violent clash, with the two sides using sticks and firearms to attack each other, said Circle Officer Shyam Singh. After receiving reports about the incident, police rushed to the spot. Four men — Umerdeen, Saddam, Irfan, and Imran — sustained bullet injuries in the violence and were immediately transferred to a nearby hospital, Singh said.

Delhi CM Atishi launches crowdfunding campaign to contest assembly polls



GNS News Agency, Jan 17

Chief Minister and AAP candidate from Kalkaji Atishi on Sunday launched a crowdfunding campaign to contest the upcoming Delhi Assembly polls and said she hoped that people would support her party's politics of work and honesty. Addressing a press conference, Atishi released an online link for people to donate money, saying she needed Rs 40 lakh to fight the elections. The AAP has always fought

elections with the help of small donations from the common man which has helped it pursue the politics of work and honesty, she said.

"Despite being in power in Delhi for 10 years, the AAP does not have even a rupee of corruption. We will contest the polls with the support of the people of Delhi and the country, as has been done in the previous elections," she said when asked about the BJP's claim that the CAG has projected a loss of Rs 2,026 crore due to the Delhi government's now-scrapped excise policy. Targeting the BJP, Atishi said, "Perhaps they have collected enough money from their friends and through government contracts and they do not need to collect funds for contesting elections." Atishi, who is seeking re-election from Kalkaji assembly seat, is pitted against former MP and BJP candidate Ramesh Bidhuri.In December, senior AAP leader and party candidate from Jangpura Manish Sisodia launched a crowdfunding platform and sought financial support from people for his poll campaign. The 70-member Delhi Assembly goes to polls on February 5 and the results will be announced on February

'Army is the servant of people...exists to defend democracy': remembering General Cariappa's legacy



GNS News Agency, Jan 17

Three days from now, Army Day will be observed by the nation and the Army, commemorating K M Cariappa, the first Indian general (later field marshal) who took over as commander-in-chief on January 15, 1949. It is a day to remember and reiterate the secular credentials of the Army emphasised by him and its role as the servant of the people. Speaking in Srinagar shortly after taking over as commander-in-chief, General Cariappa said, "The Army is the servant of the people and it exists to defend democracy and protect the country's newly won freedom in accordance with the gospel of truth, love and sacrifice preached by Mahatma Gandhi."

Cariappa's thoughts are increasingly relevant in today's environment, where the Army is seen by many to be overstepping the dividing line between personal practices and institutional character. In his Special Order of the Day after taking over, General Cariappa laid down his thoughts regarding how the Army of independent India should perform its role. "Discipline, moral integrity, loyalty not only to our seniors but equally to our subordinates of all ranks, and sense of duty will be of the highest standards possible. Remember the Army, and everything in it, is the property of the taxpayer and we are the custodians of this property. We must all see that we look after this property—which is composed of men, animals, vehicles, food, clothing, accommodation," he said. His Special Order of the Day also included a Cadet's Prayer as a guide to all ranks.

"O God, our Father, Thou searcher of men's hearts, help us to draw near to Thee in sincerity and truth. May our religion be filled with gladness and may our worship of Thee

be natural. Strengthen and increase our admiration for honest dealing and clean thinking, and suffer not our hatred of hypocrisy and pretence ever to diminish. Encourage us in our endeavour to live above the common level of life. Make us to choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong, and never to be content with a half truth when the whole can be won," the prayer said. Voluntary military training for civiliansOne of the first decisions of General Cariappa after assuming office was to introduce voluntary classes for civilians to receive simple military training with a view to inculcating a sense of discipline among the people. Under the scheme, a parade ground was selected, in consultation with the local police authorities, where civilian volunteers between the ages of 18 and 35 were to be permitted to congregate once a week. "They will be organised in small squads of 15 to 20 each. Each squad will be under the command of a Non-Commissioned Officer and a group of four such squads will be controlled by a Junior Commissioned Officer. Three group squads will be placed under an officer," the proposal read. Each squad was required to undergo 10 minutes of simple physical training and 20 minutes of squad training without rifles, when the squads would be made to march in military formations. "There will also be a 20-minute talk on sanitation, hygiene and discipline, with 10 minutes of rest in between. Each individual will be required to attend six parades. The parades will be purely voluntary and the training will be on the basis of 'no cost' to the state; no money or refreshment of any kind will be admissible to the volunteers, who are free to wear any clothes they like," the proposal said.Gen Cariappa proposed that this kind of training be given in the cities, while the police may undertake to impart it in the villages. To start with, the experiment was to be tried in the cities of Delhi, Lucknow, Jhansi, Jalandhar, Ambala, Amritsar, Calcutta, Nagpur, Madras, Bangalore, Coimbatore, Poona and Ahmedabad. "It is hoped that the scheme, of which the people are expected to take the fullest advantage, will go a long way in making them more conscious of their civic responsibilities. Bodies of men made to march about, turn left or right, salute and halt on words of command given by an officer will naturally produce an instinctive habit in such 'drilled' people of strictly obeying orders. A free course of military drill, besides helping men to walk straight and talk straight, will incidentally help them also to think straight," was what Gen Cariappa thought and proposed. Gen Cariappa's radical thoughts on drilling civilians did not meet the approval of the political establishment,

Provide legal assistance and drop cases against surrendered Maoists, mediators urge Karnataka govt

GNS News Agency, Jan 17

Days after six Maoists surrendered, Citizens' Initiative for Peace (CIP) on Saturday urged the Karnataka government to address their demands and ensure their rehabilitation. In collaboration with the Naxal surrender and rehabilitation committee, CIP played a pivotal role in mediating the surrender and negotiating their requests. At a press conference in Bengaluru, CIP member Noor Sridhar called on the government to provide legal assistance to the six surrendered Maoists to secure bail and dismiss cases filed against them. Sridhar also sought government support in resolving pending cases against Kanyakumari and other former Naxalites who joined the mainstream eight years

"The Karnataka government must officially communicate with Kerala and Tamil Nadu to seek their cooperation in reintegrating ex-Naxalites into the democratic mainstream," Sridhar stated. A key demand raised by CIP was a judicial inquiry into the killing of Vikram Gowda, a Maoist leader, in an encounter by the Anti-Naxal Force (ANF) on November 18 near Peetabailu village in Udupi. Additionally, Sridhar urged the government to engage with ex-Naxalites who have reintegrated into society and address their grievances. The six Maoists—Mundagaru Latha (Sringeri),



Vanajakshi Balehole (Kalasa), Sundari Kutluru (Dakshina Kannada), Mareppa Aroli (Raichur), Vasantha K. (Vellore, Tamil Nadu), and N. Jeesha (Wayanad, Kerala)—surrendered in a public event on Wednesday in the presence of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. "These individuals have left the forests but have yet to reintegrate into society fully. They remain behind bars, facing severe charges. The government must take primary responsibility for their release," stated a CIP note. The negotiations leading to the surrender were facilitated by an elderly tribal woman who acted as an intermediary. CIP revealed that the process took 40 days to conclude.

UP cab driver, associate arrested for applying for voter card with false Delhi address

GNS News Agency, Jan 17

The Delhi Police on Saturday arrested two men in connection with the submission of forged documents for voter registration in Rohini. The accused have been identified as Juber, 35, a cab driver from Uttar Pradesh, and Nadeem, 30, owner of Ansari Jan Sewa Kendra in Mangol Puri. Amit Goel, Deputy Commissioner Of Police (Rohini), said on Sunday that Juber had submitted a falsified Aadhaar card with a fake residential address as part of his voter registration application to avail "benefit of government schemes in Delhi". "Although the Aadhaar number was legitimate, the address was altered. Juber had handed over his original document to Nadeem, who then altered the address before applying for a new voter ID card on his behalf," the officer said.DCP Goel mentioned that a complaint was filed by the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) of the Kirari Assembly constituency on December 30, alleging that five people had submitted voter registration applications with forged docu-

An investigation was launched by a team from the Prem Nagar police station, led by SHO Inspector Shyam Sunder and supervised by Assistant Commissioner of Police Ajay Vedwal from Aman Vihar. The team included Inspector Rohit Gahlot (investigation), Sub Inspector Amit, High Constables Sandeep and Parveen Khatri, along with Constable Joginder. Their efforts led to the identification and arrest of two suspects. "Nadeem runs a service centre that assists with online applications for various documents, including voter IDs and Aadhaar cards," confirmed the DCP, adding that a hard disk from his shop had been seized for further scrutiny."During the investigation, the voter registration applications of three other people were thoroughly verified and found to be valid. No forgery was detected in their documents," the officer stated. Both Juber and Nadeem have been arrested under Section 31 (false declarations) of the Representation of the People Act, and sections 336(3) and 340(2) [both dealing with forgery] of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

As new mothers fight for life at Bengal hospital, families ask: Who will raise the babies?



GNS News Agency, Jan 17

With his four-day old infant on his lap, Salim Khan sits in front of the CCU of the Midnapore Medical College and Hospital (MMCH) waiting for doctors to confirm that he can take his wife Nasrim Khatun home.Khan, a farmer from Keshpur block in Paschim Medinipur, said that the birth of their first child should have been the happiest moment of their lives. "This was supposed to be the happiest day of my life. There was no problem when she was brought to the hospital for delivery, after the C-section delivery we were told that a second OT is required and after the second OT she became very serious," he said while speaking with Alleging that they were not being informed what had exactly happened, Khan said, "Nothing is being told to us exactly what happened, they are just saying saline and injection. There is some issue but they are not providing us details."

A woman died at MMCH on Friday after the delivery of her baby on Wednesday, an official said on Saturday. The family members of the deceased woman, identified as Mamoni Das, alleged that Ringer's Lactate administered on the intravenous (IV) fluid had expired, which led to her death. They have lodged a complaint at the Kotwali police station. While the West Bengal Health Department has ordered an investigation into the matter, a 13-member medical team visited the Midnapore Medical College on Saturday to enquire regarding the allegations of expired saline being administered to patients at the hospital.

Meanwhile, the families of three women admitted at MMCH seek answers from doctors over the health condition of the new mothers' who are in critical condition after they delivered babies and were allegedly given saline of questionable quality. Nasrim Khatun's father Shiekh Shamsher Ali while speaking with The Indian Express said, "Doctors are saying we are investigating." "As a father I am not in any condition to talk or understand anything, we just want to know who is behind all this. Basically, the saline which should not have been given, why was it given? We

have asked them to refer my daughter to Kolkata, but they (the hospital) are saying, not in this condition. After hearing the news her mother (Nasrim's mother) is in no condition to talk, she is at home, asking when will her child come back home," said a teary-eyed Ali.Nasrim's uncle Zai Khan stated, "Doctors said they are trying their best. They said the infection is from saline or injection, but not saying anything clearly. My niece was taken to the OT twice. Why, we don't know."Nasrim's condition has slightly improved, according to Khan. "She's regained some consciousness, but remains on a ventilator. A team of medical experts from Kolkata visited and provided guidance to the local doctors, which has helped reduce the bleeding that was previously uncontrollable. The team also brought blood from Kolkata to aid in her treatment," he said. Three years ago, Kartik Singh's wife, had delivered their first child in the hospital and now the situation has completely changed for him after the delivery of his second child. Singh alongwith his father and mother-in-law have been waiting in front of the CCU to speak with doctors about his wife Mampi, who is critical.

"Doctors are saying that my wife is a bit serious, no urination, that is all. When we asked why, they said it is because of some infection in the saline," Singh said, adding, "She is not very well. We want her to get well soon, the child is there at home waiting for her mother. Senior specialist doctors should come and talk to us. They should understand our pain. We treat our doctors as gods."Mampi's father-in-law Sarveshsar Singh, said, "New born has been discharged and my daughter-in-law is unwell and in the CCU. How will we bringing up the child who is just 4-days

Staring the CCU door, Mampi's mother Putul Singh said, "They are not allowing us to go inside. I just want to take my daughter back home. Yesterday blood plasma was brought from Kolkata. She has not been able to urinate. How will we bring up this child?.""This hospital is the lifeline, but after this incident how can we feel safe, a perfectly healthy person is now in a serious condition," said her aunt Kajal Singh.Meanwhile, Sabina Biwi, while sharing her ordeal with The Indian Express said, "My sister-in-law was given saline after the child was born and then suddenly she became serious. Immediately the mother was shifted to the CCU. Around 7 pm on January 8 the child was delivered at 9:30 pm and on January 9, the child was discharged. I took the child home but who will take care of the child, who is responsible for this. Everyone will be scared after this incident." My sister-in-law is a bit better today. I met her, and she enquired about her child. But still there is only one problem: no urination after delivery. Doctors are saying there is some problem due to the saline," she added.

Bengaluru woman loses Rs 1.2 crore in 'digital arrest' scam, forced to borrow Rs 40 lakh to pay fraudsters

GNS News Agency, Jan 17

The scammers promised a refund once the "case" was resolved but vanished, cutting all communication. The scammers promised a refund once the "case" was resolved but vanished, cutting all communication. A 28-year-old software engineer in Bengaluru allegedly lost Rs 1.2 crore in a "digital arrest" scam. She told the police that she had even taken a loan of Rs 40 lakh after the fraudsters had drained

The incident came to light when the woman approached the east division police to file a complaint last week. The woman told the police that on December 11, she received an automated IVR call from an international number claiming to be from DHL courier services. The caller allegedly claimed that a package in her name contained illegal items, including fake passports, ATM cards, and drugs, and directed her to contact a Mumbai police station. Soon after, a man posing as "Mumbai Crime Branch officer Sunil Datt Dubey" contacted her, she said. He allegedly accused her of involvement in a money laundering scheme worth \$10.9 million (Rs 93.89 crore) and issued a "digital arrest" order.

The scammers allegedly demanded verification of her funds and coerced her into transferring assets, using counterfeit documents from financial agencies, the Mumbai



Crime Branch, and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Believing her cooperation was essential, the woman liquidated her investments, transferring Rs 75.63 lakh. The fraudsters then allegedly demanded an additional Rs 55.87 lakh as a bond payment for her property. Unable to meet the demand, she borrowed Rs 40 lakh and added Rs 5 lakh from her remaining savings to pay the fraudsters, she told the police. The scammers promised a refund once the "case" was resolved but vanished, cutting all communication. Realising the scam, the victim reported the fraud to the police, who have begun an investigation.

Man killed in Delhi after speeding Audi jumps divider, crashes into his car

GNS News Agency, Jan 17

delhiAccording to the police, authorities were reviewing CCTV footage and other available evidence from the vicinity to reconstruct the sequence of events and track down the perpetrator. A 28-year-old man was killed in a collision early Saturday morning on Ring Road opposite the World Trade Center in Southwest Delhi after an Audi car jumped the road divider and crashed into his Ertiga. The accident occurred at around 6.30 am, and the Audi's driver fled the scene immediately after the crash, said the police.

The victim, identified as Sukhjit, a resident of Hisar in Haryana, was travelling from Dhaula Kuan towards South Extension when the Audi, coming from the opposite direction, veered off course, crossing the divider, and collided head-on with Sukhjit's vehicle. An ambulance rushed Sukhjit to AIIMS Trauma Centre, but he was declared dead upon arrival, said the police. The police registered a case under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) sections 281 (rash driv-



ing) and 106 (death by negligence), and an investigation was underway to identify and apprehend the absconding driver. According to the police, authorities were reviewing CCTV footage and other available evidence from the vicinity to reconstruct the sequence of events and track down the perpetrator.

Another boy mauled to death by stray dogs in Ludhiana village, residents block road



After the latest fatal stray dog attack, infuriated village residents blocked Ludhiana-Ferozepur Road for two hours before the police pacified them.

GNS News Agency, Jan 17

An eleven-year-old boy was mauled to death by a pack of stray dogs at the Hasanapur village of Punjab's Ludhiana district on Saturday. The victim was identified as Harsukhpreet Singh. A few days ago, a 10-year-old boy, Arjun, was killed in the same manner in this village. Deputy Superintendent of Police (Mullanpur Dakha) Varinder Singh Khosa said the boy was the only son of his parents. His father is a small-time farmer. DSP Khosa said the family lives on the village's periphery, and their home lacked a boundary wall. Harsukhpreet was playing outside when the dogs attacked him. His parents rushed to rescue him, but by the time he was taken to a medical facility, he had died. After the latest fatal stray dog attack, infuriated village residents blocked Ludhiana-Ferozepur Road for two hours before the police pacified them.

2020 Delhi riots: Court orders framing of charges against 25 accused in constable's murder



GNS News Agency, Jan 17

A Delhi court on Friday ordered the framing of charges for the offences of murder, arson, and dacoity against 25 accused in the murder of Head Constable Ratan Lal during the 2020 Northeast Delhi riots. Two accused were discharged after the court did not find credible evidence against them. In this case, there were 27 accused who were, as per the Delhi Police, part of a riotous mob that attacked a police team at the Chand Bagh protest site on February 24, 2020, when they were stopped from blocking the Wazirabad main road.

"The Constitution does not vest right to any protester, to use violence or to assault anyone or to murder anyone or to damage any property or to rob anyone. Therefore, the argument that this accused was exercising his constitu-

tional rights, is totally misconceived," noted the court of Additional Sessions Judge Pulastya Pramachala in its 115-page order. "The protesters not only gathered to show protest against CAA/NRC, rather they came well equipped with weapons with a mindset to use the same against the police force," the court added. The post-mortem report of Ratan Lal showed a firearm wound and 21 external injuries. Along with Lal, the then deputy commissioner of police (DCP) and assistant commissioner of police (ACP) had also sustained serious injuries during. As many as 50 other policemen had also been injured. In all, 700 persons were injured during the riots and 50 were killed.

"After the attempt to block Main Wazirabad Road on February 23, 2020, was neutralised by police, the emphasis on joining the protest in large numbers on February 24 and carrying weapons shows that the organisers and speakers of the protest framed a clear-cut mindset to attack upon police force," the court noted adding that the attack appeared to be part of a "well-thought strategy". As per the prosecution, the riots were the result of a months-long "deep-rooted" conspiracy allegedly hatched after the Citizenship Amendment Bill got a nod from the cabinet in December 2019. The "conspiracy" was the alleged creation of 23 protest sites (which operated 24×7) in "Muslim majority areas" close to mosques and main roads. The prosecution also alleges it that before the riots of February 2020, a "replica" of the riots took place in December 2019 with "similar characters and modus operandi".

Close shaves in Maharashtra polls: Nana Patole, Rohit Pawar and Walse-Patil save face with narrow margins

GNS News Agency, Jan 17

Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole, the NCP's Dilip Walse-Patil, Mahesh Sawant of the Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP) candidate Rohit Pawar were among the 10-odd candidates who won the Assembly elections by narrow margins. However, the lowest margin of victory in the state was registered in Malegaon Central, where the AIMIM's Mufti Mohammad Ismail Abdul Khalique retained the seat by defeating Asif Sheikh Rashid, candidate of the ISLAM party, by just 162 seats. Patole, who was trailing for the better part of the counting process on Saturday, managed to win the Sakoli seat by a margin of just 208 votes. Postal ballots saved him the day as he defeated the BJP's Avinash Brahmankar.

Other candidates who won by fewer than 1,000 votes include the BJP's Manda Mhatre (margin 377 votes) in Belapur and the Shiv Sena's Sanjay Gaikwad in Buldhana (margin 841 votes). Candidates who won by just over 1,000 votes included Sharad Pawar's grandnephew Rohit Pawar, who won the Karjat-Jamkhed seat by 1,243 votes. He defeated the BJP's Ram Shinde for the second consecutive time. While the NCP's Ajit Pawar defeated another of his nephews in Baramati, the Mahayuti failed against Rohit despite going all out to defeat him. The seat is in Ahilyanagar district. On the concluding day of the campaigning, Sharad Pawar held a rally for Rohit in Karjat-Jamkhed. Rohit had led Supriya Sule's Lok Sabha poll campaign against Sunetra Pawar, wife of Ajit Pawar, who was at the forefront of the



Mahayuti's efforts to defeat Rohit, NCP (SP) leaders said. The NCP's Dilip Walse-Patil managed to defeat Devdutt Nikam of the Sharad Pawar-led party by 1,523 votes in the Ambegaon constituency of Pune district. A former Assembly speaker, Walse-Patil had won the seat for seven consecutive terms

Among the most riveting contests was the fight for Mahim in Mumbai, where MNS chief Raj Thackeray's son Amit had to bite the dust on his electoral debut. He finished third as Mahesh Sawant of the Sena (UBT) beat the Shiv Sena's Sada Sarvankar by a margin of 1,316 votes.In Indapur, the NCP's Dattatraya Bharne defeated Harshvardhan Patil for a third consecutive time. He had joined the NCP (SP) just before the elections after quitting the BJP. Bharne's victory margin is 19,410 votes.

Parliament security breach accused denied bail, court says he knew of conspiracy but remained silent

GNS News Agency, Jan 17

A Delhi court has denied regular bail to Mahesh Kumawat, an accused in the Parliament security breach case. Six accused in this case are currently in judicial custody. This Court is of the view that even if accused Mahesh Kumawat was not present at the spot on the date of the alleged incident but he was fully aware of commission of alleged incident on 13.12.2023," Additional Sessions Judge Hardeep Kaur said in an order on Friday. "If he had parted ways and was not part of the alleged conspiracy, then he should have in fact informed the competent authority but he chose to remain silent... he shared the video of an alleged incident on social media...," she added.

While Manoranjan D and Sagar Sharma jumped inside the Lok Sabha hall from the visitors' gallery and opened smoke canisters, Neelam Azad and Amol Shinde opened smoke canisters outside the new Parliament building on December 13, 2023. Two others—Lalit Jha and Mahesh Kumawat—were arrested by the Delhi Police's Special Cell later. Kumawat had allegedly contacted Jha, the key accused, and the others via a Facebook group called Bhagat Singh Fan Page. Jha is accused of destroying evidence of the conspiracy in the case. Advocate Somarjuna, representing Kumawat, argued that he was not present on the spot of the incident and had parted ways with his co-accused. The advocate also said the investigation was complete and that the trial would take considerable time. The advocate also



argued that provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act had been arbitrarily and illegally invoked in the case. "The alleged actions of the applicant/accused herein cannot by any stretch of imagination be construed as an act of 'terrorism'," he said in the bail plea. It was also his submission that the accused had intended to raise their voice and "draw attention of the citizens of the country and the state machinery towards certain issues which in the opinion of the accused/applicant were grave democratic and political issues". Special Public Prosecutor Akhand Pratap Singh, representing the Special Cell, however, argued there was documentary evidence to show Kumawat's complicity in the alleged offence and that he was not entitled to be released on bail.

AQI in 'severe' category, smog blankets Delhi

As per the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) bulletin at 4 pm, Delhi's average AQI was recorded at 412 on Saturday, making it the worst polluted city in the country. As of 7 pm, 17 stations reported severe air quality, with Wazirpur being the most polluted with an AQI of 440.

According to the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology forecast, the air quality is likely remain in the 'very poor' category from Sunday to Tuesday. In the subsequent six days, this trend is expected to continue, it added. A thick layer of mist and smog blanketed the city during the morning and evening hours, reducing visibility on Saturday. While Safdarjung reported a minimum visibility of 300 m as of 6.30 am, the visibility was 800 m at Palam. Moderate fog conditions are likely till November 27, as per India Meteorological Department (IMD). According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), a wind speed of less than 6 kmph was witnessed in Delhi on Saturday forenoon, following which calm winds were reported. An average wind speed below 10 kmph is unfavourable for dispersal of pollutants, as per the CPCB.A dip in temperatures and fog cover also kept pollutants trapped in the atmosphere. The daytime temperature was recorded at 29.4 degrees Celsius, four notches above the seasonal average, according to IMD. The minimum temperature was near normal at 11.4 degrees

Celsius on Saturday. Humidity levels fluctuated between 96 and 66 per cent during the day. Respiratory problems: NCPCR seeks data to prepare SOP for childrenWith prevailing poor air quality in the Capital, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has sought data from doctors across Delhi on children suffering from respiratory problems. Based on the data, which it will submit to the Central government, the commission will establish an SOP or guidelines for attending to children suffering from respiratory diseases, it told pulmonologists from across the city at a recent meeting. "We cannot create an SOP or guidelines until and unless we have some sort of data. Why are we waiting for a disaster to happen and then take cognisance?" said Dr Divya Gupta, Member (Child Health, Care, Welfare), NCPCR. The commission has asked all the Central and state government hospitals, including AIIMS Delhi, to prepare the data. She noted that there was no data currently that says how many children are struggling and are getting into the OPD clinics with respiratory problems. "My instruction was to collect the data and the factors responsible behind this," she said. "Once we have data for one or three months, we need to categorise it in various segments including urban, rural, slums, semiurban, male and female children. This data should be presented to the state and Central governments," Dr Gupta added.

Pollution hits heritage walks in Delhi



GNS News Agency, Jan 17

It was not supposed to be like this. Author and film-maker Sohail Hashmi, whose heritage walks are sought-after by Delhiites, was set to host several walks this weekend. The plan was to lead a walk at Purana Qila on Saturday, and Humayun's Tomb the next day — as part of his 28 winter walks to cover the seven cities of Delhi.But as Delhi woke up to a blanket of smog on Monday, recording its worst air quality in five years with a severe plus AQI of 494, Hashmi knew he would have to take a tough decision. "Due to the terrible air quality in Delhi, walks for the coming weekend will not be conducted. For subsequent weeks, we will decide depending on AQI severity," he wrote on his Facebook page on Monday.

On what prompted his decision, Hashmi told The Indian Express: "...stepping out is becoming difficult. People are suffering from different problems and you can't expect them to come for walks in such a scenario..." Apart from his weekend walks, which are open to the general public,

Hashmi has also cancelled his weekday walks reserved for students and private groups. "The last time I had to make such a decision was in the winter of 2022," he said. Hashmi is not alone. The prevailing situation has also affected others attached to the heritage sector. Taking a break from work was something that the team of Asif Khan Dehlvi, founder of Delhi Karavan, had advised him to do amid the spike in pollution level. "I did give it a thought but then people are still going out, right?" he asked. "Life is still going on. And it should go on. However, he is reconsidering his choice of venue for his latest walk. "I am thinking of a place that has a lot of greenery so that the impact can be somewhat minimised," he said before settling on the verdant Sundar Nursery as a venue for his latest event. Acknowledging the "occupational hazard," Rameen Khan, founder of City Tales, said, "The degraded air quality of Delhi is the bane for a profession like ours wherein the attendants have to spend considerable time out in the open. Since winter is the prime season for walks in monuments, significant smog affects attendance during the events." For patrons like Ananya Kundu, a development sector professional, the passion for heritage trumps everything else. ""The current situation did affect my decision to attend heritage walks. The AQI was extremely bad earlier this week, which is why I was reluctant to leave the house. But since winter is the only good time to go on walks, I have been trying to take precautions like wearing masks, sunglasses etc before heading out," she said. Heritage professionals, meanwhile, are hoping for the weather to improve before planning their next move. "If the weather behaves, we will see," said Hashmi when asked about his

Kochi team gives nod to possibility of water metro services along Tapi river

GNS News Agency, Jan 17

An expert team from the Kochi Water Metro Project after conducting a feasibility study for a water metro along the Tapi River said that there is a possibility of setting up water metro services in Surat. Once the project gets functional, Surat will be the first area in the state and second across the country to have a water metro, after Kochi in Kerala. A two-member expert team from Kochi, including coastal engineering expert Nishanth K and transport engineer Arjun Krishna arrived in Surat on Friday following an invitation from the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) to check the feasibility of a water metro project along the Tapi river in Surat city.

The Kochi team members during their visit were accompanied by SMC additional city engineer D C Bhagwakar, technical team experts and personnel from the fire department. The officials were ferried in a boat along the causeway at Singhanpore to Valak Patia near Kamrej, a stretch of 22 km in Tapi river. The team members also surveyed the upstream water from the causeway to Dumas which is around 11 km.Providing details of the visit, coastal engineering expert Nishanth said, "There is a possibility of developing the water metro along Tapi river along a stretch of 33 km. A survey of the hydrology and a water draft is required in the river".

Talking about the hurdles, the coastal engineering expert said: "There are challenges like what will be the location, the water level, direction of river during monsoon and other seasons among other things. A detailed survey has to be done. After that we will prepare a report and hand it to the SMC authorities," he saidHe added, "The water conditions in Surat and Kochi are different. In Kochi, the metro runs on back water, while here it will run on the river. We will also collect data if more water is discharged from Ukai dam and the condition of water level in Tapi river will also be analysed". "We have tidal conditions in Kochi which were not found in Surat. We will also seek a data report on how will the river behave during floods," he said. Meanwhile, Surat



Municipal Corporation additional city engineer D C Bhagwakar said, "The Kochi team left on Saturday. They have told us that they will send us an email next week to seek more details"

"Primarily they have sought details like water carrying capacity of the river. They have also sought data of extreme and normal rainfall, heavy discharge and average discharge of water from Ukai dam into Tapi river during monsoon and other seasons, water level below bridges during monsoon and other seasons," Bhagwakar added. "They have also sought the waterbed survey reports and details about the shallowness and the depth of water in different areas. Once we fulfill all their data requirements, they will submit a preliminary report. Later we will go ahead with the second phase," the SMC additional city engineer said. "The team had also suggested that we go ahead with the Bathymetric Survey (a method for measuring the depth and mapping the underwater features of a body of water). The boat to be used in the water metro will have a capacity of 100 passengers and it will be battery operated," he said. "Along with SMC's Comprehensive Mobility Plan team, we will work to set up terminal stations along both the river banks at different locations. These terminal stations will be integrated with metro rail services, BRTS, city bus for easy

Gujarati family deaths on US-Canada border: Agents 'did not inform about blizzard', had no one to reach out to, key witness told jury

GNS News Agency, Jan 17

GujaratiYash Patel told the federal jury Wednesday that none of the migrants had experience in navigating snow paths, and the blizzard was a brutal surprise that made "most of them want to give up" but "had no one to reach out to". In the five-day jury trial of Harshkumar Ramanlal Patel and Steve Shand in an international human smuggling ring that resulted in the deaths of a family of four from Gujarat — who froze to death while attempting to cross the US-Canada border — one of the key testimonies and the only first-person migrant account was from 23-year-old Yash Patel, who survived the blizzard on January 19, 2022, and testified as a prosecution witness.

A court official told The Indian Express that Yash Patel told the jury through a Gujarati interpreter how local agents in Canada, including two Indian nationals in Harsh Patel's network, had arranged a van to transport the migrants from an assembly point in a residential apartment in Winnipeg to Manitoba, where they would cross over to the US and meet Shand, the driver of a 'white van'. However, as the blizzard intensified, the van in Canada was stuck in the snow and the driver asked the migrants to cover the rest of the distance on foot "in a straight line" until they found the 'white van' at the US border. Before they were packed into the van in Winnipeg, they were given jackets, rubber boots and gloves but were "uninformed about the blizzard". The official said, "Weather authorities and the Canadian police testified during the trial that none of the 11 migrants were dressed to face the blizzard, including the two children, who died along with their parents. The agents had, perhaps, underestimated the danger of a blizzard or did not care that some of them could freeze unto the bone. A possibility that the agents had expected was that their vehicle in Canada would be able to drive through the snow conditions and drop off the passengers at the Manitoba border, but the van was stuck in the blizzard and the migrants were left in the cold to cover the distance...

Yash Patel told the federal jury Wednesday that none of the migrants had experience in navigating snow paths, and the blizzard was a brutal surprise that made "most of them want to give up" but "had no one to reach out to". Phone messages exchanged that night between Harsh Patel and Shand, produced before the jury by the prosecution, reveal that the two men even discussed "if they (migrants) would make it alive". As the blizzard separated the group almost instantly, according to Yash Patel, most of the migrants continued walking in blinding, dark conditions for over six hours.

CBC news reported Yash Patel telling the Minnesota jury, through a Gujarati interpreter, "I was very scared. I wanted to have help from somebody, but there was no one who could come and help me. It was so cold and I was alone. That was the reason I just kept on walking." The report further stated that Patel told the jury that he "walked for hours in the dark before finally finding the van on the other side of the border and getting inside, where one of the other migrants and a man driving were waiting. The rest of the group from the house in Winnipeg eventually made it over as well and were all taken into custody by the Border Patrol agents", but he "never saw the family again". According to the CBC report, Yash Patel is currently based in Chicago and working as a salesperson in a doughnut shop as he awaits the hearing in his own immigration case. As per a release from the US Attorney's Office from the District of Minnesota, evidence presented during the trial had indicated that between December 12, 2021, and January 19, 2022, Harsh Patel and Shand "conspired to smuggle dozens of migrants across the border of Canada and into the United States". The release states, "Harsh Patel and Shand were part of a largescale human-smuggling operation that brought Indian nationals to Canada on student visas and then smuggled them into the United States. (Their) roles in the smuggling operation included the coordination and transportation of people from Manitoba, Canada, into the United States. Specifically, Harsh Patel worked with co-conspirators in Canada to organise the logistics of smuggling trips, while Shand was instructed when and where to pick up migrants just south of the Canadian border in the United States. He then drove them to Chicago. They were paid for their roles in the conspiracy and disregarded the risks posed by the cold weather at the northern border."The release states that on January 19, 2022, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) special agents responded to a request for assistance from the US Border Patrol (USBP) based out of Pembina, North Dakota. The USBP initiated a traffic stop on a white-colored, 15passenger van that Shand was driving. "The stop occurred less than one mile south of the US-Canadian border in a rural area between the US ports of entry located at Lancaster, Minnesota, and Pembina. A short while later, law enforcement encountered five Indian nationals, approximately, a quarter mile south of the Canadian border walking in the direction of where Shand had just been arrested. They explained that they had walked across the border expecting to be picked up by someone. The group estimated they had been walking around for over seven hours..."

Chinese booksellers thrive abroad as China tightens control at home



GNS News Agency, Jan 17

Yu Miao smiles as he stands among the 10,000 books crowded on rows of bamboo shelves in his newly reopened bookstore. It's in Washington's vibrant Dupont Circle neighbourhood, far from its last location in Shanghai, where the Chinese government forced him out of business six years ago. "There is no pressure from the authorities here," said Mr. Yu, the owner of JF Books, Washington's only Chinese bookseller. "I want to live without fear." Independent bookstores have become a new battleground in China, swept up in the ruling Communist Party's crackdown on dissent and free expression. The Associated Press found that at least a dozen bookstores in the world's second-largest economy have been shuttered or targeted for closure in the last few months alone, squeezing the already tight space for press freedom. One bookstore owner was arrested over four months ago

The crackdown has had a chilling effect on China's publishing industry. Bookstores are common in China, but many are state-owned. Independent bookstores are governed by an intricate set of rules with strict controls now being more aggressively policed, according to bookstore owners. Printing shops and street vendors are also facing more rigorous government inspections by the National Office Against Pornography and Illegal Publication. The office did not respond to interview requests from The Associated Press. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in a statement to AP, said it was not aware of a crackdown on bookstores.Mr. Yu isn't alone in taking his business out of the country. Chinese bookstores have popped up in Japan, France, Netherlands and elsewhere in the U.S. in recent years, because of both stricter controls in China and growing Chinese communities abroad. It's not just the books' contents that are making Chinese authorities wary. In many communities, bookstores are cultural centres where critical thinking is encouraged, and conversations can veer into politics and other topics not welcomed by the authorities. The bookstore owner who was arrested was Yuan Di, also called Yanyou, the founder of Jiazazhi, an artistic bookstore in Shanghai and Ningbo on China's eastern coast. He was taken away by police in June, according to Zhou Youlieguo, who closed his own bookstore in Shanghai in September. Mr. Yuan's arrest was also confirmed by two other people who declined to be named for fear of retribution. The charge against Mr. Yuan is unclear. An official in Ningbo's Bureau of Culture, Radio Television and Tourism, which oversees bookstores, declined comment, noting the case is under investigation. The Ningbo police didn't respond to an interview request.Michael Berry, director of UCLA's Center for Chinese Studies, said a sluggish Chinese economy may be driving the government to exert greater control.

"The government might be feeling that this is a time to be more cautious and control this kind of discourse in terms of what people are consuming and reading to try to put a damper on any potential unrest and kind of nip it in the bud," Mr. Berry said. "These bookstore owners face dual pressures," Mr. Berry added. One is the political clampdown; the other is the global movement, especially among young people, toward digital media and away from print publications. Wang Yingxing sold second-hand books in Ningbo for almost two decades before being ordered to close in August. Local officials informed Mr. Wang he lacked a publication business license even though he wasn't eligible to obtain one as a second-hand seller. Faded outlines marked

the spot where a sign for Fatty Wang's Bookstore once hung. Spray-painted black letters on the bookstore's window read: "Temporarily closed". "We're promoting culture, I'm not doing anything wrong, right? I'm just selling some books and promoting culture," Mr. Wang said, tying a bundle of books together with brown wrapper and white nylon string. "Then why won't you leave me alone?" Mr. Wang added.

Half a dozen other people heaved boxes of books into the back of a van. The books, Mr. Wang said, were being sold to cafe and bar owners who wanted to burnish little libraries for their patrons. Some would be sent to a warehouse in Anhui. The rest, he said, were to be sent to a recycling station to be pulped and destroyed. Bookstores are not the only target. Central authorities have also cracked down on other places such as printing shops, internet bars, gaming rooms and street vendors. Strict inspections have taken place all over the country, according to Chinese authorities. Authorities in Shanghai inspected printing places and bookstores, looking for "printing, copying or selling illegal publications," according to a government document. This shows that authorities are not just barring the sale of some publications but tracing them back to the printing process. They found that some printing stores did not "register the copy content as required" and demanded that they fix the problem quickly. In Shaoyang, a city in China's south, authorities said they will be "cracking down on harmful publications in accordance with the law."The Communist Party has various powers to control which books are available. Any publication without a China Standard Book Number is considered illegal, including self-published books and those imported without special licenses. Books can be banned even after they are published if restrictions are later tightened - often for unclear reasons - or if the writers say something upsetting to the Chinese authorities

Yet despite these restrictions and the crackdown on existing booksellers, more bookstores are opening. Recent figures are unavailable, but a survey by Bookdao, a media company that focuses on the book industry, shows more than twice as many bookstores opened than closed in China in 2020.Liu Suli, who has been running All Sages Books in Beijing for over three decades, says there are many idealists in the industry. "Everyone who reads has a dream of having a bookstore," Ms. Liu says, despite the challenges. In many cases, those dreams are being fulfilled outside China. Mr. Yu and other Chinese booksellers around the world stock their shelves with books from Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China, as well as books published locally. Zhang Jieping. founder of Nowhere, a bookstore in Taiwan and Thailand said there's a growing demand for books from migrants who left China after the COVID-19 pandemic. "They don't just want to speak fluent English or Japanese to fit in, they want cultural autonomy," Mr. Zhang said. "They want more community spaces. Not necessarily a bookstore, but in any format a gallery, or a restaurant."Li Yijia is a 22-year-old student who arrived in Washington from Beijing in August. One Sunday morning, she wandered through JF Books where she found titles in Chinese and English. She said a Chinese bookstore feels like "another world in a bubble" which helps her critical thinking by allowing her to read books in both languages. "It also relieves homesickness, like a Chinese restaurant." Ms. Li added. The closure of the bookstores leads the owners to different paths. Some ended up in jail, some went looking for jobs to feed their families. Some started a journey to leave censorship behind. Since he closed his Shanghai bookstore, Mr. Zhou, 39, has moved to Los Angeles but hasn't decided what his next step will be. He said his fully licensed independent bookstore, which sold art books and self-published works by artists and translators, was fined thousands of dollars and he was interrogated over a dozen times during the past four years. He's seen colleagues jailed for selling "illegal publications." All the selfpublished book artists and editors he worked with asked him to take down their work after warnings by local authorities.Mr. Zhou said he could not handle further harassment. He said it was as if he were "smuggling drugs instead of selling books."The existence of his bookstore, Mr. Zhou said, was "a rebellion and a resistance," which is not there

Woman owned cafe in Indonesia's Sharia stronghold shakes stigma

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In what claims to be the only woman-run cafe in the capital of Indonesia's most conservative province, owner Qurrata Ayuni says she and her baristas provide an alternative to rowdy, smoke-filled male haunts. The 28-year-old opened Morning Mama last year to create a space that caters to women in Banda Aceh, known as the city of 1,001 coffee shops."I thought why not open a place that is comfortable for women?" she said. While the province has long been known as the site of the world's deadliest tsunami and a decades-long separatist insurgency, Aceh's draw for visitors is often the coffee. The traditional "sanger" latte, mixed with condensed milk, is a popular staple. Aceh's strong connection to coffee started hundreds of years ago with Dutch colonial rulers. Now, its farmers cultivate worldrenowned beans in lush highlands. Aceh still catches attention for its ultraconservative values, including by-laws that require Muslim women to wear hijabs. While women are not banned from working in the only region in Muslim-majority Indonesia to impose Islamic law, running a coffee shop is seen as a man's job."It's extremely difficult for women in Aceh to pursue education or a career, facing not only legal restrictions but also social bullying," said Andreas Harsono of Human Rights Watch.

Despite widespread criticism, public whipping remains a common punishment for a range of offences in the province, including gambling, alcohol consumption and relations outside marriage. Independent career paths are mostly viewed as out of reach for Aceh's young women, but Qurrata was undeterred. 'Time for change' Qurrata, who owns her cafe without a business partner, saw a demand for a space for women to work or meet friends. She and her team of baristas pour fresh coffee to mostly hijab-wearing customers, with children's books and menstruation pads on sale nearby."There's no cigarette smoke, it's not noisy, it's really cosy," she said, adding that some men also have coffees at her shop."It's a statement that women can own businesses, make decisions and lead," she said. "Now is the time for change."The entrepreneur says women are stepping up, pointing to at least 1,000 applying for a barista job."I want to offer them the chance to change the course of their lives," she said. Caca, a 23-year-old barista, said it was a "really cool job" rare in Aceh. The cafe's regulars hail Morning Mama as a spot where women can be themselves."I feel more connection if I ask something with a woman barista," said 21-year-old student Meulu Alina. "I don't feel any nervousness. It's more like talking with your sister. "Helping othersBefore starting her business, Qurrata



While women are not banned from working in the only region in Muslim-majority Indonesia to impose Islamic law, running a coffee shop is seen as a man's job

overcame the loss of her parents at the age of eight in the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which killed more than 200,000 people.

Her village near Banda Aceh was completely destroyed, but she survived and was raised by her aunt and uncle. Qurrata said she wants to channel her grief into helping other women."It's a platform to help others find their own resilience, much like I did," she said. Photography jobs allowed her to build savings and confidence, taking a leap into business after her uncle encouraged her and helped financially. Other women were still "afraid to start", she said, for fear men will say bad things."People here tend to believe that women should stay at home," she saidBut "the older generation understands that times have changed. "Owner of Aceh's popular Solong coffee shop, Haji Nawawi, said he would not employ women but locals had accepted them making coffee elsewhere, calling it "normal" as values "from outside" Aceh had entered the province. Qurrata employs five women alongside two men. Revenue fluctuates, but Qurrata says her ultimate aim is to inspire other women."Women are capable of so much more than we're often given credit for. We can be leaders, creators, and in-

'Critically endangered' African penguins just want peace and food



GNS News Agency, Jan 17

Mashudu Mashau says it takes about two minutes to catch a penguin, a task he does weekly to investigate sightings of injured or sickly seabirds. "We don't rush... we go down, sometimes we crawl, so that we don't look threatening, and when we're close, we aim for the head, hold it and secure the penguin," the 41-year-old ranger told AFP.Sometimes, when penguins waddle up from South Africa's coastline onto nearby streets and hide under cars, it is more of a struggle. "We had one today. They're not easy to catch because they go from one side to the other side (of the car), but we got it," said Mashau, who has dedicated the past eight years to working to protect the species.

Once caught and placed with care into a cardboard box, the small feathered animals are sent to a specialist hospital for treatment. But conservationists and veterinarians are worried their efforts aren't sufficient to stop the decline of the African Penguin, listed as critically endangered last month by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)."No matter how much we do, if there isn't a healthy environment for them, our work is in vain," said veterinarian David Roberts, who works at the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB) hospital. Fewer than 10,000 breeding pairs are left globally, mainly in South Africa, down from 42,500 in 1991, and they could become extinct in the wild by 2035, the BirdLife NGO says. The dwindling numbers are due to a combination of factors including a lack of food, climate change, disturbances, predators, disease, oil spills and more. But the biggest threat is nutrition, says Allison Kock, a marine biologist with the South African National Parks.

"So many of the penguins are starving and are not getting enough food to breed successfully," she told AFP. When penguins do not eat enough, preferably sardines or anchovies, they tend to abandon breeding. Authorities have imposed a commercial fishing ban around six penguin colonies for 10 years starting in January. But SANCCOB and BirdLife say the no-fishing zones are not large enough to have a significant impact, and have sued the environment minister over the issue. "Ideally we would want more fish in the ocean but we cannot control that. What we can ask for, is to limit direct competition for the remaining fish between the industrial fisheries and the penguins," SANCCOB research manager Katta Ludynia told AFP. The South African Pelagic Fishing Industry Association says the impact of the fishing industry on penguin food sources is just a small fraction.

There are clearly other factors that have significant negative impact on the population of the African Penguin, chairperson Mike Copeland said. The environment ministry has proposed a discussion group "to resolve the complex issues", a spokesperson said. While a court hearing is scheduled for March 2025, the minister -- only in the post since July -- has called for an out-of-court settlement. Apart from the no-fishing zones, many other initiatives are underway to save the African Penguin, including artificial nests and new colonies. Being labelled "critically endangered" can be a double-edged sword. While conservationists are hoping to get attention and funding, it also makes penguins even more attractive to tourists who sometimes disturb them."Penguins are very susceptible... and the level of disturbance, people with selfie sticks, it's becoming more and more of a challenge," Arne Purves, coastal conservation and compliance officer for Cape Town, told AFP. "Especially as the penguins are now even more high-profile. "Tourism is a vital sector for South Africa and each year thousands of people visit the penguin colonies, bringing in millions of dollars in profit. For those on the frontlines to save the flightless black and white birds, like Mashau, the spotlight has been a long time coming."In the last five years, it was the rhinos... we hope we'll get the same respect now and the same assistance," he said. It is also about protecting the environment. "This is a species that is an indicator of a healthy ecosystem that humans are also part of... and the healthier the penguins, the more humans also benefit," he

Climate talks in Baku head into second week amid disagreements

GNS News Agency, Jan 17

United Nations talks on getting money to curb and adapt to climate change resumed Monday (November 18, 2024) with tempered hope that negotiators and ministers can work through disagreements and hammer out a deal after slow progress last week. That hope comes from the arrival of the climate and environment ministers from around the world this week in Baku, Azerbaijan, for the COP29 talks. They'll give their teams instructions on ways forward. "We are in a difficult place," said Melanie Robinson, economics and finance program director of global climate at the World Resources Institute. "The discussion has not yet moved to the political level — when it does I think ministers will do what they can to make a deal." Talks in Baku are focused on getting more climate cash for developing countries to transition away from fossil fuels, adapt to climate change and pay for damages caused by extreme weather. But countries are far apart on how much money that will require. Several experts put the sum needed at around \$1 trillion.

"One trillion is going to look like a bargain five, 10 years from now," said Rachel Cleetus from the Union of Concerned Scientists, citing a multitude of costly recent extreme weather events from flooding in Spain to hurricanes Helene and Milton in the United States. "We're going to wonder why we didn't take that and run with it." Also on Monday (November 18, 2024), the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has been mulling a proposal to cut public spending for foreign fossil fuel projects. The OECD - made up of 38 member countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, South Korea, Japan and Germany — are discussing a deal that could prevent up to \$40 billion worth of carbon-polluting projects.At COP29, activists are protesting the U.S., South Korea, Japan, and Turkey who they say are the key holdouts preventing the agreement in Paris from being finalized. "It's of critical importance that President Biden comes out in support. We know it's



really important that he lands a deal that Trump cannot undo This can be really important for Biden's legacy," said Lauri van der Burg, Global Public Finance Lead at Oil Change international. "If he comes around, this will help mount pressure on other laggards including Korea, Turkey and Japan."Meanwhile, the world's biggest decision makers are halfway around the world as another major summit conrazil is hosting the Group of 20 summit, which Nov. 18-19, bringing together many of the world's largest economies. Climate change — among other major topics like rising global tensions and poverty — will be on the agenda. Harjeet Singh, global engagement director for the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative, said G20 nations "cannot turn their backs on the reality of their historical emissions and the responsibility that comes with it.""They must commit to trillions in public finance," he said.In a written statement on Friday, United Nations Climate Change's executive secretary Simon Stiell said "the global climate crisis should be order of business Number One" at the G20 meetings. Stiell noted that progress on stopping more warming should happen both in and out of climate talks, calling the G20's role "mission-critical."

First direct cargo shipment from Pakistan arrives in Bangladesh, signals shift in foreign relations

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Pakistan's first direct cargo ship to Bangladesh since 1971 independence docked at the southeastern Chittagong Port last week, signalling a shift in foreign relations under the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus."To my knowledge, this was the first cargo ship that came directly from Karachi, mainly carrying raw materials for our textile and ceramic industries," an official of the Chittagong Port Authority said. He, however, added that the ship began its voyage from the UAE with its destination being Indonesia and made a stopover in Karachi to load cargo for Bangladesh. Some of the containers also carried goods from Dubai.War of 1971In 1971, West Pakistan and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) fought. This war led to the creation of an independent state known as Bangladesh. Officials said the ship, 'MV Yuan Xian Fa Zhong', arrived at Chittagong Port on November 13 and left soon after unloading the cargo from Pakistan. Earlier, cargo from Pakistan was shipped from a third country like Sri Lanka, Singapore or Malaysia through feeder vessels. Improved feasibility

A commerce ministry official familiar with the process said direct cargo transport from Pakistan reduces the price of commodities and quickens the shipment process. Pakistan's High Commissioner to Bangladesh Syed Ahmed Maroof called the voyage a step toward "boosting more integrated and trade network across the region." Leading foreign relations expert Professor Imtiaz Ahmed said that from an economic point of view "it is surprising to me why there were no direct shipments to and from Pakistan so far since the two countries are engaged in trade relations despite strained political relations". But, he said, as far as regional and geopolitical politics were concerned, "you should not do anything annoying other major countries like India, a reference to Yunus's comments that he wanted to revive the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). "In diplomacy, we need inclusion instead of alienating anyone...If India wants, SAARC will revive, if it



does not want to, it will remain inactive as it is now and even if you want to form a new regional alliance discarding India, you have to consider as well if other countries would like to discard a giant elephant," Ahmed said. On India-Bangladesh ties after the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina regime, the analyst said, "I think what is going on now is a temporary phenomenon and eventually Dhaka-Delhi ties should be on the right track for mutual benefit". During the recent UN General Assembly in New York, Yunus held meetings with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and other regional leaders, but an expected meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not take place. Yunus, who assumed the office as the Chief Adviser of the interim government on August 8, three days after the ouster of then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a student-led mass upsurge, on Sunday said Dhaka would seek her repatriation from India to stand trial."It is very clear that the interim government, because of its concerns about its partnership with India, would want to take a bit of a different approach to Pakistan," director of the Wilson Center's South Asia Institute Michael Kugelman said in a recent media interview. Bangladesh founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was unwilling to strengthen ties with Pakistan due to its lack of a full apology for the 1971 war.

Ranga Reddy **SATURDAY 18 JANUARY 2025 INDIAN CHRONICLE**

Why have timings for release of CPI inflation and IIP data been advanced, and the likely problems with this change



closely watched retail inflation and factory output data at 5:30 pm on the 12th of every month, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) on Tuesday announced new timings for data released at 4 pm. The Ministry said the revision in data release timings is being done "to provide more time on the day of release to access CPI (Consumer Price Index) & IIP (Index of Industrial Production) data. It also said the new release time aligns with the closing hours of major financial markets in India. However, some financial markets like the government bond markets and the foreign exchange futures, which are sensitive to inflation data, remain open till 5 pm and hence, may be sensitive to data released during market hours.

Why was the data release timing kept at 5:30 pm ear-

Back in 2013, there were some reports of data getting leaked before the official release time that had led to many representations to the Ministry to keep the timing of the data release, especially retail inflation data, after the market hours. The retail inflation and IIP data used to be released around 11-11:30 am on the 12th of every month till June 2013. Retail inflation data, which is a closely watched indicator for the Indian economy, would then become a crucial input for trading and taking positions in markets, especially in the forex and government bond markets. After the representations were made about data leaks at that time, the Ministry then changed the release time for the retail inflation and IIP data to 5:30 pm from July 2013 onwards. The timing was changed keeping in mind that the forex and government bond markets close at 5 pm. While retail inflation data has always been released on a monthly basis, the wholesale inflation data was released weekly till December 2012. Now, it's released on the 14th of every month around

What is the new change in data release timing?

for retail inflation and IIP on Tuesday, the Ministry said it will

'The CPI & Index of Industrial Production plays a critical role in economic policy and financial markets by reflecting inflationary trends across rural, urban, and combined sectors and industrial growth in the country," it said. Currently, the CPI and IIP are released by the MoSPI on the 12th of each month at 5:30 pm. If 12th is a holiday, then CPI data is released on the next working day and IIP is released on the previous working day if 12th falls on a holiday. The data release in November for both CPI and IIP will be made at 4 pm. The Ministry stated that the new release time aligns with the closing hours of major financial markets in India, "ensuring that CPI data dissemination does not interfere with active trading". "This adjustment also adheres to MoSPI's commitment to transparency and accessibility in data dissemination," it said. Analysts, however, point to the fact that while the stock markets may close by the 4pm release time, some financial markets such as the government bond and the foreign exchange markets, which are also sensitive to inflation data releases, remain open till 5 pm. The suggestion, therefore, is that the release time of 4 pm still does means the data could be sensitive, given the extended timings of the bond market and the currency market.

What is the significance of CPI and IIP data?

Consumer Price Indices (CPI) measure changes over time in the general level of prices of goods and services that households purchase for consumption. CPI is widely used as a macroeconomic indicator of inflation and as a tool by governments and central banks for inflation targeting and for monitoring price stability, and as deflators in the national accounts. Inflation is the rate at which prices for a basket of selected goods and services rise over a period of time and it is calculated by measuring year-on-year change in CPI, that is, current month CPI over CPI of same month of last year. At present, the CPI (combined), which is the most closely watched indicator for retail inflation, is linked to base year 2012 since the time of release in January 2015. Before that, it was linked to the base year 2010.

The IIP data measures the quantum of changes in the industrial production in an economy and captures the general level of industrial activity in the country. It is measured as an index number to value the short term changes in the volume of production of a basket of industrial products during a given period with respect to the base period, which is 2011-12 at present.

It covers industrial growth across three sectors - Mining, Manufacturing and Electricity - and different use-based categories, that is, basic goods, capital goods, intermediate goods, consumer durables and consumer non-durables. The IIP is watched as a short-term indicator for industrial growth till the release of the Annual Survey of Industries

While announcing the change in data release timing and National Accounts Statistics. provide more time on the day of release to access data. Larsen & Toubro to buy 21% stake

in E2E Networks for Rs 1,407 crore



and Al Cloud provider, Larsen and Toubro, Indian express business, business news, business articles, current affairs"The narrative in India has changed from being viewed as a digital colony to that of evolving into a provider of sovereign cloud platforms to the world," Dua said.

Larsen & Toubro (L&T) has proposed to acquire a 21 per cent equity stake in E2E Networks, an Indian Cloud and Al Cloud provider, at a cost of Rs 1,407 crore through a combination of primary and secondary transactions. Under this alliance, L&T will integrate E2E Networks' cloud

and AI cloud platform with its expertise in data centre management and cloud solutions towards empowering startups, and enterprises, L&T said. The company will not acquire control in E2E Networks following the proposed acquisition and will be a minority shareholder with certain protective rights, it said. The collaboration aims to accelerate digital transformation for a diverse range of industries, fostering a technology-driven, sustainable future for India, L&T said. Tarun Dua, Chairman and MD of E2E Networks, said, "The strategic collaboration between E2E Networks and L&T marks a significant milestone for the future of adoption of domestically built HyperScaler Cloud Platforms in India. The partnership marks the next step in the journey towards 'Make in India' for running production-grade traditional CPU workloads and GPU-led GenAl innovation in India."The narrative in India has changed from being viewed as a digital colony to that of evolving into a provider of sovereign cloud platforms to the world," Dua said. "Collaborating with E2E Networks allows us to offer our clients seamless, scalable and secure cloud experiences. By combining our capabilities, we are delivering a cloud ecosystem designed for businesses in India that want to drive growth, optimise costs and unlock the full potential of AI and digital transformation," said Seema Ambastha, Chief Executive of L&T Data Center and Cloud Business.

Microfinance delinquencies nearly double to over Rs 28,000 crore in a year

India's microfinance sector is experiencing a notable rise in delinquencies, particularly in the top ten states, despite the banking sector's celebration of a 12-year low in non-performing assets (NPAs). Microfinance loans to lowincome groups saw a significant surge in portfolio at risk (PAR) — loans with an overdue of 31-180 days — doubling to `28,154 crore by September 2024 from `14,617 crore a year ago. The delinquencies in the 31-180 days overdue category work out to 6.8 per cent of the total portfolio of `4.14 lakh crore exposure of microfinance firms, including banks and NBFCs, as of September 2024 as against 3.8 per cent of `3.84 crore portfolio in September 2023, says a report.

The incremental rise in the 31-180 days PAR category of microfinance institutions stood at `8,117 crore for the quarter ended September, taking the overall incremental rise in PAR to `13,468 crore for the 12 months ended September, according to a CRIF High Mark report. PAR was 4.6 per cent of advances in June 2024.

MFIs also cut down their exposure from `4.32 lakh crore to `4.14 lakh crore during the three months ended September 2024, CRIF report said. Bihar, UP, Tamil Nadu, and Odisha accounted for 62 per cent of the incremental delinquency, with Bihar reporting a `1,715 crore rise in delinquency for the three months ended September 2024. Bihar was followed by UP with a rise of `1441 crore in PAR, Tamil Nadu `1,009 crore and Orissa `995 crore, the report said.

Several factors contributed to this decline in portfolio quality. MFIs were lending to over-leveraged borrowers and they taking on too much debt, leading to repayment difficulties. Further debt-waiver campaigns by states and politicians to waive off debts have disrupted the repayment cycle. There was high field-staff attrition with frequent changes in field staff, affecting the quality of loan disbursal and collection. Elections and extreme weather conditions hindered loan recovery efforts. This rise in delinquencies may push up the credit cost for NBFC-MFIs, potentially impacting the microfinance sector's growth.

The slowdown in the economy has also contributed to the indebtedness and stress in the microfinance sector. The Reserve Bank of India has set a common household limit of `300,000 for loans to qualify as microfinance. This limit



applies to all entities in the microfinance sector. On the other hand, gross non-performing assets (GNPA) ratio of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) declined to a 12-year low of 2.6 per cent of advances in September 2024, says the Reserve Bank of India. India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) recently revised the outlook on the microfinance (MFI) sector to deteriorating from neutral, while maintaining a 'Stable' rating Outlook for FY26. The agency says that there are multiple headwinds for the sector such as borrower overleveraging for both MFI loans and non-MFI loans, reduced centre attendance, high attrition at branch levels and instances of frauds, all leading to a higher operating and credit cost for the sector in the medium term. "Ind-Ra has revised the sector outlook on MFIs to deteriorating from neutral, while maintaining a Stable rating outlook for FY26. Near-term challenges are likely to continue to play out with a recovery expected in 2HFY26. The Stable rating Outlook factors in adequate capitalisation and liquidity buffers and sufficient PPoP (pre-provision operating profit) margins which will help absorb the current asset quality downturn, said Karan Gupta, Head and Director Financial Institutions, Ind-Ra. The asset quality challenges faced by the sector and covenant breaches by players could lead to tighter funding from lenders. This could also lead to lenders assessing their incremental disbursements, thereby requiring monitoring of the rollover of the existing debt. This could impact the growth outlook for the sector in the medium term, it said.

The more carbon dioxide you emit, the more likely you are to be bitten by mosquitoes



If you've ever complained about being bitten by mosguitos, we would not be surprised if you've been told it's because your blood is 'sweeter.' But is it true? To find out, we contacted Dr Jinendra Jain, consultant physician at Wockhardt Hospital, Mira Road, who said that it's not blood but increased levels of carbon dioxide (CO2) in the environment that could significantly lead to more mosquito bites."Mosquitoes are generally attracted to carbon dioxide, mostly inhaled by humans and animals. Several factors can contribute to the emission of CO2. The higher carbon dioxide levels in certain areas with warmer temperatures and climate changes can create a perfect atmosphere for more mosquitoes to breed," said Dr Jain

Dr Mallika Motta, MD (Homeopathy), The Vital Dose Homeopathy Clinic, noted that mosquitoes have nerve cell receptors that detect carbon dioxide, allowing them to sense the air we exhale from over 30 feet away. "Mosquitoes are attracted to the carbon dioxide that humans and other animals exhale. This is one of the primary ways they locate potential hosts for their blood meals. The more carbon dioxide a person or animal emits, the more likely they are to be targeted by mosquitoes," said Dr Motta. While carbon dioxide is a natural byproduct of respiration, increased levels in the atmosphere due to human activities like burning fossil fuels can contribute to a higher concentration of this attractant for mosquitoes, said Dr Motta. Apart from CO2,

mosquitoes are attracted to certain compounds that are present on human skin and in sweat, noted Dr Motta. "These compounds give us a specific odour that can draw mosquitoes in. Several different compounds have been identified as being attractive to mosquitoes. Some that you may be familiar with include lactic acid and ammonia," said Dr Motta.

People with high metabolic rates, like pregnant women and those who work out, "who generally have subnormal body temperatures," are more prone to mosquito bites, said Dr Motta. While a 2019 study found that the primary mosquito vector of dengue virus preferred people with type O blood to those with other blood types, Dr Motta noted that separate research notes that experimental and laboratory data evaluating whether blood type makes one person more (or less) attractive to mosquitoes has fueled a lot of speculation, but the science is contradictory. "Instead, the researchers report that the likelihood of being a 'mosquito magnet" has more to do with skin odours and microbiota than blood type," said Dr Motta. Taking proactive steps and following necessary precautions can help mitigate this situation.

People should rely more on renewable energy sources such as solar or hydroelectric power to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels. "Use energy-saving appliances and light bulbs in your house to reduce the excessive energy consumption," said Dr Jain. Remember to apply a generous layer of mosquito repellent all over your body to protect yourself from being bitten by mosquitoes."Immediately consult a doctor if you start to feel symptoms like fever, chills, muscle pain, vomiting, nausea, fatigue, lightheadedness, and skin rashes as it can indicate various mosquito-borne diseases," said Dr Jain. If a mosquito has bitten you, there are things you can do to help relieve the swelling and itch.Dr Motta shared the following suggestions: *Avoid scratching. Scratching can increase swelling, and it breaks your skin, putting you at risk of an infection.

*Apply a cold compress to the site, like a wet towel or cold pack, to help with swelling and itch.*Take deeper breaths so that you avoid too much CO2 emission.

Radhika Apte opens up about first trimester struggles, says was in 'denial' after learning about pregnancy: 'I was having a meltdown'



Radhika Apte, due to deliver her first child in December 2024 with husband Benedict Taylor, recently opened up about her first trimester. Admitting that she was in "denial" for two weeks after learning about her pregnancy, Apte mentioned that she had "terrible bloating, severe constipation, and nausea" while she was shooting for those three months in 40-degree heat. "I was having a meltdown all the time. And people were telling me you need to be happy because you're having a child. I wanted to punch them. I'm telling you that I'm suffering, and you're telling me to be happy," said Apte, adding that she never planned to have children.In an interview with ETimes, Apte, 39, shared that the couple "never looked into what pregnancy means or what happens when you're pregnant." "What are the changes that the body goes through? There's so much sacredness attached to pregnancy that nobody tells you the

truth because pregnancy is very hard. Pregnancy is not fun. Some people have a better pregnancy; for some, it's easier than other people. But it's a very subjective case. Pregnancy is very hard, and bodies constantly go through very big changes," the Merry Christmas actor added.

Notably, Apte surprised her fans by appearing at the BFI London Film Festival last month, flaunting her baby bump. Taking a cue from the actor's admission, let's understand the changes that occur in the first trimester and what can help to cope.Dr Pratima Thamke, consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist, Motherhood Hospital, Kharghar, seconded Apte and said that the first trimester of pregnancy could feel like navigating through a wide range of emotions and physical changes, often leaving expectant mothers with anxiety and stress. "For many, the thought of bringing new life into the world is tempered by overwhelming fatigue and nausea. Hormonal shifts can create heightened sensitivity, stress, fatigue, and weight gain in a large number of women," said Dr Thamke.

According to Dr Thamke, emotional turmoil can cause loneliness, frustration, and irritation. "Initiating conversations about fears, hopes, and expectations can help form deeper bonds with partners while opening channels for essential support networks from families and friends during this time," said Dr Thamke. Moreover, mindfulness practices like journaling or gentle yoga can help "ground fluctuating emotions while promoting a sense of control during this journey." According to Dr Thamke, the challenges differ from woman to woman as every woman's journey is different, and the issues they experience will also not be similar. "It is better for pregnant women to stay calm and composed during the first three months by opting for relaxation techniques like meditation and regular check-ups with the doctor. Don't get bogged down; resilience is key during this crucial period. Pay attention to your health, eat a balanced diet, and follow the advice given by the doctor," said Dr Thamke.

Get chronic UTIs? Future treatments may add more bacteria to your bladder to beat back harmful microbes

Millions of people in the US and around the world suffer from urinary tract infections every year. Some groups are especially prone to chronic UTIs, including women, older adults and some veterans. These infections are typically treated with antibiotics, but overusing these drugs can make the microbes they target become resistant and reduce the medicines' effectiveness. To solve this problem of chronic UTIs and antibiotic resistance, we combined our expertise in microbiology and engineering to create a living material that houses a specific strain of beneficial E. coli. Our research shows that the "good" bacteria released from this biomaterial can compete with "bad" bacteria for nutrients and win, dramatically reducing the number of disease-causing microbes. With further development, we believe this technique could help manage recurring UTIs that do not respond to antibiotics.UTI Since beneficial bacteria cannot attach to and survive in the bladder for long, we developed a biomaterial that could slowly release bacteria in the bladder over time. Bringing bacteria to the bladderFor the microbes living in people, nutrients are limited their presence varies between different parts of the body. Bacteria have to compete with other microbes and the host to acquire essential nutrients. By taking up available nutrients, beneficial bacteria can stop or slow the growth of harmful bacteria. When harmful bacteria are starved of important nutrients, they aren't able to reach high enough numbers to cause disease. Delivering beneficial bacteria to the bladder to prevent UTIs in challenging, though. For one, these helpful bacteria can naturally colonize only in people who are unable to fully empty their bladder, a condition called urinary retention. Even among these patients, how long these bacteria can colonize their bladders varies widely. Current methods to deliver bacteria to the bladder are invasive and require repeated catheter insertion. Even when bacteria are successfully released into the bladder, urine will flush out these microbes because they cannot stick to the bladder wall. Since beneficial bacteria cannot attach to and survive

in the bladder for long, we developed a biomaterial that could slowly release bacteria in the bladder over time.

Our biomaterial is composed of living E. coli embedded in a matrix structure made of gel. It resembles a piece of jelly about 500 times smaller than a drop of water and can release bacteria for up to two weeks in the bladder. By delivering the bacteria via biomaterial, we overcome the need for the bacteria to attach to the bladder to persist in

We tested our biomaterial by placing it in human urine in petri dishes and exposing it to bacterial pathogens that cause UTIs. Our results showed that when mixed in a 50:50 ratio, the E. coli outcompeted the UTI-causing bacteria by increasing to around 85% of the total population. When we added more E. coli than UTI-causing bacteria, which is what we envision for future development and testing, the proportion of E. coli increased to over 99% of the population, essentially wiping out the UTI-causing bacteria. Moreover, the biomaterial continued releasing E. coli for up to two weeks in human urine.Our findings suggest that E.coli could stick around and survive in the bladder for extended periods of time and successfully decrease the growth of many types of bacteria that cause UTIs.Improving biomaterialsOur findings show that E. coli can not only control harmful bacteria it's closely related to but also a broad range of diseasecausing bacteria in humans and animals. This means scientists might not need to identify different types of beneficial bacteria to control each pathogen - and there are many - that can cause a UTI. Our team is currently evaluating how effectively our biomaterial can cure UTIs in mice. We are also working to identify the specific nutrients that beneficial and harmful bacteria compete over and what factors may help beneficial bacteria win. We could add these nutrients to our biomaterial to be released or withheld. This research is still at an early stage, and clinical uses are not in development yet, so if it does reach patients it will be well in

Kangana Ranaut calls Salman Khan a 'good friend', talks about their collaboration: 'We had many opportunities to work together'



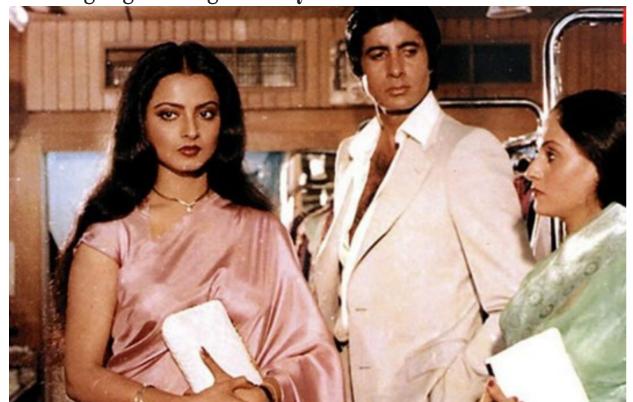
Kangana Ranaut has earned a reputation for voicing her unfiltered opinions about the Hindi film industry and its biggest stars. Recently, Kangana opened up about her bond with Salman Khan, describing him as a "good friend". She also shared that, despite multiple opportunities for collaboration with the Dabangg actor, none of them have materialised so far. However, Kangana admitted that the possibility of working with him in the future remains open.

Speaking to News18, Kangana said, "Salman is a good

friend of mine, and we've had many opportunities where we could work together. But, you know, let's see. Somehow it never came together."In an earlier interaction with Siddharth Kannan, Kangana Ranaut revealed that Salman Khan had offered her prominent roles in films like Bajrangi Bhaijaan and Sultan, but she turned them down. She explained, "Salman offered me a role in Bajrangi Bhaijaan, I was like, 'Yeh kya role diya hai? (What is this role?).' He then approached me for Sultan. I didn't take that up. He was like 'What more do I offer to you now?'"

Kangana has emphasised that though she rejected roles offered by Salman, the actor has always been kind to her. "Salman is so kind. He keeps talking to me. He is even excited to watch Emergency. We have a common friend, he sent him and was like 'You go see what film she has made.' He called me and said, 'It's a nice film.' I was like, 'So you have the news, but you haven't watched it yourself.' This is the kind of bonding we share," she added.Kangana Ranaut's upcoming film, Emergency, is slated for a theatrical release on January 17. The movie, which she has directed and produced, features her in the role of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

When Jaya Bachchan spoke out on Amitabh Bachchan's rumoured affair with Rekha and if she'd mind them working together again: 'My life would have been hell if...'



Despite Amitabh Bachchan and Rekha consistently denying involvement with each other, it's doubtful if any other relationship rumour in Bollywood has endured as long or as intensely. Amitabh Bachchan, Jaya Bachchan and Rekha in director Yash Chopras' Silsila. Though Bollywood's Shahenshah Amitabh Bachchan and legendary actor Jaya Bachchan (née Jaya Bhaduri) have been married for 51 years, gossip circles continue to speculate whether Big B has a relationship with the thespian par excellence Rekha. Despite Amitabh and Rekha consistently denying involvement, it's doubtful if any other relationship rumour in Bollywood has endured as long or as intensely.

In fact, Jaya herself has faced this question multiple times. However, her response during a 2008 interview with People magazine stands out for its clarity and conviction. When asked about the alleged affair between Amitabh and Rekha, she replied, "If there was any, he would have been somewhere else, na? People liked them as a couple on screen, and that's fine. The media tried linking him with every one of his heroines. My life would have been hell if I had taken it all seriously. We are made of sterner stuff." Madha Gaja Raja movie review | Vishal, Santhanam power this

Sundar C throwback to simpler yet sus timesJaya Bachchan was also asked if she would object to Amitabh Bachchan and Rekha working together again, to which she firmly responded that she wouldn't. "Why should I mind? But I feel it will be more like a sensation than actual work. And that's a pity because one will miss the opportunity of seeing them together. Both of them probably realise it will go beyond work."On how she maintained a lasting marriage, Jaya explained, "By just leaving him alone. You have to have the conviction. I married a good man and a family that believes in commitment. You must not get too possessive, especially in our profession, where you know things aren't going to be easy. You can either drive the artiste crazy or you can help him or her grow. And if he goes, then he was never yours!"One of the most cherished on-screen couples of all time, Amitabh Bachchan and Rekha joined forces in several films including Do Anjaane (1976), Alaap (1977), Khoon Pasina (1977), Ganga Ki Saugandh (1978), Muqaddar Ka Sikandar (1978), Mr Natwarlal (1979), Suhaag (1979), Ram Balram (1980) and Silsila (1981). However, they haven't shared the screen in 43 years since Silsila, directed by Yash Chopra, which also featured Jaya Bachchan in a key role.

Telangana govt revokes ticket price hike for Ram Charan's Game Changer

Ram Charan's Game ChangerThe Telangana government said early morning shows of Game Changer will not be permitted in future 'until public interest, health and safety are duly considered'. The Telangana government has revoked its earlier orders allowing an increase in ticket prices for actor Ram Charan starrer Game Changer.

Complying with the High Court directives, the government said early morning shows will not be permitted in future 'until public interest, health and safety are duly considered'. The orders withdrawing permission for screening the movie with enhanced rates would be effective from January 16, an official statement said on Saturday night.

Following a request made by the makers of Game Changer, the state government had issued orders on January 3 permitting screening of six shows on January 10 (including extra show at 4 am) with an additional amount of Rs 150 for multiplex theatres and Rs 100 for single theatres.lt also allowed screening of five shows from January 11 to 19 (for nine days) with an additional amount of Rs 100 for multiplex theatres and Rs 50 for single theatres.While allowing additional shows and hike in prices, the government had said advertisements on adverse impact of narcotics and drugs and cyber crime should be screened.

However, the High Court passed interim directions on January 10 to review the decision issued in enhancing the ticket rates on Rs 150 for multiplex and Rs 100 for single theatres from the regular rates, within 24 hours from the date of receipt of a copy of the order, and also to not allow early morning shows. Opposition BRS MLA T Harish Rao on January 10 criticised the Congress government for allowing ticket price hike though state Cinematography Minister K Venkata Reddy spoke against it in the Legislative Assembly in the wake of the death of a woman in a stampede on December 4, 2024, at the premiere of Allu Arjun starrer Pushpa-2.



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Salman Khan recalls Raveena Tandon fighting with him on-set, reacts to Rasha and Aman's debut: 'Main wahi ka wahi hoon'



The latest episode of Bigg Boss 18 Weekend Ka Vaar featured Salman Khan welcoming debutant actors Rasha Thadani and Aman Devgan, who are gearing up for their big-screen debut with Azaad. Rasha is the daughter of Bollywood star Raveena Tandon, while Aman is the nephew of actor Ajay Devgn. During the episode, Salman greeted the two newcomers warmly, acknowledging his personal connection with them.

In a delightful surprise for viewers, Raveena also graced the Bigg Boss 18 stage, reuniting with her Andaz Apna Apna co-star. Salman expressed his fondness for the young stars and humorously remarked, "It's hard to believe that you guys have become a hero and heroine aur main wahi ka wahi (and I'm still the same)." Taking a playful dig at Ajay's dancing skills, Salman quipped, "Aman, you're a good dancer, and even Ajay will agree." Salman then invited Raveena onto the stage, referring to her as "Rasha's elder sister." Together, Salman and Raveena recreated the hook steps of some of their iconic songs.

Amid the fun interactions, Raveena Tandon recalled the time Salman Khan commented on her weight. As the show displayed throwback photos of the stars, one image showed Salman carrying Raveena on his back. Sharing the story behind the picture, Raveena said, "He asked me, 'Tumhara wazan kitna hai? (How much do you weigh?)' And I was really fat at that time," she added with a laugh.

Throwback photos of Salman with a young Rasha Thadani, who was just 3 years old at the time, were also displayed during the episode. The heartwarming pictures captured Salman feeding cake to little Rasha and happily posing with her. Reflecting on the moment, Rasha said, "Wow, that was ages ago." Salman Khan and Raveena Tandon also indulged in playful banter, reminiscing about their time working together in the 1990s. Salman teased Rasha by saying, "Tumhari mummy mujhse bohot jhagda karti thi (Your mother used to fight with me a lot)." Raveena quick responded with her own anecdote, "Hum saath mein shoot ke liye jaate the, tab Salman flights mein so jaate the. Tab Instagram ka zamana hota toh main bohot saare snaps leke dalti (When we traveled for shoots, Salman would sleep on the flight. If Instagram existed back then, I'd have clicked lots of pictures and posted them)."The Bigg Boss Weekend Ka Vaar episode airing on Sunday night will also feature cricketer Yuzvendra Chahal alongside Punjab Kings teammates Shreyas Iyer and Shashank Singh.

Disney pledges \$15 million in Los Angeles fire aid as more stars learn they've lost their homes

The Pacific Palisades wildfires torched the home of This Is Us star Milo Ventimiglia, perhaps most poignantly destroying the father-to-be's newly installed crib. CBS cameras caught the actor walking through his charred house for the first time, standing in what was once his kitchen and looking at a neighborhood in ruin. "Your heart just breaks." He and his pregnant wife, Jarah Mariano, evacuated Tuesday with their dog and they watched on security cameras as the flames ripped through the house, destroying everything, including a new crib. "There's a kind of shock moment where you're going, 'Oh, this is real. This is happening.' What good is it to continue watching?' And then at a certain point we just turned it off, like 'What good is it to continue watching?'"More stars learn their homes are gone

Firefighters sought to make gains Friday during a respite in the heavy winds that fanned the flames as numerous groups pledged aid to help victims and rebuild, including a \$15 million donation pledge from the Walt Disney Co.

While seeing the remains of his home, Ventimiglia was struck by a connection to his This Is Us character, Jack Pearson, who died after inhaling smoke in a house fire. "It's not lost on me life imitating art." Mandy Moore, who played Ventimiglia's wife on This Is Us, nearly lost her home in the Eaton fire, which scorched large areas of the Altadena neighborhood. She said Thursday that part of her house is standing but is unlivable, and her husband lost his music studio and all his instruments.

Mel Gibson's home is "completely gone", his publicist Alan Nierob confirmed Friday. The Oscar winner revealed the loss of his home earlier Friday while appearing on Joe Rogan's podcast. Numerous stars have confirmed their homes were lost or sustained damage in devastating wild-fires burning in and around Los Angeles. At least 10 people have died, thousands of structures and vehicles have been destroyed and more than 150,000 people remain under evactuation orders. The home that Miles Teller and his wife, Keleigh, shared was a pile of dust and debris, with only the fall shrubbery and a gate surrounding the lot still standing. Keleigh posted photos of the home on Instagram of before the wildfire and after, urging people to get out of the neigh-



borhood and thanks to first responders. "We will come back stronger than ever," she wrote. She added that she wished she'd taken her wedding dress. Billy Crystal and his wife lost their home of 45 years. Paris Hilton, Jeff Bridges and Cary Elwes and R&B star Jhené Aiko have also said their homes are gone. Haley Joel Osment says he lost everything in Altadena. "I am so sorry for the losses that thousands of people are suffering and I'm trying to etch in my mind the unique details of this lovely town that are gone forever — thank you to everyone who has reached out and who has helped as we lose our home," the actor wrote on Instagram.

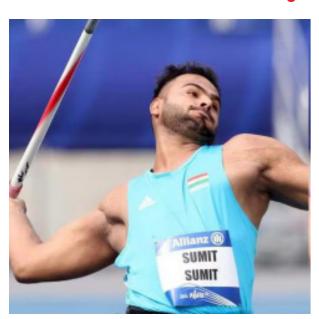
The company announced the donations Friday afternoon. It said the money would be spread across several groups, including the American Red Cross, the Los Angeles Fire Department Foundation and the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank. "Walt Disney came to Los Angeles with little more than his limitless imagination, and it was here that he chose to make his home, pursue his dreams, and create extraordinary storytelling that means so much to so many people around the world. We are proud to provide assistance to this resilient and vibrant community in this moment of need," Disney CEO Bob Iger said in a state-

Vishal, Santhanam power this Sundar C throwback to simpler yet sus times

Madha Gaja Raja movie review: When one looks at films that are over a decade old, it is but natural to see if it has aged well. Are the dialogues still relevant? Is the narrative still fresh? Have the actors and filmmaker evolved? In fact, many a time, it takes us back to the time we first saw it, and our response to it today is a reflection of our own evolution. But what if it is a movie that you never saw, and you are watching it for the first time a decade after it was made. What if it is a movie that no one saw because it didn't release when it had to, and is finally hitting the screens 12 years later? Do you see it as a 2013 film? Do you see it as a 2025 film? That is the conundrum one finds themselves in while watching Sundar C's long-delayed Madha Gaja Raja, which was supposed to hit screens for Pongal 2013, but a time traveler moved a chair somewhere in the past, and it saw the light of day for Pongal 2025. This conundrum finds a way to solve itself by simply understanding that Madha Gaja Raja or MGR is a Sundar C film. Over three decades in the industry, Sundar C has managed to create a brand for himself. Despite dabbling in various genres, including comedy, action drama, horror, and slice-of-life films, most of his movies carry his brand of irreverence and glamour. For instance, one might ask why a film about what a friend would do to save the skin of his other friends in deep trouble, have him take time out to attend a Yoga session featuring a glamorous instructor and a roving camera in the hands of the cinematographer. But you don't ask it because you know it is a Sundar C film, and everyone, including the actors and the audience, are primed for the same. Now, is

it right? Is it needed? Is it voyeuristic? Does the gaze need an immediate revision? Are we reading too much into it? Should it be looked at with this amount of seriousness? Wait, Raja (Vishal) is now springing out of the well with Madhavi (Anjali) and Maya (Varalaxmi) in his arms, and has broken into the extremely catchy "My Dear Loverr-u" by Vijay Antony... let's come back to this debate after that. The first half of Madha Gaja Raja is a sped-up version of Adam Sandler's Grown Ups with a few changes made to accommodate local sensibilities. For instance, it is a running race instead of basketball, a glamourous sister-in-law instead of a glamorous step-daughter, a marriage function in the favourite teacher's family instead of the death of the favourite teacher, etc... Here too, Raga and his gang of friends are boisterous, crass, endearing, and the embodiment of the statement, 'Boys will be boys.' This leads to scenes where objectification is par for the course, and garden variety misogyny is thrown in for fun. But because it is about boys being boys, we are asked to sympathise with their plights.But if we are able to look past it all, and still laugh a lot or smile wide despite our eyes rolling, it is because the film brings back Santhanam, the comedian. He is in his elements, and like he effortlessly used to, masks all the cracks to make us split our slides with laughter. In fact, he powers the entire first half's humour quotient with his one-liners that borders on the risque, and manages rare moments of vulnerability that shows us Santhanam's penchant for sentiment.

The hidden force behind India's Paralympic gold rush



Imagine losing a limb and believing your dreams have ended. For thousands of determined people, the Artificial Limb Centre (ALC) in Pune has transformed that narrative from hopeless despair to a powerful destiny. In the heart of Pune, a quiet revolution is reshaping the lives of India's para-athletes, who have gone on to make the country proud at the Paralympics, transforming their setbacks into comebacks.

Life took an unexpected turn for Murlikant Petkar during the 1965 Indo-Pak war, where nine bullet wounds left him paralysed from the waist down. However, he refused to let his disability define him. During his rehabilitation at the ALC campus, Petkar discovered swimming as an alternate sport career. His determination culminated in clinching India's first Paralympic gold medal in the 50-metre freestyle event at the 1972 Heidelberg Games in Germany. He happens to be the real inspiration behind the movie 'Chandu Champion' starring Karthik Aryan.paralympics Murlikant Petkar is India's first Paralympic gold medal winner in 50-metre freestyle swimming

"ALC did not just give me prosthetics; they restored my warrior spirit and rebuilt my broken dreams. The dedicated staff and world-class facilities helped me find my strength again. Today's Para-athletes might see me as an inspiration, but I see ALC as the true architect of India's Paralympic journey," said Petkar.

Hokato Hotozhe Seema: bronze medal in shotput at 2024 ParalympicsSurviving a land mine blast in an antiterror operation in Jammu and Kashmir in 2002 plunged Hokato into a phase where he questioned his identity as a soldier. After this accident, he continued working in an administrative position within the Army. However, a visit to the ALC for a prosthetic limb fitting in 2016 opened new opportunities for him.

Paralympics Hokato Hotozhe Seema won bronze medal in shotput at 2024 Paralympics "Officers at ALC inspired me to play 'shotput'. Their expertise in sports-specific prosthetics and unwavering support transformed my perceived weakness into my greatest strength. I used to need a new limb every 10 days during the training sessions, which would cost lakhs, but ALC never complained and always offered me a new one. The bronze medal won at the 2024 Paralympics Games isn't just mine: it belongs to every person at ALC, Army Paralympic Node, the Indian Army and the support staff who believed in me," shared

Sumit Antil: gold medals in javelin in Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024 Paris Paralympic history at the 2024 Paris Paralympic securing 29 medals – seven gold, nine silver, dent crushed Sumit's wrestling dreams, resulting in the amputation of his left leg. Yet, this young athlete's spirit remarks and paralympic Games," said Murlikant Petkar.

mained unbroken. At ALC, Sumit discovered para-javelin as an alternative sport. His journey from countless hours of training with the prosthetic leg to becoming a two-time Paralympic champion speaks volumes about his resilience, clinching gold medals in both Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024 Paralympic Games with record-breaking throws in the men's javelin throw F64 category.paralympics Sumit Antil won gold medals in javelin in Tokyo 2020 and Paris 2024 Paralympics

"After such a tragic incident, one needs to get mental stability. The facility at ALC provided me with that mental strength. When I first walked into ALC in 2015, I never imagined I would walk out as a future Paralympic champion. The technicians at ALC didn't just design a prosthetic leg but engineered my comeback story. The centre's cutting-edge prosthetics and understanding of an athlete's needs turned my disability into my strength," said Sumit.Nitesh Kumar: gold in men's singles in badminton at Paris Paralympics 2024

Nitesh Kumar met with a tragic train accident in 2009 that left him bedridden, but it could not dampen his sporting spirit. During his stay at IIT-Mandi, he discovered para-badminton, finding a new purpose in life. His journey from rehabilitation to winning gold in the men's singles SL3 category at the 2024 Paris Paralympics showcases extraordinary determination and skill.

Nitesh Kumar Nitesh Kumar won gold medal in men's singles in badminton at Paris Paralympics 2024"I was inspired by observing 'Anandan Gunasekaran,' a champion blade runner. I have walked for hours in the rehabilitation centre during my recovery phase. I was fitted with a highend 'Flex-run Blade' and a 'Socket' for free which cost lakhs elsewhere. This has helped me move with agility on the badminton court. Every smash, every dive, and every victory on the court carries the spirit of those who rebuilt me, one step at a time and is a testament to ALC's commitment to transforming lives through sports," said Nitesh.

Where technology meets compassionWhat sets ALC apart is its cutting-edge prosthetics and human-centric approach. While using advanced technologies like computer-aided design (CAD) and computer-aided manufacturing (CAM), they don't just replace limbs but restore the dignity and potential of an individual.

"ALC happens to be the world's only centre that manufactures both endo-skeletal and conventional limbs simultaneously. Over 71,000 persons with disabilities are registered at ALC. And around 800 new beneficiaries are added yearly," said Brigadier C N Satish, Commandant of ALC Pune. "In India, the most significant challenge faced by the para-athletes is the lack of sports prosthetic facilities because very few manufacture them, they are costly, and many depend on its import. But we, as a defence organisation, can provide high-end prosthetics for sports persons. We also have a special team of para-athletes who offer highly skilled expertise in designing and manufacturing prostheses in-house. After this, we train them to use prostheses at our rehabilitation centre. And our collaborative team at the Indian Army's Paralympic node trains them in their respective sports," he added. "We have started a "direct socket system," for transfemoral prosthesis users, a novel interface where the socket is shaped and laminated on the residual limb, and takes around three hours to make, which took over a week earlier. We recently manufactured a "Phoenix foot" that provides natural ankle movement on uneven terrain and comforts the hip and knee during long physical work. We are also planning to start implementing 3D printing technology-based manufacturing," said Brigadier Satish, talking of innovations inspired by the institute's motto of "No Wheelchair, No Crutches" "India achieved its most successful performance in Paralympic history at the 2024 Paris Paralympic Games, securing 29 medals - seven gold, nine silver, and 13 bronze. I believe India will secure over 50 medals in the

Jasprit Bumrah set to miss Champions Trophy group stage matches because of back swelling



GNS News Agency, Jan 17

IN A setback for India, strike bowler Jasprit Bumrah is likely to miss the group stage of next month's Champions Trophy due to health reasons. The Indian Express has learnt that Bumrah, who has swelling on his back, has been asked to report to the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru where his recovery will be monitored. The Champions Trophy, which will have the world's top eight ODI teams, begins on February 19, with the matches scheduled at Karachi, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Dubai for India's games. The national selectors, who met in Mumbai on Saturday to pick the team for the T20 series at home against England later this month, are learnt to have been updated about Bumrah's fitness status. Though the deadline for announcing squads for the Champions Trophy is Sunday, the BCCI has sought an extension.

Selectors are considering whether they should name Bumrah in the squad of 15 or add him to the list of reserve players for the tournament. It is learnt that the BCCI will initially submit a provisional squad to the International Cricket Council. As changes to teams can be made till February 12, it gives selectors time to monitor Bumrah's progress closer to the tournament. According to a BCCI source, Bumrah is expected to be fully fit only by the first week of March. "He (Bumrah) will be going to NCA for his rehabilitation. The initial report says he doesn't have a fracture but has swelling on his back. So the NCA will monitor his recovery and he will be there for three weeks. But even after that, he will have to play a match or two, even if they are practice games organised to check his match fitness," said the source. While India's last group match, against New

Zealand, is on March 2, it is unclear if Bumrah will be ready to play. Prior to this, India will play Bangladesh on February 20 and Pakistan on February 23. India will play all their matches in Dubai, as the team refused to travel to Pakistan citing security concerns and the ICC agreed to a hybrid model. The semi-finals are on March 4 and 5, and the final on March 9.

In the recent five-match Test series in Australia, Bumrah took 32 wickets and won the player of the series award. He sat out on the final day of the series in Sydney because of his injury. Australia won the series and took the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Bumrah has had issues with his back earlier too. He missed nearly 11 months of cricket from September 2022 to August 2023 — after undergoing a surgery. He made a comeback at a T20 match against Ireland. The Indian team management has been mindful of his workload to prevent the strike bowler from straining himself. Bumrah was rested for the fourth Test against England in Ranchi at the start of last year. More recently, he was rested for the third and final Test against New Zealand in Mumbai so he could stay fresh for the Test series in Australia. In Australia, Bumrah bowled 151.2 overs in five Test matches with an average of 13.06 and a strike rate of 28.3. He was also the stand-in captain for the first Test in Perth as Rohit Sharma skipped the match. Bumrah also captained the side for the final Test in Sydney when Rohit decided to sit out.

Satwik, Chirag pair bows out of Malaysia Open semifinals

Kuala Lumpur: Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty's impressive run at the Malaysia Super 1000 badminton tournament came to an end following a straightgame loss to Korea's Kim Won Ho and Seo Seung Jae in the semifinals, here on Saturday. Seeded seventh, Satwik and Chirag, who reached the finals last season, lost 10-21 15-21 in a 40-minute semifinal clash. "They played really well, and we could have followed our game plan a bit better. Instead, we played some random strokes, but kudos to them for playing a solid game," Satwik said. "Today, the pace of the game was very slow compared to the last three days. It's part of the game. It was a valuable learning experience

No knee-jerk decisions in BCCI's review meet on India's disastrous Australia tour



GNS News Agency, Jan 17

New Delhi: India's disastrous tour of Australia was reviewed by the BCCI in an over two-hour-long meeting with under-fire skipper Rohit Sharma and head coach Gautam Gambhir on Sunday but the Board decided against any knee-jerk response to the debacle that was largely blamed on the poor form of senior players. The meeting was held at a five-star facility in Mumbai and BCCI President Roger Binny and secretary elect Devajit Saikia were in attendance along with Rohit and Gambhir.

"There was a detailed discussion on the Border Gavaskar Trophy performance and what all went wrong and the course correction required. But do not expect a hurried decision from the new dispensation of BCCI," a source privy to developments in the Board said.India surrendered the Border-Gavaskar Trophy for the first time in a decade following the 1-3 loss to Australia. The team was also knocked out of the World Test Championship final in

June this year due to the defeat in the five-match series. It is understood that with an important ODI tournament like the Champions Trophy scheduled in another six weeks' time, any immediate reaction would have a negative impact on the team as well as the support staff. Rohit, who drew considerable flak for his underwhelming batting performance in Australia, is also the national ODI captain. The team will get a break only after the Champions Trophy, which concludes on March 9, and the players will then be seen in the colours of their respective IPL franchises after that. India's next big Test assignment is a five-match series against England in June. Speculation is swirling that the 37-year-old Rohit will not be selected for that series. Virat Kohli's future is also under the scanner although it is believed that he is in a slightly better position as of now. While Rohit managed just 31 runs in Australia, prompting him to drop himself from the fifth and final Test, Kohli managed a hundred in the opening game in Perth. With more than five months to go for the next Test series, many in the BCCI believe that there is no need to take a decision right away. However, how Rohit and Kohli perform in the Champions Trophy will be a major factor in deciding which direction their careers take in the coming few months. That the Indian Test set-up is in turmoil during a difficult transition was evident from the abrupt manner in which senior off-spinner R Ashwin retired mid-series after not being played for the majority of the games he was there. It is also learnt that players won't be allowed to pick and choose bilateral assignments based on their whims and fancies. They will have to provide valid medical reasons for skipping any games. The Board has already directed the stars to turn up for domestic engagements with Gambhir stating it firmly that all those who are committed to red-ball cricket must show up for Ranji Trophy matches.

Jemimah Rodrigues' first international century powers India to their highest ever total in women's ODIs

GNS News Agency, Jan 17

It was a record-breaking day in Rajkot for the Indian women's cricket team as a solid batting display, led by Jemimah Rodrigues' unbeaten 102 off just 91 balls, powered the hosts to a massive 370 for five against Ireland in the second ODI on Sunday. It is now the highest ODI total for Indian women, breaking the previous best of 358/2, which was also against Ireland in Potchefstroom, scored in 2017. Just recently, they had equalled that tally with 358/5 v West Indies in Vadodara. Opting to bat, Smriti Mandhana (73) and Pratika Rawal (67) forged a 156-run stand for the opening wicket. It's already their 100-plus opening stand in just their fifth match together at the top of the order. They have now scored 468 runs as a pair at an average of 93.60 per partnership.

But the headline belonged to Rodrigues as she scored her first-ever international century. Rodrigues and Harleen Deol (89) added another 183 for the third wicket. "It has been



a long wait to get this hundred," Rodrigues said after her knock that included 12 fours. "Glad that the team gave me a role at No. 4 and I could deliver. Today, the important thing for me was to be till the 50th over. Getting runs is not a problem, I am good at that, but being till the end was important and glad I could do that."

Karun Nair hits 4th consecutive List A hundred in Vijay Hazare Trophy, becomes 3rd Indian to record feat



GNS News Agency, Jan 17

Karun Nair became the third Indian to hit four consecutive List A centuries in the Vijay Hazare Trophy. (Instagram)Karun Nair became the third Indian to hit four consecutive List A centuries in the Vijay Hazare Trophy. (Instagram)Vidarbha captain Karun Nair extended his stupendous purple patch as he smashed his fourth consecutive century in the Vijay Hazare Trophy in the quarter-final clash against Rajasthan at the Motibaug Cricket Ground in Vadodara in Sunday.

Chasing a hefty 292-run total, the 33-year-old Nair walked in at number three after a 92-run opening stand between Yash Rathod and Dhruv Shorey. Nair then anchored

the chase with Shorey wht got to his century in 114 deliveries. The former Karnataka batter reached his fourth hundred in consecutive innings off only 77 deliveries with 11 fours and three sixes, making him only the third Indian and the fifth batter overall to achieve the milestone in List A cricket. Shortly after the century, Nair smoked pacer Khaleel Ahmed for 24 runs in five deliveries with three fours and two sixes before Vidarbha secured a nine-wicket win in 43.3 overs.

Vidarbha qualified for the knockouts after winning all games in Group D of the tournament, with their final league game against Mizoram ending in a 10-wicket win. Within his four previous outings with the bat in the league stage, Nair set a new List A world record for most runs between two dismissals. Nair's scores during this run read: 112*, 111*, 163* and 44* against Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Chandigarh and Chhattisgarh respectively. Nair had earlier started the tournament with a century against J&K. The overall streak makes him only the second batter to hit five centuries in an edition of the Vijay Hazare Trophy after Tamil Nadu's Jagadeesan. Nair became the third batter after Devdutt Padikkal (4, 2020-21) and Jagadeesan to record four consecutive centuries in List A cricket. While Jagadeesan holds the world record with five consecutive centuries during the 2021-22 VHT, only Kumar Sangakkara (4) and Alviro Petersen (4) have achieved the landmark of four consecutive List A centuries outside India.

Shakib, Litton miss out on Bangladesh's Champions Trophy squad

Dhaka: Bangladesh on Sunday omitted former skipper Shakib Al Hasan, who has been suspended from bowling in international and domestic cricket because of an illegal action, from their Champions Trophy squad. Shakib, who failed a test of his bowling action at the Loughborough University in England last month, also could not procure a positive assessment in a second independent test conducted at the Sri Ramachandra Centre for Sports Science in

The omission from the 15-member Champions Trophy squad could also mark the end of the 37-year-old's ODI career. The tournament begins on February 19. Shakib, who was retired from Test and T20I formats, was reported for a suspect bowling action during a one-off appearance for Surrey in the County Championship in September last. Onfield umpires Steve O'Shaughnessy and David Millns made the report, which was termed "shocking" by Bangladesh Cricket Board officials.

Bangladesh, who will open their Champions Trophy campaign against India in Dubai on February 20, have also left out seasoned wicketkeeper-batter Litton Das after his recent modest outings. Das could not make a fifty in his last 13 ODI innings. His last 50-plus score was against In-



dia at Pune in October 2023. In fact, the 30-year-old's last seven innings read: 6, 1, 0, 0, 2, 4, 0. Other than these two big names, all-rounder Afif Hossain, and pacers Shoriful Islam and Hasan Mahmud too failed to get a place in the squad which will be led by Najmul Hossain Shanto. Najmul is returning to the side after missing the home ODIs last year against the West Indies due to a hamstring injury. Along with Najmul, experienced Mushfiqur Rahim and Mustafizur Rahman and promising top-order batter Towhid Hridoy too have made a comeback.

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