

INDIAN CHRONICLE

4 January, 2025 | Saturday | Volume No:12 | Issue No:279 Pages: 8+8

www.indianchronicle.com

Published from : Ranga Reddy (Telangana State)

₹ 3

Fire breaks out in godown of chemical company in Jeedimetla; No casualties reported

Hyderabad: A major fire broke out in the godown of a Rishika chemical company at Dulapally in the industrial area in Jeedimetla on Friday. No casualties were reported. As per available information, the fire spread to the plastic drums filled with chemicals which led to thick fire and smoke. The company workers, who noticed the flames, alerted the police and the fire department. Panic prevailed in the area for some time due to the neighbourhood being engulfed with thick smoke. The cause of the fire was not known. Four fire engines were rushed to the spot and the flames were doused in about two hours and the worth of the property damaged is to be estimated.

'Built homes for poor, not Sheesh Mahal for myself': PM Modi attacks Kejriwal in first Delhi rally ahead of Assembly polls

GNS News Agency, Jan 3

Recalling his stay in Delhi during the Emergency, PM Modi sought to underline the role of education in the lives of the poor and the middle class. (Photo/PTI) Recalling his stay in Delhi during the Emergency, PM Modi sought to underline the role of education in the lives of the poor and the middle class. At his first political event in Delhi ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi took on Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) convenor Arvind Kejriwal, without naming him, on Friday and said he could have built a Sheesh Mahal for himself but chose to prioritise the people. Attacking the AAP, which "used Anna Hazare as its face" to come to power, PM Modi accused the party of having become "a disaster" for the people of Delhi, and urged voters to take steps to "liberate" themselves from the incumbent "Aapda", or disastrous, government. "Yeh kattar beimaan log... Ek to chori upar se seena zori (These staunchly corrupt people... They steal and then defend themselves brazenly)... Dilli ke log keh rahe hain, aapda ki nahin sahenge, badal ke rahenge (The people of Delhi are saying they will not tolerate this disaster, but will usher in change)," PM Modi alleged while speaking at Ashok Vihar, where he inaugurated several infrastructural projects worth an estimated Rs 4,500 crore. He accused the AAP of being involved in scams across sectors including education and health. "...Poora desh jaanta hai ki Modi ne kabhi apne liye ghar nahin banaya... Picchle 10 saalon mein 4 crore logon ko ghar diye... Main bhi Sheesh Mahal bana sakta tha... Par mere liye desh wasiyon ko ghar dena sapna tha (The country knows that Modi never built a home for himself. But in these past 10 years, 4 crore citizens have been given houses. I could have also built a Sheesh Mahal. But my dream was to give my citizens a house)," he said. The BJP has accused Kejriwal of spending crores on the chief minister's official residence in Delhi while neglecting unauthorised colonies. As many as 30,000 homes, the PM added, would be constructed and handed over to citizens in Delhi over the coming days under the PM Awas Yojana even as work related to the development of the Narela sub-city would be speeded up. Recalling his stay in Delhi during the Emergency, PM Modi sought to underline the role of



education in the lives of the poor and the middle class even as he accused the AAP Delhi government of negatively impacting the school education sector and stalling the implementation of central schemes dedicated to it.

"Everyone dreams that their children study in good institutions. The BJP is focusing on this... It is not easy for the middle class to educate their children in English. Why can't poor and middle-class children become doctors, engineers? The DU east and west campuses were awaited for a long time... A new college named after Veer Savarkar will also be built in Najafgarh," he said. "...Those who have been in government in the state have harmed school education. Of the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan funds given by the central government, not even half was spent on education by the state government..." he said even as he accused the AAP Delhi government of stalling central schemes such as Ayushman Bharat and seeking to undermine the Union government's contribution to Delhi's development. "Delhi is the capital. Big expenditure projects are done by the Centre. Metro, roads, colleges, hospitals are being built by the central government... The BJP government at the Centre is making electricity bill zero (through) the PM SURYAGHAR Yojana... 75 lakh people have been given free ration in Delhi," he said. Taking on the AAP over the non-implementation of the Ayushman Bharat scheme, PM Modi said, "...I want to give free treatment under Ayushman yojana, but people from 'aapda' are the villains of Delhi. They are not letting it come here in Delhi. People are suffering... The government has brought citizens above 70 years into the Ayushman (scheme)... But your son has not been able to serve Delhi's elders... aapda people are not letting them take its benefits."

Nearly 1,000 electric buses to be introduced in Hyd

Hyderabad: The Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) is planning to operate nearly 1,000 electric buses in all major and important routes in the city this year. Authorities are preparing route maps and supervisors are being appointed in busy routes, focusing in on opportunities to increase the footfall of passengers. Authorities are taking steps to ensure that occupancy rate in electric buses reaches 90 per cent by operating EV buses on long routes and also planning new routes targeting commuters from suburban areas. The Greater Hyderabad (GH) zone authorities are taking smart steps towards pollution free public transport.

Ajay Kumar Bhalla, Hari Babu Kambhampati sworn in as Manipur and Odisha Governors

GNS News Agency, Jan 3

Former Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla took oath as the 19th governor of Manipur during a function at the Raj Bhavan in Imphal on Friday (January 3, 2025). Mr. Bhalla was administered the oath of office by Manipur High Court Chief Justice D Krishnakumar. Ajay Kumar Bhalla's appointment as the Governor will help in restoring peace: Manipur. He inspected the guard of honour by Manipur Rifles personnel. Mr. Bhalla, who has the rare distinction of being the longest-serving Union Home Secretary, completed his five-year tenure in August last year. He is a 1984-batch retired Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the Assam-Meghalaya cadre. President Droupadi Murmu appointed Mr. Bhalla the Governor of Manipur last month. Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya was holding the additional charge of Manipur. Mr. Bhalla arrived in Imphal on Thursday and was accorded a reception at Raj Bhavan by Chief Minister N Biren Singh. Hari Babu Kambhampati sworn in as Odisha Governor

Hari Babu Kambhampati was sworn in as the 27th Governor of Odisha during a function at the Raj Bhavan in Bhubaneswar on Friday (January 3, 2025). Orissa High Court Chief Justice Chakradhari Sharan Singh administered the oath of office to Mr. Kambhampati in the presence of



Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik, State ministers, MLAs, MPs, BJP leaders and other dignitaries. Mr. Kambhampati succeeded Raghubar Das, who resigned from the post recently. He was accorded a guard of honour immediately after the swearing-in ceremony. Mr. Kambhampati arrived here on Thursday afternoon. Soon after landing at the airport, he along with his family members visited the Jagannath Temple in Puri and sought the Lord's blessings for the welfare of the state and its people. Mr. Kambhampati, a former governor of Mizoram, was appointed as the governor of Odisha by President Droupadi Murmu on December 24 last year.

Nimhans model for mental health worth emulating: President Droupadi Murmu

GNS News Agency, Jan 3

President Droupadi Murmu Friday stressed that the integrative approach to mental health adopted by the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (Nimhans) was worth emulating. Addressing the commemorative event of the golden jubilee celebrations of Nimhans at Bengaluru, Murmu said, "Nimhans has shown that modern systems of healthcare can successfully incorporate traditional methods such as yoga to alleviate both mental and physical distress. The integrative medical services of Nimhans has been a model for all to examine the application of Ayurveda in the promotion of mental health and well-being and in the treatment of psychiatric and neurological disorders. Different kinds of meditation techniques are also useful for countering negative parental forces." The President highlighted that earlier mental health did not receive the attention it deserved in many societies. However, she added that the awareness about mental health issues has been steadily rising. "The dispelling of unscientific beliefs and the reduction of stigma associated with mental illness are significant and welcome developments. This is especially crucial at this juncture, as various mental health issues are reaching epidemic proportions globally," said Murmu. She also stated that the Covid-19 pandemic and other global trends have triggered a sharp increase in mental health concerns, affecting people across all age groups. "...young students grapple with uncertainty in their studies due to social pressures; professionals encounter stress in their work environments, the elderly experience loneliness due to social isolation and women, often burdened with domestic responsibilities and caregiving roles, are particularly prone to mental illnesses, many of which go unnoticed," Murmu said.

However, she expressed optimism about increasing



willingness to address these issues through mechanisms such as the Union Health Ministry's Tele-MANAS program and multiple digital platforms. Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah who was also present during the event stated that the Tele-MANAS program has benefitted around 1.7 million people in the state. "To ensure equitable access to services for urban and rural populations, the state government has integrated mental health into primary healthcare systems. An annual allocation of Rs 137 crore for Nimhans demonstrates our commitment to its functioning," Siddaramaiah said. The President Friday also inaugurated the KLE Cancer Hospital at Belagavi during her day-long visit to Karnataka. Several cutting-edge facilities aimed at advancing mental health and neurological care were also inaugurated at Nimhans to mark its golden jubilee year. A new Psychiatry Speciality Block has been launched to provide comprehensive and specialised care in mental health. The facility focuses on geriatric psychiatry, perinatal psychiatry, and services for individuals with severe mental disorders. It also includes suicide prevention programs. Designed to offer multidisciplinary and holistic care, the centre aims to support recovery, rehabilitation, and capacity building for mental health professionals nationwide.

AICMH key to Telangana achieving clean, green energy goals: Bhatti

GNS News Agency, Jan 3

Sangareddy: Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka observed that the Australia India Critical Minerals Hub (AICMH) role will be key to Telangana achieving clean and green energy policy goals. Addressing the inaugural session of the two-day workshop-cum-symposium on critical minerals organised at the Indian Institute of Technology-Hyderabad (IIT-H) in Kandi on Friday, the Deputy Chief Minister said the establishment of institutes such as AICMH was crucial for a stable, sustainable, and ethical supply of critical minerals not just for Telangana but also for India and the world. Vikramarka said Telangana aimed to increase renewable energy generation to 20,000 MW by 2030, besides prioritising battery energy storage systems and promoting green hydrogen technologies. He said the Telangana government involved all stakeholders such as academics, industry, local communities, and researchers to achieve clean and green energy goals.

Underlining the importance of research in critical minerals, the Deputy Chief Minister said research was the foundation for every real-world breakthrough. "Whether finding efficient ways to extract critical minerals, innovating sustainable mining practices, or building robust global supply



chains, research gives us the what and the how. But real-world execution brings in the when and the why," he said. IIT-H and Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) signed an MoU to collaborate on critical minerals. Australia Consulate General in Bengaluru, Hillary McGeachy, CMD, SCCL, Balaram Nayak, Director IIT-H Prof B S Murty, Joint Secretary Ministry of Mines Dinesh Kumar, Prof Mohan Yellishetty, faculty at Monash University Australia, and others were present.

KTR objects to Congress govt seeking ryots' self-declarations for Rythu Bharosa



GNS News Agency, Jan 3

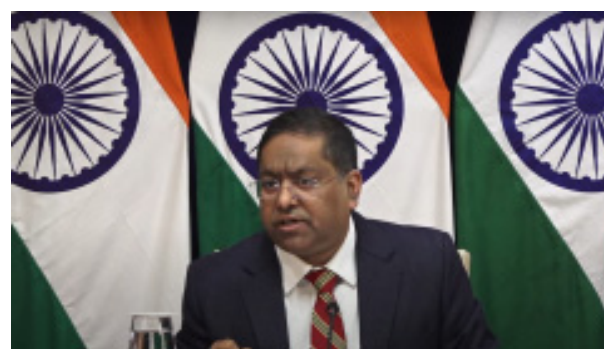
Hyderabad: Raising strong objections to the Congress government seeking self-declarations from farmers for the implementation of Rythu Bharosa investment support, BRS working president KT Rama Rao dubbed it as another attempt to deny support to farmers and weaken the scheme before scrapping it entirely. He called the party cadre to organise awareness programmes across the State commencing from Saturday, to sensitise the farmers and stop the Congress government's conspiracy. "The government's actions are nothing short of a conspiracy to demoralise farmers," he said. He condemned the government's alleged attempts to impose stringent conditions for Rythu Bharosa and file cases against farmers

under the guise of affidavits.

Speaking to the media at Telangana Bhavan on Friday, Rama Rao termed the Congress government insisting for fresh applications under the scheme as a ploy to delay and deny financial assistance to majority farmers on one pretext or other. "Instead of fulfilling its promises, the Congress government is trying to portray farmers as a burden on the State and spreading false propaganda against them," he said.

He pointed out that under the BRS administration, schemes such as Rythu Bandhu were implemented without bureaucratic hurdles. "We deposited Rs 73,000 crore into farmers' accounts across 11 crop seasons without demanding applications or self-declarations. In contrast, the Congress government has failed to deliver even a fraction of its promised support," he said. The BRS working president called upon farmers and party cadres to launch awareness campaigns, urging them to expose the government's failure to fulfil its election promises, including the Warangal Farmers Declaration. "The Congress pledged Rs 15,000 per acre per year to farmers, as well as financial support for tenant farmers and agricultural labourers. A year has passed, but not a single rupee has reached farmers under Rythu Bharosa," he said. He said the Congress deliberately stalled the disbursement of funds during the Yasangi (Rabi) crop season by complaining to the Election Commission (EC) before the Assembly elections, despite Rythu Bandhu being an ongoing programme. "However, after coming to power, the Congress government released the same amount of Rs 7,500 crore," he added.

New counties in region bordering Ladakh won't legitimise China's illegal occupation, says India



GNS News Agency, Jan 3

India on Friday (January 3, 2024) said it protested China's creation of two new counties in Hotan Prefecture, stating that the creation of new counties would not affect India's sovereignty or legitimise China's illegal occupation. "We have seen the announcement pertaining to the establishment of two new counties in Hotan Prefecture of China. Parts of jurisdiction of these so-called counties fall in India's Union Territory of Ladakh," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. In a strong reaction, he said, "We have never accepted the illegal Chinese occupation of Indian territory in this area. Creation of new counties will neither have a bearing on India's longstanding and consistent position regarding our sovereignty over the area nor lend legitimacy to China's illegal and forcible occupation of the same," he added. Days after China announced its plan to build a mega dam on the Brahmaputra (Yarlung Tsangpo) in Tibet, India on Friday (January 3, 2025) said it will continue to monitor and take necessary measures to protect its interests.

In its first reaction to the proposed dam, New Delhi

urged Beijing to ensure that the interests of downstream states of the Brahmaputra are not harmed by activities in upstream areas. "We will continue to monitor and take necessary measures to protect our interests," Mr. Jaiswal said. There have been apprehensions that the dam will have adverse impact on Arunachal Pradesh as well as Assam.

"As a lower riparian state with established user rights to the waters of the river, we have consistently expressed, through expert-level as well as diplomatic channels, our views and concerns to the Chinese side over mega projects on rivers in their territory," Mr. Jaiswal said. "These have been reiterated, along with the need for transparency and consultation with downstream counties, following the latest report," he said."

Actor Allu Arjun granted conditional bail in Sandhya theatre's Pushpa stampede case

The Nampally court of Hyderabad granted a conditional bail to actor Allu Arjun on Friday (January 3, 2025) in connection with the ongoing investigation of the Sandhya 70 MM theatre stampede case, which claimed the life of a woman and left her son hospitalised during the benefit show of Pushpa 2 on December 4.

The court directed the actor to submit two sureties of ₹50,000 each. Among the conditions imposed by the court, the actor has been asked to visit the Chikkadpally Station House Officer (SHO) every Sunday for two months or until the chargesheet is filed.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Denigrating Mujib

THE writing was on the wall in Bangladesh when the interim government's chief adviser, Muhammad Yunus, didn't even mention the young nation's founding father, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in his Bijooy Dibosh (Victory Day) speech on December 16 last year. The day, celebrated as Vijay Diwas in India, commemorates the Pakistan military's surrender to Indian defence forces and the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971. Yunus understandably described deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's regime as the "world's worst autocratic government", but he did a grave disservice to the independence movement by ignoring its iconic figure, Mujib.

It's obvious that the interim dispensation is bent on undermining, if not erasing, the legacy of Hasina's father. New textbooks for primary and secondary students will state that Ziaur Rahman, not Mujib, declared independence of Bangladesh. Ziaur, a decorated military officer who later became the President, served with distinction in the 1971 war. His contribution must be duly acknowledged by the nation, but it should not be used as a pretext to belittle Mujib's stellar role. Phasing out currency notes with Mujib's image is another step in the wrong direction. Undoubtedly, these decisions are prompted by political considerations as the caretaker government — which calls itself 'apolitical' — is on good terms with Ziaur's widow and ex-PM Khaleda Zia, who heads the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Desperate to regain power, the BNP is getting restless over the delay in holding elections. The Yunus government is also under pressure from student leaders who spearheaded the movement that sent Hasina scurrying to India last year. They want the 1972 Constitution rewritten, describing it as a 'Mujibist' charter that paved the way for "India's aggression". The anti-Mujib narrative and the anti-India rhetoric — this lethal cocktail can deal a body blow to Bangladesh's democratic aspirations.

A case for pragmatic approach in T.N.



GNS News Agency, Jan 3

Immediately after Govi Chezhiaan, a three-time legislator from Thiruvudaimaruthur in Tamil Nadu's Cauvery delta and a member of SC community, was inducted as the Higher Education Minister in late September, he sounded conciliatory towards Governor-Chancellor R.N. Ravi, with whom the DMK government has been having a running battle over many matters, especially over appointment of Vice-Chancellors to various universities. When Mr. Chezhiaan interacted with the media for the first time as Minister, he conveyed the advice given to him by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin: to avoid tussles and follow the rules and regulations in the interest of the students. However, in no time, the expectations of a cordial relationship between the Governor and the State government disappeared with old issues getting revived.

In the past week, the State witnessed a familiar controversy between the two institutions over the appointment of V-C. The trigger for the latest round came when Mr. Ravi objected on December 18 to a government order, issued on December 9, on the constitution of a search committee for shortlisting a set of candidates for V-C of the Annamalai University. According to the Governor, this order, which had ignored the 2018 UGC Regulations [7.3 - ii] on the subject by excluding the nominee of the University Grants Commission (UGC) Chairman from the panel, "violates Supreme Court judgments." As per the regulations, there has to be a panel of 3-5 persons, including a nominee of the UGC chief, for the selection of V-Cs of State, private, and 'deemed to be' universities.

The next day, Mr. Chezhiaan issued a statement. He stated that the State government had been following laws enacted by the State legislature. It did not accept the stipulation concerned (7.3 - ii) when its Higher Education department came out with an order in January 2021. The order, issued by the previous AIADMK regime, had marked the general acceptance of the UGC Regulations on minimum qualifications for the appointment of teachers and other academic staff in universities and colleges under the control of the State Higher Education department. However, the order was categorical in stating that the "appointment and selection of the Vice-Chancellor" of 12 universities would be governed by provisions of the Tamil Nadu Universities Laws (amendment), 2017, and in respect of Madras University, the existing provisions of the relevant 1923 law would do. He further contended that it was the "prerogative" of the State government to accept the regulations, which were "only recommendations" in nature. He also quoted Supreme Court's verdict in the Jagdish Prasad Sharma vs State Of Bihar (2013) case, that said "Education now being a List III subject, the State government is at liberty to frame its own laws relating to education in the State and is not, therefore, bound to accept or follow the regulations framed by the UGC" and in the event of the States' willingness to adopt the regulations, they would have to abide by the conditions laid down by the Commission. In fact, on the very same issue, the Governor, in 2023, issued notifications constituting Search-Selection Committees for the identification of candidates for appointment of V-Cs of the Bharathiar, Madras, and the Tamil Nadu Teachers Education Universities. This prompted the State government to approach the Supreme Court in November 2023, where the case was pending. In January this year, Mr. Ravi took back the notifications. Subsequent to the Minister's response, there was one more round of exchange of words between him and Mr. Ravi. But, what is at stake is the fate of six universities, which do not have V-Cs for months, the earliest vacancy being at Bharathiar University since October 2022. Madras University has remained headless since August 2023. In addition, there are two universities wherein the extended tenure of V-Cs is due for expiry in February and May 2025. Ironically, it was to ensure that universities enjoyed the continuity of V-Cs that the State, in May 2017.

Farmers intensify protest with Punjab bandh. Here's what their demands are



GNS News Agency, Jan 3

When farmers in Punjab started their protest under the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) and Sanyukt Kisan Morcha Non-Political (SKM-NP) at the Shambhu and Khanauri borders on February 13, they had a charter of 12 demands. After the death of Shubhkar Singh, 22, on February 23, they also demanded those behind his death must be booked and punished. This month, the farmers also demanded that the draft national policy framework on Agriculture Marketing shouldn't be implemented, the Punjab farmers called for a shutdown in the state in support of Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who has been on a hunger strike for more than a month seeking the implementation of their demands. Here is a look at the demands being made by the Punjab protesting farmers:

1. A law guaranteeing the purchase of all crops at Minimum Support Price (MSP) for farmers across the country, with crop prices fixed as per the recommendations of the Dr Swaminathan Commission.
2. A complete debt waiver for farmers and labourers.
3. Reinstatement of the Land Acquisition Act, 2013, should be nationwide, ensuring written consent from farmers and four times compensation based on collector rates should be given before any land acquisition.
4. Justice for the victims of the October 2021 Lakhimpur Kheri violence and punishment for the culprits.
5. India should withdraw from the World Trade Orga-

nization (WTO), and suspend all free trade agreements.

6. Pension for farmers and agricultural labourers.
7. Compensation for farmers who died during a protest against the now scrapped farm laws at Delhi borders, along with government jobs for one family member of each victim. More than 750 farmers died during the agitation. Though the Punjab Government has given compensation to the majority of the victims' families, it provided jobs to only a few. Other states are yet to give compensation to many, claim union members.
8. The Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2020, should be repealed.
9. Under MGNREGA, ensure 200 days of employment per year with a daily wage of Rs 700, and link MGNREGA with agriculture.
10. Strict penalties and fines for companies producing fake seeds, pesticides, and fertilisers. They have also asked for measures to improve seed quality.
11. Establishment of a National Commission for chilli, turmeric, and other spices.
12. Implementation of the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, ensuring the rights of tribal communities over water, forests, and land, and stopping the exploitation of tribal lands by corporations.
13. Justice for Shubhkar Singh, who was killed on February 23 at Khanauri border when Haryana security forces were stopping farmers from marching ahead. The farmers have said personnel of the Haryana security forces and the officers who ordered action on farmers should be punished. 14 National Policy Framework for Agriculture Marketing shouldn't be implemented. Farm union leaders say it is an attempt to implement the repealed farm laws through backdoors. As of now, feedback is being taken from states regarding this policy. Members of KMM and SKM-NP last held a talk with Union ministers in the presence of Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on February 18. Later, SKM-NP leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal wrote twice to Prime Minister Narendra Modi reminding him about these demands and even sent the details to the Supreme Court. The Centre hasn't initiated any fresh round of talks with them till now.

The Gurgaon village that shared a unique bond with Jimmy Carter

GNS News Agency, Jan 3

Jimmy Carter, the 39th President of the United States who passed away on December 29 at the age of 100, had a brief association with a small village in Gurgaon around four decades ago. In conversation with The Indian Express in 2016, older residents of Chuma Kheragaon village said they still fondly remembered the day — January 3, 1978 — on which Carter visited them along with his wife Rosalynn. The village has since been known as Carterpuri. Carter's mother Lillian was a nurse in Bombay in the 1960s. Villagers believe she convinced her son to visit Chuma Kheragaon during his trip to India.

According to villagers, the entire area underwent a transformation in anticipation of the then US President's visit. "They repaired the roads, cleaned up the streets, and cordoned off the area," Ramesh Chand, an older resident of Carterpuri, said at the time. Besides officials from the central and state governments, Carter — who was the third American president to visit India — was accompanied by the then Prime Minister of India Morarji Desai. A Haryanvi pagdi was tied on Carter's head at the village chaupal, while Rosalynn was given traditional Haryanvi attire to wear, residents recalled. "They covered her face with the dupatta, as women would traditionally do, and the President kept lifting it up to look at her face. Each time she put it down, he would lift it up," Attar Singh, a cloth store owner, said. It was Morarji



Desai who suggested that the village be renamed in Carter's honour, villagers said, recounting that Carter was interested working for the development of the place. Kartar Singh, who was a post office master at the time, said Desai rejected Carter's idea to "adopt" the village and instead promised to help them, but nothing came of it. "If he (Desai) had only remained silent, we would be in an entirely different state today," he added. Among his treasured possessions were pictures of Carter's visit and three letters that served as proof of the correspondence shared by Carter, his wife, and the villagers. When Jimmy Carter won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002, the village erupted in celebration. To this day, January 3 is a holiday in Carterpuri.

This Chandigarh woman quit her corporate job to launch a fashion brand



GNS News Agency, Jan 3

A few years ago, Gonika Sachdeva quit her corporate job to start her fashion brand with an initial investment of Rs 55,000. It has now grown into a thriving business earning lakhs of rupees, with an international clientele. With a background in corporate governance, Sachdeva, 32, used her organisational skills and business acumen to transition into fashion. A resident of Sector 21D in Chandigarh, she now runs two labels: one specialising in corporate uniforms and the other in women's wear.

"In 2016, I cleared my company secretary exam and joined a corporate job, but later decided to leave it. I pursued a fashion course and launched Puroschneedlework, a women's wear brand, in 2019. In 2023, I diversified into uniforms with my second label, UNIKAGO. This allowed me to combine my professional expertise with my creative aspirations," Sachdeva said. She added, "With UNIKAGO, we have created designer uniforms for food and beverages brands, builders, and corporates in the Tricity, completing nearly 16 projects in 13 months." The story behind the labels Purosch began in 2019 after Sachdeva designed an outfit for her mother, which received appreciation from friends and family. "My first order was outsourced. Slowly, with grace and consistent orders, I saved for a year, bought machines, and hired a karigar. It started with zero capital, but with ₹55,000 savings in the second year, we saw steady growth and attracted international clients." UNIKAGO came to life during a late-night sketching session for London Fashion Week in October 2022. "My brother Rajat suggested designing for companies and doing bulk orders. He also came up with the name UNIKAGO, blending 'unique' with my name to give it a brand identity," she said. From local to global

Initially catering to domestic clients in Delhi, Punjab, and the Tricity, her brands now have an international presence in Dubai, Canada, the USA, and Australia. "We

customise over 700 designs annually, serving more than 500 clients in three years. Many of our orders come from repeat customers and social media." UNIKAGO has established itself as a designer uniform brand, merging aesthetics with functionality. "We work with an average of one-two cafes or corporates each month," she added. Chandigarh should encourage startups with infrastructure and schemes that maximise the city's corporate potential. This will help people find opportunities locally without having to look elsewhere," she said about how to retain Chandigarh's talent. "The government should offer subsidies or business loans without collateral and simplify registrations to foster growth and customer reach." Free time and hobbies "I enjoy reading spiritual and self-help books, often with a coffee. Books are brain food and essential for staying mentally strong and knowledgeable. I also work out four to five times a week, meditate daily, and journal—it keeps me grounded," Sachdeva said. Quoting Joseph Chilton Pearce, she advised budding entrepreneurs, "To live a creative life, we must lose our fear of being wrong." Start early, embrace the journey, and don't fear making mistakes—learn from them. Keep your eye on the goal and stay focused." On Chandigarh's charm, she said, "I love everything about Chandigarh—it's perfect and relaxed. If I had to change one thing, I would like weekends to feel like weekends, just two days long, not seven."

Movement of tiger triggers panic in Asifabad

Kumram Bheem Asifabad: Movement of a tiger at an irrigation tank sparking a panic among villagers at Kondapalli village in Penchikalpet mandal on Monday.

Some local farmers who were harvesting the cotton crop spotted pugmarks of a tiger near the tank and alerted residents of the village. They said that they recorded pugmarks of the tiger using mobile phones and informed Forest officials about its presence. They expressed concern over their safety following the movement of the tiger, adding they were living in the grip of fear.

Forest officials said that they were tracking movement of the tiger. They stated a tiger from Maharashtra was wandering in the forests of Penchikalpet range in search of territory. They advised the villagers to be cautious. They urged the farmers not to set electrified fences meant for preventing damage of crops by wild animals, posing a threat to lives of the tigers.

Pujari Granthi Samman Yojana: AAP will give temple, gurdwara priest Rs 18,000 a month if returns to power, says Kejriwal



GNS News Agency, Jan 3

Pujari Granthi Samman Yojana: AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Monday announced that his party would launch a 'Pujari Granthi Samman Yojana' if it gets re-elected in Delhi, promising a monthly allowance of Rs 18,000 for Hindu temple priests and granthis of gurdwaras. The announcement comes ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections, with AAP seeking to retain power for a fourth consecutive term. "Pujaris and granthis are an important part of our society, but they are often a neglected section. For the first time in the country, we are introducing a scheme to support them, under which they will receive a monthly allowance of Rs 18,000," Kejriwal said, adding, registration for the scheme will start tomorrow. He also said he would visit the Hanuman Mandir in Connaught Place on Tuesday to oversee the registration process for priests there.

Andhra Pradesh appoints K Vijayanand as new chief secretary



GNS News Agency, Jan 3

The Andhra Pradesh government has appointed K Vijayanand as the new chief secretary of the state, as the incumbent, Neerabh Kumar Prasad, will retire on December 31. "Vijayanand IAS, special chief secretary to the government, Energy Department is hereby appointed as chief secretary to the Government of Andhra Pradesh," said S Suresh Kumar, secretary to the government (political) in a government order (GO). Vijayanand is a 1992 batch IAS officer who served as chairman of AP GENCO (Andhra Pradesh Power Generation Corporation Ltd) from 2022 and the chairman and managing director of APTRANSCO (Andhra Pradesh Transmission Corporation) for some time starting in 2023 among several other key positions held earlier. He started his bureaucratic career as an assistant collector in the erstwhile Adilabad district in united Andhra Pradesh in 1993.

How a 50-year-old spun her track of life leaving a successful corporate career to become a DJ

Can life be reinvented at 50? Vandana Irani, now known as DJ VanD, is living proof that it can. Vandana Irani or DJ VanD, at 50 has embarked on an extraordinary journey, leaving behind a successful corporate career to embrace her love of DJing. Vandana, an MBA graduate from IIM Calcutta and a financial services professional with decades of experience, now spins tracks instead of presentations, proving it's never too late to pursue one's passion. Born and raised in Kolkata, Vandana's early life was defined by the usual toil—focused hard work, solid education and an impressive professional career. She built a stellar career, starting with Citibank in 1997, followed by stints in other well known multinationals in the US, Gurgaon, and Pune. Starting as a credit card business personnel and most recently heading operations for Bajaj Finserv Health Limited, her professional life was fulfilling but demanding. By early 2023, Vandana decided to take a step back to focus on her family and personal aspirations and to reconnect with herself. "I've always loved playing music," she said. "Even during social gatherings, I would curate playlists that would make everyone dance. It was my way of bringing people together and taking the party to the next level." After quitting her job in early 2023, she decided to get professional training to be a DJ. While she identified a professional DJ course at an academy, she didn't get around to starting the course. Her family recognised this passion and gifted her a DJ console for her 50th birthday. Inspired, Vandana enrolled in the DJ training program right away, immersing herself in the endeavour of mixing music. dj irani, pune, against all odds, "Being 50 doesn't limit me; it empowers me. I've found joy and freedom in pursuing what I love, and I hope others are inspired to do the same," Vandana said.

Her first public performance came during a Holi celebration at her housing complex. "I was nervous, but I thought, 'If this music makes me want to dance, it will make others feel the same,'" she said. The overwhelming response from her audience gave her the confidence to keep going. But Vandana's journey wasn't without challenges. In May, during a family trip, she suffered a wrist fracture, requiring surgery and months of recovery. "It set me back by a couple of months," she admitted. "But it also gave me time to reflect and focus on what needed to be done to professionally scale my passion." By July, Vandana was back in action, performing at a private event—a milestone birthday party held at a premium resort near Lonavala. Her blend of Bollywood, retro, and international music struck a chord with diverse audiences. She has since had a lot of success as DJing for private parties, celebrations, and events, crafting playlists that make people of all ages hit the dance floor. "I love how music connects people," Vandana shared. "It's not about fame or money for me. It's about creating moments of joy and togetherness." For Vandana, her new path is about rediscovering herself and embracing a new chapter of life with courage and creativity.

Flower show at Chennai Semmozhi Poonga from January



GNS News Agency, Jan 3

A transformation is happening at the Semmozhi Poonga with pots after pots of colourful flowering plants being tastefully arranged. Work is underway for Chennai's second flower show at the park on Cathedral Road that will be open to the public from January 2, 2025. The Chief Minister M. K. Stalin is likely to inaugurate the event. Preparation in full swing for the annual flower show which is to be inaugurated during the first week of January 2025 at Semmozhi Poonga in Chennai Carpets of pink and red petunias, yellow marigolds, purple, white and cream delphiniums, are getting ready to welcome the visitors from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily till January 18. About 30 lakh potted flowers are being brought in from the Department of Agriculture's Horticultural

gardens in Udthagamandalam, Kodaikanal and roses from Krishnagiri and Hosur. The plants are being arranged inside iron trellis along pathways, inside a clock, a train, a heritage car, a butterfly and even the steps leading to an open auditorium. Roses- red, pink, white and multi-coloured will be ready and blooming on time for the show. "At Ooty, the flower show is made of cut flowers where they are arranged in structures of different shapes. This is a live plant show where the plants are specially grown at our nurseries to coincide with the show in Chennai. We start from the scratch with planting the seeds in the right season so that the plants flower during this month. We use organic manure and fertilizers and neem based pesticides," explained an official. The begonias are 2-3 months old and the delphiniums about six months old.

A lot of care has been taken while transporting the plants that come in different sized pots. "We ensured enough watering was done to keep them well during the journey. As soon as they arrive, we water them again. The plants are being arranged in the shade of trees. Loads of soil and manure too have been brought in for plants that need them," said another source. Plants are still coming in, which is why the Semmozhi Poonga will remain off-limits for the public for the next few days. More than 50 varieties of flowers from Ooty and Kodaikanal's Botanical Gardens and the respective Rose gardens will be exhibited at the show for which entry will be ticketed. The public can buy tickets at the venue as well as online.

On India's international obligations towards Rohingya refugees | Explained



GNS News Agency, Jan 3

The story so far: A recent study examining the plight of Rohingya refugees detained in India, conducted jointly by The Azadi Project, a U.S.-registered non-profit, and Refugees International, an American organisation advocating for displaced populations, has highlighted "gross violations of constitutional and human rights" and criticised India's "failure to uphold its obligations under international human rights treaties." Based on interviews with detainees, their families, and legal representatives, the report reveals that "a significant number of Rohingya refugees continue to be incarcerated even after serving their prescribed sentences."

How are Rohingya refugees protected under international law?

The Rohingya of Myanmar constitute the world's largest stateless population, estimated to number approximately 2.8 million. Denied citizenship and subjected to decades of persecution by Myanmar's military authorities, the majority of the Rohingya have been compelled to flee their homeland due to genocidal violence. At present, they are dispersed across multiple countries. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), nearly 22,500 Rohingya refugees currently reside in India. The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol enshrine the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits states from expelling individuals under their jurisdiction when substantial evidence suggests they would face persecution, torture, or other severe human rights violations upon return. This principle is a cornerstone of human rights, humanitarianism, and refugee law. Moreover, its status as customary international law imposes binding obligations on states regardless of formal assent. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has reiterated that "the principle is characterized by its absolute nature without any exception". Additionally, in a 2007 advisory opinion, the UNHCR affirmed that non-refoulement constitutes customary law and is binding on all states, including those not parties to the Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol.

What is India's stand?

As India is neither a signatory to the Refugee Convention nor a party to key international instruments such as the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, it maintains that it bears no legal obligation to provide asylum or adhere to the principle of non-refoulement. India continues to detain Rohingya refugees under archaic domestic legal frameworks, notably the Foreigners Act, 1946, and the Passport Act, 1967. These legislations confer sweeping executive powers to regulate the presence of foreigners and enable authorities to categorise Rohingya refugees as "illegal migrants." In response to a public interest litigation (PIL) in the Supreme Court seeking the release of detained Rohingya refugees, the Union government clarified in March that while they are entitled to the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution, they do not possess the right to reside or settle in India. In 2021, the top

court in Mohammad Salimullah and Anr. v. Union of India, rejected a plea to prevent the deportation of 170 Rohingya refugees detained in Srinagar accepting the Centre's national security concerns. In October 2024, the Delhi High Court dismissed a PIL seeking directions to the authorities to admit Rohingya refugee children in local schools. The court noted that the matter involved international implications and required a policy decision to be taken by the Union government.

What are India's international obligations?

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which India is a party, implicitly obligates member states under Article 7 to refrain from refouling individuals to places where they may face torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. The U.N. Human Rights Committee has unequivocally affirmed this interpretation. Similarly, the principle of non-refoulement is enshrined in other significant international instruments, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, both of which India has ratified. Further, the Convention Against Torture makes an express mention of non-refoulement under Article 3. While India's position as a signatory but not a ratifier renders its provisions non-binding, any deviation from the convention's principles would compromise the commitment India demonstrated by signing the treaty. Although India lacks a domestic refugee law, the Supreme Court in landmark rulings such as Vishaka & Ors. v. State of Rajasthan (1997) and National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India (2014), has affirmed that in the absence of domestic legislation on a matter, international conventions and norms must be applied by municipal courts to ensure the dignity of human life. Additionally, Article 51(c) of the Constitution mandates that the State must strive to promote respect for international law and treaty obligations. Several High Courts in India have also interpreted the principle of non-refoulement as integral to Article 21 of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to life and personal liberty. Notable examples include the Gujarat High Court's decision in Ktaer Abbas Habib Al Qutaifi v. Union of India (1998) and the Delhi High Court's ruling in Dongh Lian Kham v. Union of India (2015), both of which involved refugees from different countries seeking protection from deportation.

What are the existing concerns?

The absence of a standardised refugee policy has led to disparate treatment of different refugee populations, driven by India's shifting geopolitical and diplomatic interests. While groups such as Tibetans, Sri Lankans, and Afghans are granted refugee certificates or long-term visas by the government, most Rohingya refugees — despite being registered with the UNHCR — often face arbitrary detention and criminal imprisonment. Further, the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, excludes persecuted Muslim minorities, such as the Rohingya, from its ambit. The lack of legal representation and aid for detained Rohingya refugees also poses a severe concern. The report by Azadi Project and Refugees International highlights that civil society organisations working on behalf of Rohingya refugees in India are starved of funding as most Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) licenses that allow for the receipt of foreign funding have been revoked. This has made lawyers reluctant to take on cases involving the Rohingya, fearing unfavourable outcomes and potential repercussions. Moreover, detention centres housing Rohingya refugees, including pregnant women and children, are plagued by dehumanising living conditions. In light of the appalling conditions at the Matia Transit Camp, the Supreme Court in October, directed the Assam State Legal Services to conduct surprise visits and evaluate the conditions in which the refugees are living.

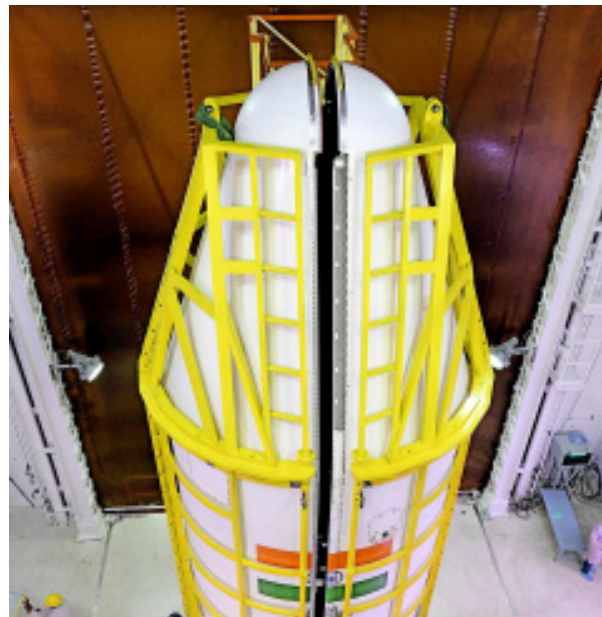
Farmers call meet on Jan. 4; no pressure to fast, says Dalal

Farmers, on a warpath against the Centre, on Saturday (December 28, 2024) called for a 'Kisan Mahapanchayat' at the Khanauri protest site on January 4. Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha had earlier given a call for a Punjab bandh on December 30. The move comes amid the Supreme Court coming down heavily on the Punjab government for not shifting farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dalal, who has been fasting for over a month, to a hospital. SKM leader Kaka Singh Kotra said the 70-year-old has been on an indefinite hunger strike, which entered its 33rd day on Saturday. "On January 4 at Khanauri, we will hold a big 'Kisan Mahapanchayat' in which farmers from various States will participate," he said. On Saturday, while it admonished the Punjab government, the Supreme Court also indicated the possibility that Mr. Dalal may have not been allowed to be taken to a hospital by other farmer leaders.

Responding to it, Mr. Dalal, in a video message, said, "I am sitting on a fast. Who gave this report in the Supreme Court and who spread this misconception that I

have been kept hostage, where did such a thing come from?" "Seven lakh farmers of this country have committed suicide due to debt. To save farmers is necessary, therefore, I am sitting here, I am not under anyone's pressure," he added. In his message, Mr. Dalal said he had written a letter to the Supreme Court, requesting it to direct the Centre to accept the farmers' demands, including a legal guarantee of the minimum support price on crops. He had earlier said he would not break his fast till the government agreed to the farmers' demands. "We thought, maybe the Supreme Court would give direction to the Centre," he said. Farmer leader Abhimanyu Kohar said Mr. Dalal may also speak at the Mahapanchayat. On Saturday, a Vacation Bench of Justices Surya Kant and Sudhanshu Dhulia gave the Punjab government time till December 31 to persuade Mr. Dalal to shift to a hospital, giving it the liberty to seek logistical support from the Centre, if the situation warrants. Expressing helplessness, the Punjab government said it is facing huge resistance from the protesting farmers who have encircled Mr. Dalal and are preventing him from being taken to a hospital.

All eyes on PSLV-C60 mission as ISRO looks to end 2024 on a high



GNS News Agency, Jan 3

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) hopes to end 2024 on a high with an exciting mission on the launch pad to test technologies that will one day be used for interplanetary and human spaceflight. It also hopes to kickstart preparations for human spaceflight missions that have already been delayed for years. Mission updates: PSLV-C59: The PSLV-C59 mission dedicated to NewSpace India Ltd. (NSIL) placed the European Space Agency's (ESA) Proba-3 spacecrafts — short for 'Project for Onboard Autonomy' — into a highly elliptical orbit of 600 km x 60,500 km as planned 18 minutes after liftoff. The liftoff was from the Satish Dhawan Space Center's first launch pad at 4:04 pm IST on December 5. This mission demonstrated the ability of ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) to launch a spacecraft into such orbits. After the launch, the ESA said the Yatharagga station in Australia began receiving telemetry from the satellite "almost immediately after separation". The telemetry will be passed on to the ESA's mission control centre in Belgium.

Gaganyaan: Ahead of its experimental flight of the Launch Vehicle Mark 3 (LVM-3) X in 2014, ISRO had wanted to test the vehicle's ability to fly through the thickest part of the earth's atmosphere. The organisation designed a suborbital flight for this with an altitude of 126 km and a range of 1,600 km from Satish Dhawan Space Centre. The vehicle didn't carry a cryogenic engine in its third stage and didn't reach earth orbit by design.

The LVM-3 X test flight also tested the reentry characteristics of the crew module using the Crew-module Atmospheric Re-entry Experiment (CARE). On December 18, 2014, the CARE module re-entered the earth's atmosphere after separating from the rocket and performed a controlled landing in the Bay of Bengal using its thrusters and parachutes. This successful mission was an important precursor to India's human spaceflight mission. Ten years later on the same day, December 18, 2024, ISRO began assembling the human-rated LVM-3 (HLVM-3) for its first uncrewed mission. This was done by stacking the nozzle end segment of the S-200 solid rocket motor with the full flex seal nozzle at 8.45 am on December 18. This marked the official launch campaign for the HLVM-3 G1/OM-1 mission. 'G1' stands for the first Gaganyaan mission and 'OM-1' for the first orbital module mission. The orbital module consists of the crew module and a service module. PSLV-C60 SpaDeX: Just like the CARE mission preceded the human spaceflight mission, the SpaDeX — short for 'Space Docking Experiment' — is a predecessor to ISRO's Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS) and the Chandrayaan-4 missions. SpaDeX will demonstrate in-orbit docking.

The year 2024 began with a PSLV flight and looks like it will end with one as well. The PSLV-C60 flight is currently scheduled for 9.58 pm on December 30, 2024. The rocket will carry two satellites called SDX01, dubbed 'Chaser', and SDX02, dubbed 'Target'. Each weighs 220 kg. After launch and orbit insertion, the two satellites will rendezvous in low-earth orbit, dock, and then undock. In addition, the fourth stage of the PSLV-C60 rocket will carry 20-plus payloads of its own, designed by various ISRO centers, academic institutions, and Indian private companies. After inserting the satellites in orbit, the fourth stage will enter an orbit of its own, where its payloads will perform various tests. The PSLV-C60 mission will fly the rocket in its core alone configuration (called CA): i.e. its first stage will fly without its strap-on boosters. The 'Chaser' and 'Target' satellites will be placed in a 470-km-wide circular orbit with an inclination of 55°. The duo will also have different velocities such that the gap between them increases to 10-20 km after a day.

The propulsion system on-board the 'Target' satellite will be used to slow it down to the same speed as the 'Chaser' over time. They will eventually maintain a distance of 20 km in the same orbit heading up to the SpaDeX mission's first milestone, called far rendezvous. Then they will move closer such that the gap drops to 5 km, 1.5 km, 500 m, 225 m, 15 m, and finally 3 m. Then 'Chaser' and 'Target' will dock. After a rigid mechanical connection is realised between the two satellites, electrical power trans-

fer between 'Target' and 'Chaser' will be demonstrated before they undock and drift apart. They will then operate their on-board payloads with a mission life of two years. The 'Chaser' has a high resolution camera. The 'Target' has a miniature multispectral payload and a radiation monitor. Earlier, an Indian private space company named Ananth Technologies became the first of its kind to integrate and test the two satellites.

POEM's two dozen payloads: PSLV-C60's fourth stage, called the PSLV Orbital Experimental Module (POEM-4), carries 24 payloads: 14 contributed by various ISRO centers and 10 by academia and private industry. POEM-4 will begin operations after satellite separation. Of these, the Relocatable Robotic Manipulator-Technology Demonstrator, a.k.a. the 'Walking Robotic Arm', developed by ISRO Inertial Systems Unit (ISU), is expected to demonstrate a robotic arm that can move to defined targets on the POEM using an inch-worm walking technique. The Vikram Sarabhai Space Center (VSSC) developed the Debris Capture Robotic Manipulator. In a proof of concept, it will attempt to capture tethered space debris with a robotic manipulator. The VSSC also built the Compact Research module for Orbital Plant Studies to study the germination and growth of eight cowpea seeds in a five- to seven-day experiment in a controlled environment. The other experiments from ISRO centres include — to quote from a press release — the Gradient Control Reaction Wheel Assembly (ISU), the Multi-Sensor Inertial Reference System with in-house gyroscopes (ISU), the MEMS-based High Angular Rate Sensor (VSSC), the Lead Exempt Experimental System (VSSC), the Highly Configurable Onboard Common Controller (Space Physics Laboratory), and the PILOT-G2 payload (Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology) "that hopes to qualify in-house equipments for small satellites". One experiment of note is the Amity Plant Experimental Module in Space (APEMS) payload developed by Amity University, Mumbai. It will compare growth-related changes in plant callus cells using spinach plants (Spinacia oleracea) in microgravity and earth gravity. For this, two parallel experiments will be carried out — one on POEM 4 and the other at Amity University. Another biological payload of note is the RVSat-1 developed by R.V. College of Engineering, Bengaluru. It will measure the growth of the gut bacterium Bacteroides thetaiotaomicron in space. The experiment is expected to provide data to understand human physiology in space and astronaut health during crewed missions.

There are two notable communications payloads called BGS Amateur Radio Payload for Information Transmission (ARPIT) and Swetchasat. BGS ARPIT was developed by the S.J.C. Institute of Technology, Karnataka, and the Upagraha Amateur Radio Club at the U.R. Rao Satellite Centre. It can transmit audio, text, and images from a satellite to the ground with frequency modulation in the VHF band. It is designed to provide amateur radio satellite services worldwide. The Swetchasat payload, developed by Nspace Tech, a private entity in Andhra Pradesh, plans to demonstrate an onboard UHF transmitter's capability to store data and establish a communication link, and transmit data and telemetry with the ISRO Telemetry and Tracking Command ground station. There are two propulsion payloads developed by private industry. RUDRA 1.0 HPGP, developed by Bellatrix Aerospace, will test a green propulsion system with a thrust of 1 newton and a specific impulse of 220 seconds. Likewise, the VYOM 2U developed by Manastu Space will test a monopropellant the company has said is a safer and better performing alternative to hydrazine, which is the most widely used propellant in the Indian space programme at present. VYOM has a thrust of 1.1 N and a specific impulse greater than 250 seconds.

Two payloads will also be hoping to demonstrate synthetic aperture radar (SAR) capabilities. SAR creates high-resolution images of objects on the ground by moving a radio-emitting antenna over the objects of interest. The SAR Imaging Demonstration Payload (GLX-SQ) from GalaxEye Space will test the generation, capture, and processing of SAR images in a space environment. The Varuna payload, from Piersight Space, will demonstrate SAR in a cubesat form factor and test the performance of seven advanced subsystems — including a deployable reflectarray antenna — that can help monitor all human and industrial activities at sea. Finally, the MEMS-based Inertial Measurement Unit (STeRG-P1.0) was developed at the MIT World Peace University, Pune, and the MOI-TD by the private company TakeMe2Space. STeRG-P1.0 will perform attitude determination and higher efficiency data processing. The MOI-TD payload is a technology demonstrator planning to perform real-time data processing for earth observation. It will attempt to receive three machine learning models through an uplink from ground to orbit, conduct in-orbit computation, and downlink the models' inferences.

Onward to 2025: The year 2025 will be a pivotal year in Indian spaceflight with the launch of the first uncrewed HLVM-3 missions to orbit. Indians will potentially get to see the sight of the first Indian in space since Rakesh Sharma in 1984 when Shubanshu Mukula flies — schedule permitting — to the International Space Station on board a Falcon 9 rocket as part of the Axiom 4 mission in 2025. We will also have the launch of the innovative NASA-ISRO SAR mission. In all, 2025 promises to be an action-packed and, by all means, a defining year for space for India. Pradeep Mohandas is a technical writer and space enthusiast in Pune.

Political leaders condemn sexual assault of student on Anna University campus

GNS News Agency, Jan 3

In a social media post, he said, "It is a shame that such a crime took place within the campus of a higher educational institution located in the heart of Chennai city. Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has pushed law and order in the State backwards. Whenever I pointed out the lapses in the law and order situation in Tamil Nadu, the State government was only keen on opposing my statements. Had it acted promptly, we could have avoided such incidents." BJP State president K. Annamalai too expressed shock over the incident and demanded that the culprits be arrested immediately. "It is absolutely shocking to hear about the sexual assault of a student at Anna University, the premier institute of the State. Tamil Nadu, under the DMK government, has become a breeding ground for unlawful activities and a haven for criminals. Women don't feel safe in the State anymore, as the police are kept busy by the ruling administration to silence the Opposition," Mr. Annamalai said in a social media post.

"The BJP Tamil Nadu demands that the Chief Minister take responsibility at least now, and address the people on the status of this sexual assault case in Anna University and do justice to the portfolio he holds," he added. Law and order deteriorating: Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) founder S.

Ramadoss and Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK) general secretary Premalatha Vijayakant also condemned the incident. In a statement, the PMK leader said the case was an example of the deteriorating law and order situation in Tamil Nadu. Recalling various incidents from the recent past — a doctor's stabbing at a hospital in Chennai, a teacher's killing at a school in Thanjavur, and a man's murder by an armed gang near a court in Tirunelveli — Dr. Ramadoss said: "No one feels safe in the State under the DMK regime. Every time such an incident occurs, the ruling government attempts to divert the public's attention without improving the law and order situation. The people of Tamil Nadu are watching, and they will punish the DMK government at the right time." Ms. Premalatha, in a statement, said it was evident from the incident at Anna University that anti-social elements have no fear of the police. The State government should take immediate steps to arrest all the persons involved in the incident, she added. "Raises safety concerns: Expressing shock, Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK) general secretary T.T.V. Dhinakaran said the incident has raised concerns about the safety of students at Anna University. He urged the State government and Anna University to ensure that student safety is prioritised. Communist Party of India (Marxist) State secretary K. Balakrishna.

One Nation One Election and representative democracy



GNS News Agency, Jan 3

The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth Amendment) Bill, 2024, that was tabled in the Lok Sabha, proposes simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and State/Union Territory Legislative Assemblies with the insertion of Article 82(A). This ambitious reform seeks to synchronise elections, fix the tenure of the Lok Sabha, and simultaneously align elections to the State Assemblies. If the Lok Sabha or a State Assembly is dissolved before its five-year term, mid-term elections will only cover the remainder of the original tenure. The Bill also amends Articles 83, 172, and 327, with changes effective from an 'appointed date', post-2029 general elections, thereby initiating simultaneous elections in 2034. A second Bill, the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024, aligns the tenure of Union Territories' legislative Assemblies with the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. While the proposal seeks administrative efficiency and reduced election fatigue, critical questions arise: has the 'One Nation, One Election (ONOE)' process been truly inclusive and representative? Are there limits to our understanding of the representative spirit of Indian democracy? Understanding representative democracy

Representative democracy is a system wherein citizens elect representatives to make decisions on their behalf. Rooted in the principles of free and fair elections, political accountability, and the protection of individual rights, it balances majority rule with the protection of minority interests. This form of governance becomes especially critical in diverse and populous countries such as India. The theoretical underpinnings emphasise that elected representatives act as intermediaries, ensuring stable governance while accommodating competing interests. Citizens, being too numerous and diverse to participate directly in governance, delegate authority to their elected representatives. The system thrives on periodic elections, informed citizen participation, and institutional checks and balances.

Despite its theoretical merits, representative democracy faces growing challenges in practice. A 2024 Pew Research Center study across 24 nations, including Brazil, India, Nigeria, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States, revealed widespread disillusionment with the system. Citizens increasingly questioned its effectiveness, with some exploring alternatives such as direct democracy, expert rule, or even authoritarian regimes. In 13 countries, significant segments supported strong leaders bypassing parliamentary checks, reflecting frustration with institutional inefficiencies. Alarmingly, military rule garnered between 15% to 17% support in nations such as Greece, Japan, the U.K., and the U.S. Such trends underscore growing distrust in representative systems, driven by perceived inefficiencies, corruption, and unfulfilled promises. Jayaprakash Narayan's critique

In India, debates about representative democracy are

not new. Jayaprakash Narayan, in his seminal work, *A Plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity* (1959), offered a deep critique of parliamentary democracy. JP argued that the reliance on individual voting created an 'atomized society', where fragmented, partisan politics overshadowed the collective national interest. JP highlighted the following defects — risks of minority governments: In a multi-party system like India, he warned that parliamentary democracy risks unstable and unrepresentative governments. First, demagoguery and populism: JP highlighted how political parties manipulate public opinion through half-truths, empty promises, and divisive rhetoric. Second, centralisation of power: Parliamentary democracy, according to JP, concentrates power in the state, weakening intermediary institutions between citizens and the national government. Third, financial costs of elections: JP critiqued the exorbitant cost of elections, tethering democracy to moneyed interests and large organisations.

While critical, JP's analysis aimed to reform and strengthen democracy. His concerns resonate today as India debates ONOE and its implications for democratic representation. For a reform as significant as ONOE, an inclusive and representative process is crucial. In representative democracies, public opinion shapes policy, holding governments accountable to citizens' aspirations and concerns. To achieve this, pre-legislative consultation becomes indispensable, enabling policymakers to gather diverse views, address challenges, and enhance transparency.

The Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy, 2014, mandates a minimum 30-day period for public feedback on proposed legislation. It requires draft Bills to be accompanied by explanatory notes that clarify key provisions in accessible terms. However, the process adopted for ONOE fell short. First, inadequate consultation period: The high-level committee issued a public notice on January 5, 2024, inviting suggestions on ONOE. Citizens were given just 10 days — until January 15 — to respond, undermining the spirit of the 2014 policy. Second, lack of explanatory material: Despite the high-level committee being established in September 2023, no explanatory notes or background papers were provided, limiting citizens' understanding of the proposal's scope and challenges. Third, framing of questions: The high-level committee's approach, seeking 'yes/no' responses on supporting ONOE, appeared perfunctory, giving the impression the matter was already settled. Such procedural lapses risk alienating citizens and stakeholders, undermining trust in the reform process. In a diverse democracy like India, meaningful public engagement is vital to ensure that policy reflects varied perspectives and fosters consensus.

Implications for representative democracy The ONOE Bill raises critical questions about the representative nature of Indian democracy. First, centralisation versus federalism: synchronising elections risks a further centralising of power, potentially undermining the federal spirit of the Constitution. State-specific issues may be overshadowed by national narratives. Second, inclusivity and participation: by curtailing consultation and rushing reforms, the government risks sidelining citizens' voices, weakening democratic inclusivity. Third, electoral accountability: frequent elections, while resource-intensive, enhance accountability by enabling voters to evaluate governments regularly. Simultaneous elections could dilute this accountability.

India's democratic fabric thrives on citizen participation, inclusivity, and accountability. Reforms such as ONOE, while aimed at efficiency, must not compromise these principles. A rushed process undermines trust and risks centralisation. Only by adhering to the principles above can our democracy remain truly representative in letter and spirit. K. Gireesan is with the Department of Public Administration, Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Regional Centre, Chandigarh. Chinmay Bendre is Senior Research Associate, MIT School of Government (MIT-SOG), Pune. The views expressed are personal

Bullfight from Harappa to Alanganallur... now at Kalaingar museum in Keelakarai near Madurai



GNS News Agency, Jan 3

With just two weeks more to go for the three most important jallikattu events to take place in Madurai, there has been a renewed interest at the museum that traces the history of bull fight right from Harappa to Alanganallur at the Kalaingar Centenary Eru Thazhuvuthal Arangam at Keelakarai. And soon, the district administration will announce the date for the jallikattu event to be held at the stadium. This will be the first full-fledged event to be conducted after the stadium was inaugurated in January this year. Minister for Commercial Taxes and Registration P. Moorthy, who inspected the arena on Saturday, asked the officials to make arrangements to build a temporary gallery too. The arena has a seating capacity of 5500 and with the temporary gallery being set up, the officials hope that about 10,000 spectators will come to the arena. Already, the holiday season has brought in a lot of footfalls.

A staff at the site says that on regular days around 200 people visit the place and during weekends the numbers are more than 300. The museum apart from the stunning contemporary wall sculpture or relief art that showcases the rippling might of a bull being tamed by lithe sinewy tamers also has numerous displays that are a connoisseur's delight. Exhibits and photos at Kalaingar Centenary Eru Thazhuvuthal Arangam at Keelakarai in Madurai.

Stark and arresting black and white photographs of vintage jallikattu events throws light on the bygone days, when this traditional sport was once played out in temple grounds. Colour photographs on another wall capture how this spectacular display of skill and valour, now bound by rules and regulations, draws tourists from abroad. Snapshots of how the social fabric of Madurai and its villages revolved around these events, captures in alluring details these much-loved bulls being treated as part of the family and even in death the mourning and the rites are performed as done for one of their family members. Images of leaping bulls found in Egyptian seals in 3000 to 2800 BCE, those that appear in Cretan art towards the beginning

of the Late Bronze Age and the centerpiece of Minoan social life are all on display along with startling photographs of rock art depicting this sport that was found in Karikaiyur in Nilgiris district. A tourist from Chennai, said that only one photograph captures the protest that led to the overturning of the ban on jallikattu on 16 January 2016. "The protest is also part of the history associated with jallikattu. Just as the museum has a wall depicting the various mention of jallikattu in Sangam literature, the landmark judgement and the process that led to the lifting of the ban can be inscribed on a wall," he adds. A tourist official says that soon the arena will play host to various events on almost all days. Plans are afoot to conduct traditional games, including performances by folk artists and classical dancers. As the arena gets ready to open its doors, a proposal has also been sent to the government on collecting a minimal entry fee from visitors. Staff at the arena have welcomed the move as they say it would help curb disinterested walk-ins, help in crowd-control and give a better experience to the visitors.

Trump says he's a believer in H-1B visas

New York: President-elect Donald Trump has declared that he is a "believer in H-1B" visas, quashing the opposition to the programme for qualified professionals to work in the US that pitted the right-wing fringe against his advisers Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy.

"It's a great programme," he told the *New York Post* in a phone interview on Saturday. He said, "I've always liked the visas, I have always been in favour of the visas. That's why we have them. I have many H-1B visas on my properties. I've been a believer in H-1B. I have used it many times." Trump has supported reforming the immigration system to make it merit-based, adopting a points system like Canada's or Australia's that gives weight to academic and employable qualifications.

He has said that he wanted foreign students graduating from US universities to get green cards with their diplomas. He reiterated it during his campaign this year. "What I want to do, and what I will do, is — you graduate from a college, I think you should get automatically, as part of your diploma, a green card to be able to stay in this country." The differences over H-1B visas and the immigration of highly qualified persons boiled over among Trump's loyalists after he appointed Sriram Krishnan, an Indian immigrant, as his artificial intelligence adviser. One of the first salvos was fired by Laura Loomer, a far-right Trump supporter in the base of his loyalists known as the MAGA, an acronym for Trump's rallying cry of 'Make America Great Again'.

Restoring constitutional order in Manipur



GNS News Agency, Jan 3

An editorial titled 'Welcome spotlight: On the Supreme Court directive to Manipur government' published in *The Hindu* on December 14, 2024, rightly mentions that the executive's reticence and lack of accountability, both at the federal and State levels, for the unrelenting ethnic violence in Manipur has again forced the higher judiciary to intervene. However, we must be circumspect in projecting the Supreme Court as a benevolent institutional actor that has dutifully responded with alacrity matched by requisite conviction, and concern to consistently hold the executive to account. A thorough assessment of the Supreme Court's interventions in Manipur over the last 18 months and the incremental steps it can take to rebuild trust in the rule of law is at least merited. In general, we can witness a gradual slide towards institutional dereliction, complacency, and apathy that is unbecoming of a Constitutional Court meant for all Indians. This is evident from the fact that, except for the last hearing on December 9, where it sought details of destroyed and encroached properties, the court did not hold any effective hearings or pass corresponding orders in 2024.

Throughout this year, the main batch of petitions on Manipur was heard only six times. In other words, the court functioned as if its writ jurisdiction had ceased to extend to Manipur, even as 2024 saw some of the bloodiest phases of violence and gruesome killing of innocent victims belonging to both warring ethnic communities. Adding to this are the continuation of various events that emerged on or after May 3, 2023, and are unprecedented in the life of our republic. The list of illustrations is lengthy and extensive — the demographic and geographical separation of the State and its enforcement through a militarised buffer zone, the State's complete surrender over the monopoly of violence and law and order to armed militant groups, and the administration of an illegal, hateful ethno-cultural oath to legislators by the Arambai Tenggol. On some occasions, the Supreme Court did respond, especially when it took suo moto cognisance after a video depicting tribal women being sexually assaulted and paraded naked by a mob went viral on social media. But its responses were episodic across several months in 2023, only to remain largely absent in 2024. This is evident as magisterial courts in Assam, to whom

the Supreme Court had given charge of pre-trial procedures, await its directions to take cognisance of the chargesheets filed and begin the trial. For instance, the trial is yet to begin in the case of the sexual assault and naked parade of two tribal women, even though the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had filed chargesheets against six accused persons, including a juvenile, in October 2023.

In an order dated August 7, 2023, the Supreme Court had directed: the formation of a committee of three retired judges, led by Justice Gita Mittal, to look into all matters of relief and rehabilitation; the constitution of 42 Special Investigation Teams (SITs) in six groups based on the crimes, comprising CBI officers drawn from cadres/States and headed by a retired Director-General of Police. By all accounts, the functioning of the former has been reduced to a mechanical, bureaucratic ritual of filing occasional reports. Several tribal student organisations have since also filed separate pleas before the Supreme Court for relocating displaced students to other universities and professional institutes. Simultaneously, a report in *The Hindu* (December 18, 2024) stated that chargesheets for only 6% (192 cases) out of 3,023 registered cases have been filed by the SIT till November 20, 2024. It remains unclear how much of the structure envisioned for the SITs by the Supreme Court is still intact, as publicly available information suggests that multiple IPS officers on deputation to the SITs from Haryana, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, and Delhi have either sought repatriation or have already been repatriated back to their home cadres.

Crucial measures These directions, initially viewed with a high degree of optimism, have overwhelmingly failed to instill any sense of justice among the people of Manipur or arrest their feelings of institutional neglect and the complete erosion of the rule of law. Now that the Supreme Court appears to have turned its attention back to Manipur, it must undertake the following measures to provide the State with a much-needed healing touch. First, given the volatile situation in Manipur, inimical to a fair criminal justice system, the trials of cases investigated by the SITs should be transferred forthwith outside Manipur, and the appropriate trial courts should be allowed to take cognisance of chargesheets already filed. Second, the SITs should be directed to fill the existing informational vacuum and provide timely updates to petitioners and the families of deceased victims about the progress of the investigations and trials. Thirdly, considering the enormity of multi-faceted issues arising from the conflict in Manipur that persist and are likely to continue due to the sharp governance deficit, a bipartisan High Powered Commission comprising eminent persons, including members from both conflicting communities, should be constituted. This commission, in turn, be directed to report its findings directly to a Special Bench of the Supreme Court, which should be given the task of exclusively hearing cases related to the ethnic violence in Manipur.

Incidents on loop, but it's escape for regulator, airlines

The recent incident, on December 5, 2024, involving an Air India Airbus A320 aircraft at Goa's Mopa airport is another wake-up call for Indian aviation. The crew of the Hyderabad-bound aircraft had to reject takeoff after entering a parallel taxiway instead of the main runway. This is not the first time an event such as this has happened to airlines in India. This falls under the category of runway confusion. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), the regulatory body that primarily deals with safety issues, as we have seen during the past 20 years, will blame the pilots and sweep the report under the carpet. The blame, squarely, points to the regulator and the airlines. It has failed to learn from earlier events. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)'s Annex 13 makes it mandatory for a member-state to investigate accidents, serious incidents and also incidents and identify the cause and take corrective steps to prevent a recurrence. Series of incidents

The history of runway confusion errors by Indian carriers is long. In 1993, a Jet Airways Boeing 737 inaugural flight to Coimbatore landed at the Sulur air base of the Indian Air Force instead of Peelamedu civil airport. In September 2002, a Jet Airways Boeing 737 landed on the taxi track in Dabolim airport in Goa. In June 2007, a Spicejet Boeing 737 landed on the wrong runway at Delhi. In December 2008, a Spicejet Boeing 737 landed on a wrong runway at Kolkata. In March 2009, a Jetlite CRJ landed on a wrong runway at Kolkata. In September 2018, an Air India Airbus A320 on the Delhi-Thiruvananthapuram-Male sector landed on a wrong (under construction) runway in the Maldives.

Just a month earlier, a Jet Airways Boeing 737 had to abort takeoff while on a taxiway at Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. In January 2014, an Air India Boeing 787 almost



landed at Melbourne's Essendon airport before air traffic control directed the crew to Melbourne Tullamarine airport. And in December 2020, a Spicejet Boeing 737 had a hard touchdown short of the runway threshold in Guwahati, Assam. Had the DGCA and the airlines concerned taken proactive and corrective steps, India would not have to cut a sorry figure in international aviation. India is lucky that none of these events resulted in fatalities. The blame is apportioned to pilot error while the airlines and the regulator walk away without accountability.

In June 2010, in the first meeting of the Civil Aviation Safety Advisory Council (CASAC), formed after the Mangaluru crash of an Air India Express flight (May 2010), this writer had highlighted some of the events, between 2002 and 2009, in a presentation before the Union Minister of Civil Aviation. If such serious incidents are still taking place in 2024, the blame falls squarely on the Ministry of Civil Aviation, the DGCA and the airlines for their failure to prevent a recurrence.

Singapore took corrective measures Contrast this with an incident involving a Singapore Airlines flight in Taiwan on October 31, 2000. The crew were trying to expedite their departure before the airport closed due to a typhoon. They took off from a wrong runway which had been partially closed. The aircraft crashed into

construction equipment, exploded in a fire and several passengers died. It was night, in heavy rain and with strong winds. Singapore took corrective measures and there has not been a serious incident till date. Can India not learn from them? Airlines in India have had a repeated number of accidents involving high and fast approaches, resulting in runway overruns since 2005. In October 2005, an Air Sahara Boeing 737 went off the runway at Mumbai and there was serious damage to the aircraft. In March 2015 a Spicejet DH8-D sustained damage during a runway excursion on landing in Hubli. In July 2019, a Spicejet Boeing 737 overran the runway in Mumbai on landing and was damaged. In December 2016, a Jet Airways Boeing 737 went off the runway at Goa after a rejected take off

A majority of those aircraft have resulted in hull losses and some such as the Mangaluru and Kozhikode (2020) crashes have resulted in the loss of 179 lives. In all those overrun accidents, pilots have been blamed but never the poor training and safety standards of airlines, the non-compliance with ICAO standards on aerodrome infrastructure and the failure of the DGCA's and Airports Authority of India's safety audits that have covered up serious deficiencies. The Flight Standards Directorate of the DGCA — which is supposed to oversee stan-

dards — has failed miserably, as it is the same type of accidents that have occurred and aircraft have been written off. Pressure on crew India has one of the worst set of regulations on flight and duty time limitations for flight crew. Pilots and cabin attendants are pressured to operate in violation of flight time limits, flight duty limits and rest periods. The new addition to pressure on flight deck crew is the hydra-headed monster called "on time performance", or OTP. Many of these errors can be attributed to the OTP pressure and failure of crew resource management in the cockpit. In the Kozhikode crash, the captain was in a hurry to land because he was required to operate the next day's flight. The accident is a classic case of "press-on-it-is" where, once the pilot gets fixed on to the landing strip, no inputs are received from the other pilot. The same happened in the Mangaluru accident. Repeated calls by the co-pilot to go around were ignored. The incident, in Mopa, Goa, shows a lack of knowledge of runway markings by the pilots. Runways and not the taxi track have specific markings. Pilots landing short is also an indication of a lack of knowledge of runway markings and non-compliance of stabilised approach criteria. Airline training and safety departments should wake up and address these serious training deficiencies.

Frequent GPS interference, including 'spoofing', near India's border with Pakistan, Myanmar



GNS News Agency, Jan 3

Instances of GPS interference on passenger aircraft, including 'spoofing' with false signals, are on the rise over conflict zones globally, including on India's borders with Pakistan, which are among the top sites for such occurrences, according to OPSGROUP, a voluntary group of 8,000 aviation personnel, including pilots, who share information on risks to flights. The GPSJam portal also lists India's borders with Pakistan and Myanmar as among the top five regions where more than 10% of aircraft reported low navigation accuracy. 'Spoofing' is a form of cyber attack that includes false GPS signals to mislead navigation equipment. It is seen in conflict zones and is used to attack drones that are increasingly used in modern warfare. Interference with GPS was recently seen on the Embraer jet involved in the Azerbaijan Airlines crash on December 25 in which 38 people onboard were killed. On Saturday (December 28, 2024), Russian President Vladimir Putin apologised to his Azerbaijan counterpart, Ilham Aliyev, for the "tragic incident that occurred in Russian airspace" and said that Russian air defence was repelling attacks from Ukraine's combat drones in Russian towns. According to a report published by the OPSGROUP in September 2024, the first series of GPS spoofing was identified in September 2023 in the area of northern Iraq, centred on Baghdad. In 2024, new spoofing locations were identified in the Black Sea region, western Russia and the Baltics, the North and South Korea border areas, western Ukraine, and the India-Pakistan border.

The report said there was "daily spoofing" since May 2024 in the Delhi Flight Information Region. It also ranked this area at the ninth position among the top 20 Flight Information Regions, with 316 aircraft impacted by spoofing between July 15 to August 15. The rank was based on the

analysis of 17,000 flights. Globally, instances of spoofing have increased from 300 flights impacted daily in January to 1,500 flights impacted daily by August, the report said. In an advisory in November 2023, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) asked airlines to develop standard operating procedures and provide bi-monthly reports on such occurrences. This data is not available publicly. The Hindu requested the Ministry of Civil Aviation to share this data, but there was no response till the time of going to press. One IndiGo pilot reported losing both GPS systems for a few minutes while he was flying out of Amritsar earlier this month. Several other pilots have said that "nearly every flight" to Amritsar either experiences interference or spoofing. Flights to Dubai, Doha and other Gulf destinations from northern parts of India also experience false GPS signals, as do flights to Bangkok, Vietnam, Hong Kong while crossing Myanmar. Pilots have also said flight tracking website flightradar24 can sometimes show, albeit inaccurately, that there had been a flight diversion mid-air because of loss of data used to indicate the aircraft's location to other aircraft and air traffic control, resulting in an immediate message from the airline's operation control centre. While aircraft systems are built with several redundancies, including the Inertial Reference System that's also used for navigation, which continue to operate safely for up to five hours even if a primary system fails, one pilot described the phenomenon of GPS spoofing and interference as one of flying with "one's hands tied to one's back".

Spoofing the GPS could also result in errors in the speed display, or trigger a terrain warning by tricking the navigation system into believing it's at a dangerously low altitude or in proximity to terrain. Though pilots don't receive an alert inside the cockpit during spoofing, crew are able to detect such events from the "incoherent" information displayed on various instruments. The UN's International Civil Aviation Organisation held its 14th Air Navigation Conference in Montreal between August 26 to September 6 on aviation safety concerning interference to the Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS). It expressed "strong concerns on the serious recent escalation of GNSS harmful interference" and condemned interferences "not clearly justified by security or defence needs". It recommended that states under the International Civil Aviation Organization "acknowledge that military shall notify aviation authorities, spectrum regulators and ANSPs (aviation navigation service providers) about their GNSS intentional interference activities whenever possible".

Elon Musk backs AfD party in German newspaper opinion piece

GNS News Agency, Jan 3

U.S. billionaire Elon Musk backed Germany's Alternative for Germany (AfD) in a guest opinion piece for Germany's Welt am Sonntag newspaper published online on Saturday (December 28, 2024) that prompted the commentary editor to resign in protest. In the commentary, published in German by the flagship paper of the Axel Springer media group, Mr. Musk expanded on his post on social media platform X last week claiming that "only the AfD can save Germany." "The portrayal of the AfD as right-wing extremist is clearly false, considering that Alice Weidel, the party's leader, has a same-sex partner from Sri Lanka! Does that sound like Hitler to you? Please!" Mr. Musk said in the piece. Germany's domestic intelligence agency has classified the AfD at the national level as a suspected extremism case since 2021. Shortly after the piece was published online, the editor of the opinion section, Eva Marie Kogel, wrote on X that she had submitted her resignation, with a link to the commentary. "Democracy and journalism thrive on freedom of expression. This includes dealing with polarising positions and classifying them journalistically," the newspaper's editor-in-chief designate Jan Philipp Burgard and Ulf Poschardt, who takes over as publisher on January 1, told Reuters.

They said discussion about Mr. Musk's piece, which had around 340 comments several hours after it was published, was "very revealing." Underneath Mr. Musk's com-



mentary, the newspaper published a response by Mr. Burgard. "Musk's diagnosis is correct, but his therapeutic approach, that only the AfD can save Germany, is fatally false," he wrote, referencing the AfD's desire to leave the European Union and seek rapprochement with Russia as well as appease China. The AfD backing from Mr. Musk, who also defended his right to weigh in on German politics due to his "significant investments," comes as Germans are set to vote on Feb. 23 after a coalition government led by Chancellor Olaf Scholz collapsed. The AfD is running second in opinion polls and might be able to thwart either a centre-right or centre-left majority, but Germany's mainstream, more centrist parties have pledged to shun any support from the AfD at national level.

U.S.-India ties will be strengthened, but expect tariff trouble, FTA push: Former Ambassador Juster

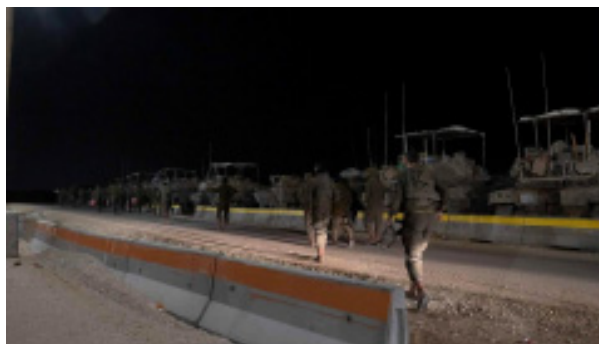
GNS News Agency, Jan 3

India should expect raised tariffs, and a renewed push to get a Free Trade Agreement finalised from the United States as Donald Trump gets set to begin a second term in office, said former Ambassador to India Kenneth Juster. In an exclusive interview to The Hindu via videoconferencing from New York, Mr. Juster, a former U.S. department of Commerce official who was appointed by Mr. Trump to India in the first term (2017-2021) said that the first tenure and Mr. Trump's campaign pronouncements were indicators that the second term would see a further strengthening of India-U.S. ties, but certain irritants in ties, such as over high tariffs, market access in areas like "agricultural exports from United States to India and the IT (information technology) equipment sector and medical devices", and differences over Iran policy could also return. In Mr. Trump's first term, the U.S. had withdrawn India's GSP status for exporters, and forced India to cancel all oil imports from Iran. Mr. Juster pointed out that Mr. Trump's cabinet nominees thus far had very strongly pro-India positions, and that they also saw China as the U.S.'s "major strategic challenge", pointing in particular to NSA-designate Michael Waltz, currently co-chair of the India Caucus in the House of Representatives, whom External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met in Washington last week. Mr. Juster said that it was unlikely the Department of Justice indictments in the Pannu case and against the Adani group would have "any substantial effect on the broader US-India relationship".

When asked about a possible invitation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the Trump inauguration on January 20, Mr. Juster pointed out that foreign leaders have not traditionally attended the inauguration, but that the two leaders share a close personal relationship from Mr. Trump's previous term. With the inauguration of Donald Trump as the President of the United States for the second time just weeks away, New Delhi stepped up its outreach to the incoming administration with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri both spending the year-end week in Washington. In an exclusive interview to The Hindu over a video conference from New York, Mr. Trump's last envoy to India (2017-2021) Kenneth Juster spoke about what to expect from his next tenure in office. Broadly, how do you think President Trump will approach India, given your experience of the ties during his previous tenure?

I think there's going to be a very strong U.S.-Indian relationship during the second term of the Trump presidency, and I base that on what happened during the first term. U.S.-India relations were among the highlights of the Trump administration's foreign policy. President Trump was the first U.S. President to label China as a strategic challenge to the United States and to popularize the concept of the Indo Pacific, which strategically links the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean regions. It was a concept that was pioneered by former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan, but the United States really enhanced it by its own activities, and soon the entire region and world was speaking of the Indo Pacific. Under the Trump administration, we also revived the Quad, the grouping among the United States, India, Japan and Australia, which has continued to thrive under the Biden administration. We enhanced our defence cooperation significantly, signing three major foundational agreements, increasing the number of military exercises and having the first ever tri-services exercise. We increased energy exports to India of all types, clean coal, natural gas, oil and renewables, and worked closely with India on those issues. There was also a very strong people-to-people relationship. There was a Howdy Modi event in Houston with over 50,000 people that President Trump was at. And then there was a Namaste Trump event in February of 2020, that had over 100,000 people in Gujarat. So, there's a very strong relationship between the President and the Prime Minister, and the United States really provided very critical and important assistance to India when China came across the Line of Actual Control into disputed territory in 2020. What should one make of Trump nominees thus far, including Rubio, Hegseth, Gabbard, Ramaswamy and Hegseth, all of whom have been positively disposed towards India? Let me also mention Representative Michael Waltz, who's going to be the incoming National Security Advisor, who is currently co-chair of the India Caucus in the House of Representatives. And yes, I think the appointees by and large will be furthering the strength of the US-India relationship that we saw in the first term of the Trump administration. Senator Rubio, who's the nominee to be Secretary of State, had introduced legislation that would treat India as equivalent to an ally for purposes of technology transfers and provide a variety of other positive elements to the US-India relationship.

Israeli forces order new evacuation at besieged northern Gaza town, residents say



GNS News Agency, Jan 3

Israeli forces carrying out a weeks-long offensive in northern Gaza ordered any residents remaining in Beit Hanoun to quit the town on Sunday (December 29, 2024), pointing to Palestinian militant rocket fire from the area, residents said. The instruction to residents to leave caused a new wave of displacement, although it was not immediately clear how many people were affected, the residents said. Israel says its almost three-month-old campaign in northern Gaza is aimed at Hamas militants and preventing them from regrouping. Its instructions to civilians to evacuate are meant to keep them out of harm's way, the military says. Palestinian and United Nations officials say no place is safe in Gaza and that evacuations worsen humanitarian conditions of the population. Much of the area around the northern towns of Beit Hanoun, Jabalia and Beit Lahiya has been cleared of people and razed, fuelling speculation that Israel intends to keep the area as a closed buffer zone after the fighting in Gaza ends. The Israeli military announced its new push into the Beit Hanoun area on Saturday (December 28, 2024). The Palestinian Civil Emergency Service said

it had lost communication with people still trapped in the town, and it was unable to send teams into the area because of the raid.

On Friday (December 27, 2024), Israeli forces stormed the Kamal Adwan hospital in northern Gaza. The military said it was being used by militants, which Hamas denies. The raid on the hospital, one of three medical facilities on the northern edge of Gaza, put the last major health facility in the area out of service, the World Health Organization (WHO) said in a post on X. Some patients were evacuated from Kamal Adwan to the Indonesian Hospital, which is not in service, and medics were prevented from joining them there, the Health Ministry said. Other patients and staff were taken to other medical facilities. On Sunday (December 29, 2024), health officials said an Israeli tank shell hit the upper floor of the Al-Ahly Arab Baptist Hospital in Gaza City near the X-ray division. Meanwhile, Palestinian health officials said Israeli military strikes across the enclave killed at least 16 people on Sunday (December 29, 2024). One of those strikes killed seven people and wounded others at Al-Wafa Hospital in Gaza City, the Palestinian Civil Emergency Service said in a statement.

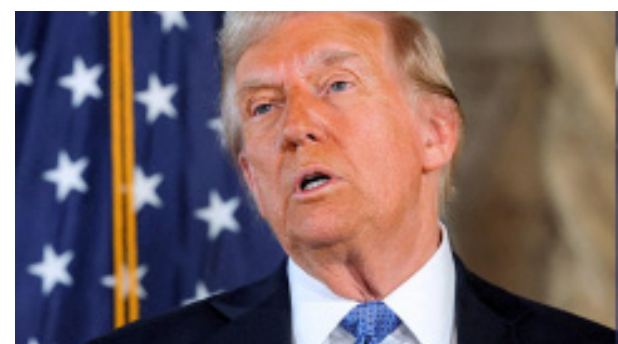
The Israeli military said the strike was aimed at members of the Hamas 'Aerial Defence Unit', who operated from the compound, saying the place no longer served as a hospital. It said the militants used the compound to plan and execute attacks against Israeli troops in the immediate future. Israel's campaign against Hamas in Gaza has killed more than 45,300 Palestinians, according to health officials in the Hamas-run enclave. Most of the population of 2.3 million has been displaced and much of Gaza is in ruins. The war was triggered by Hamas' attack on southern Israel on October 7, 2023, in which 1,200 people were killed and 251 taken to Gaza as hostages, according to Israeli tallies.

Bangladeshi Americans urge Trump to protect minorities in Bangladesh

GNS News Agency, Jan 3

Describing the ongoing atrocities against religious and ethnic minorities in Bangladesh as an "existential threat" from Islamist forces, a coalition of Bangladeshi American Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians has urged President-elect Donald Trump to intervene and help protect minority communities in the country. Urging Mr. Trump to secure the immediate release of monk Chinmoy Krishna Das, who they said has been falsely imprisoned on sedition charges, the group on Sunday said Bangladesh risks descending into radicalisation, which could have far-reaching effects not only for South Asia but for the rest of the world as well.

Mr. Das, a former ISKCON leader, was arrested at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka on November 25. A court in Chattogram sent him to jail, rejecting his bail petition as he was accused of a sedition charge for allegedly disrespecting the country's flag. The hearing in the case will be held on January 2, 2025. In a memorandum addressed to Mr. Trump, the group suggested linking Bangladesh's participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions to the cessation of internal ethnic and religious



persecution. The memorandum also proposed a comprehensive Minority Protection Act to recognise minorities and indigenous groups officially. Key recommendations included the establishment of safe enclaves, a separate electorate for minorities, and laws against hate crimes and hate speech to protect religious practices and cultural heritage, according to a media release.

Centre asks Mizoram, Nagaland and Manipur to keep close watch on activities of foreigners

GNS News Agency, Jan 3

The Union Home Ministry has asked police and security agencies in the States of Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur to "keep a close watch on the activities of the foreigners visiting these States". In a circular sent on December 17 to the Chief Secretaries of the three States bordering Myanmar, the Ministry said that State governments "shall take necessary action to strengthen their mechanism to monitor the activities of foreigners". The order accessed by The Hindu said that the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) and police authorities should keep a close watch on the activities of the foreigners and "if anything adverse is found, appropriate action may be taken under relevant Acts including Foreigners Act". The circular was issued to withdraw the relaxation provided under the Protected Area Regime (PAR) to the three States since 2010, which enabled the arrival of foreigners without a Protected Area Permit (PAP) for tourism or other purposes. The exemption from PAR, in existence since 1958, has been withdrawn in the three States after a relaxation of 14 years. After being extended in 2022, the relaxation was to continue till December 31, 2027. The Home Ministry said that the matter was examined "in the backdrop of growing security concerns in border areas of these States". The PAPs or special permits are either issued by the Ministry or the State governments.

The latest circular states that in order to "facilitate the travel of bonafide foreigners and to avoid delays in granting the PAP/RAP (Restricted Area Permits) permits, it has now been decided to process all PAP/RAP applications on the e-FRRO portal only. No physical PAP/Rap permits shall be issued." It added that the pending physical applications,



if any will be integrated on the e-FRRO portal by the State governments in coordination with the National Informatics Centre (NIC). FRRO functions under the Home Ministry. A centralised platform has been designed to track the movement of foreigners in the country. The Ministry further requested all State governments to sensitise all the authorities concerned under their administrative control. "These instructions may please be brought to the notice of all concerned for compliance with immediate effect," the Ministry said. It said that all foreigners who want to visit the three States "shall mandatorily obtain PAP from the authorities to whom powers have been delegated". On December 18, the Manipur government said in a press statement that PAR was reimposed in light of "growing security concerns arising out of influx from neighbouring countries". Manipur has been affected by ethnic violence between the tribal Kuki-Zo people and the Meitei people since May 3, 2023. More than 250 people have been killed and around 60,000 people have been displaced from their homes.

Stability hangs in balance in Bangladesh as mob violence rises under the interim govt.

Abdul Hai Kanu, a 78-year-old veteran freedom fighter from Bangladesh's Comilla district, could never have imagined that December — a month synonymous with liberation and pride — would become a chapter of horror in his life. On the afternoon of December 22, in his hometown in Chaudhagram under Comilla, Abdul Hai Kanu was on his way to the market to buy medicine when a group of young men, affiliated with the politics of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, surrounded him. They forced a garland of shoes — a symbol of ultimate humiliation — around his neck and captured his torment. They then shared the video on social media that has since gone viral where Mr. Kanu can be seen standing visibly crushed. His trembling hands clasped together as he begged for mercy, his voice breaking with desperation. "Let me go," he pleaded, but his cries met only cold disdain. They also asked him to leave the district.

Mr. Kanu was involved with the Awami League, the party of ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, but claimed he never harmed anyone despite his political affiliations. He said that he had to leave his village for eight years due to conflicts with the local MP from Sheikh Hasina's party. After this incident, Mr. Kanu was admitted to hospital and left his village for another district. However, the chief adviser press wing condemned the deformation and asked authori-

ties to launch an investigation into the incident. Not only Mr. Kanu, but hundreds have recently fallen victim to mob justice, killings, fabricated cases, brutal attacks, and public humiliations across Bangladesh. Mr. Kanu is relatively fortunate to have survived, unlike two young men who were beaten to death by a mob on suspicion of cattle theft in the presence of police on December 14 in Kishoreganj. In recent months, an alarming number of people have lost their lives to mob justice across the country. After the fall of Sheikh Hasina's 15-year regime on August 5, a tenure marked by allegations of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, the country has experienced a sharp rise in mob violence, fabricated cases, robbery, mugging and extortions. The instability persists, with the nation still struggling to restore law and order, even after four months under the interim government led by Nobel Laureate Prof. Dr. Muhammad Yunus. The surge in many forms of violence has disproportionately targeted both Awami League members and those unaffiliated with the party, often stemming from political disputes, power struggles, internal party conflicts and monetary gains. Although police operations have resumed across the country, and traffic police are actively managing road traffic, a sense of fear still lingers within the force. The visible police presence has done little to reassure the public, as officers remain hesitant to intervene.

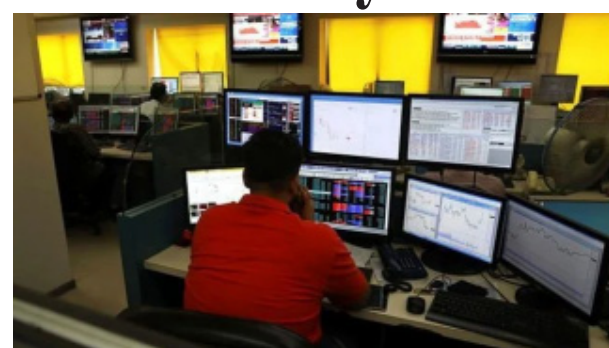
After 2 years of India-Australia trade deal, export utilisation reaches 79%



India, Australia agree on tie-up in clean energy, push for trade pact PM Narendra Modi with his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese in Rio de Janeiro in November. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Sunday said that export utilisation under the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) has reached 79 per cent after two years of implementation, while import utilisation stood at 84 per cent. Trade utilisation of a free trade agreement (FTA) indicates the extent to which trade benefits from the agreement. It also provides insights into whether businesses are effectively leveraging the FTA or finding its concession procedures burdensome.

However, trade between India and Australia has declined during the current financial year. Official trade data revealed that goods exports to Australia totalled \$3.99 billion during the six months from April to September 2024, down from \$4.89 billion in the same period last year, marking an 18 per cent decline. Imports during the same period also fell by 18 per cent, dropping to \$6.7 billion this year from \$8.3 billion last year. This has resulted in a narrowing trade deficit. "Exchange of preferential import data has commenced between both countries, highlighting the effective implementation of the agreement in 2023. The data reveals export utilisation at 79 per cent and import utilisation at 84 per cent," the Commerce and Industry Ministry stated. The ministry said that key sectors such as textiles, chemicals, and agriculture have recorded significant growth. Additionally, exports in new categories, including gold studded with diamonds and turbojets, demonstrate the agreement's role in diversifying trade. Imports of essential raw materials such as metalliferous ores, cotton, and wood products have bolstered India's industries, underscoring the mutually beneficial nature of the partnership. Meanwhile, sectors such as electronics and engineering have potential for further growth. The data also indicated that India has benefited from cheaper coal imports, which received a 2.5 per cent duty concession under the agreement. The ministry further stated that the India-Australia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) is now progressing, with 10 formal rounds and inter-session discussions completed so far. "CECA builds on the foundation laid by the ECTA, advancing the bilateral trade agenda with greater ambition. A stocktake meeting on the India-Australia CECA was recently held in New Delhi from 4-6 December 2024 to evaluate progress and chart the path forward," the ministry said. Both nations remain committed to capitalising on the momentum created by the ECTA, driving deeper economic integration, and achieving the target of AUD 100 billion in bilateral trade by 2030, the ministry added.

Equity market gets Rs 1,600 crore FPI inflows, down 99% from last year



The year 2024 saw a sharp slowdown in foreign portfolio investor (FPI) activity, with foreign investors pumping in just over Rs 1,600 crore on a net basis into the domestic equity market, a steep fall of 99 per cent from the robust inflows of Rs 1.71 lakh crore in the previous year. The significant shift can largely be attributed to concerns over the valuation of Indian stocks, below-expected domestic GDP growth in the second quarter of fiscal 2025, weak corporate earnings and higher US bond yields.

According to the National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL) data, FPIs injected Rs 1,656 crore on a net basis into the Indian equity market this year (until December 27). Foreign investors were majorly selling in the stock market while buying in the primary market. In contrast to equities, FPIs net bought Rs 1.12 lakh crore of domestic debt in 2024, up from Rs 68,663 crore in 2023. Inflows in the debt voluntary retention route (VRR) and fully accessible route (FAR) categories were Rs 13,782 crore and Rs 28,795 crore in 2024, respectively, the NSDL data showed.

"The larger picture in 2024 from a global investor's point of view was that the US market was doing well and the US dollar remained strong. Post Donald Trump's election, the view was that the dollar would remain a stronger currency and the US market would be a good investment destination. It was the biggest factor driving the global flows. When the largest market appears favorable, every other asset class has to offer something better. That was a big challenge for other (emerging) markets (including India) in 2024," said Nitiin Jain, CEO, Kotak Mahindra Asset Management, Singapore. Despite the inclusion of a couple of India stocks into MSCI's emerging market indices, foreign investors stayed away from the Indian market. MSCI indexes are globally tracked by investors who allocate funds based on the weightage given to countries and stocks. Equity market gets Rs 1,600 crore FPI inflows, down 99% from last year. The year began with FPIs buying Indian equities, purchasing Rs 1.12 lakh crore of domestic shares in the first nine months. "This (inclusion in MSCI indices) would have meant passive flows coming into the Indian market. However, we haven't seen flows. This means that investors were underweight on India," Jain said.

On an aggregate level, foreign investors' holding of Indian equities has reduced to around 17 per cent at present, from 21-22 per cent in 2020. The year began with FPIs buying Indian equities, purchasing Rs 1.12 lakh crore of domestic shares in the first nine months. This upbeat sentiment was driven by robust GDP growth, strong corporate earnings and macroeconomic indicators like fiscal and current account deficits remaining under control.

"It was a Goldilocks scenario. But the situation reversed after the Q2 FY2025 corporate results. Nobody expected that the growth would be flat. That was an indication that the Q2 GDP growth would also come lower," said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services. During Q2 FY2025, non-financial firms reported a slower growth of 5 per cent year-on-year in net sales, as compared to 6.4 per cent in the previous quarter. The contraction in profit after tax (PAT) also deepened, falling by 2 per cent y-o-y in Q2, a sharper drop than the 0.4 per cent y-o-y decline seen in Q1, according to a CareEdge Ratings report. In the July-September quarter of 2024, the real GDP growth slumped to a seven-quarter low of 5.4 per cent. Following the sub-optimal GDP growth in Q2 and disappointing corporate earnings, FPIs offloaded Rs 1.16 lakh crore worth of local shares in October and November, resulting in a nearly 6 per cent fall in the Sensex and Nifty during the period. However, in December, FPIs turned purchaser of domestic shares, buying Rs 16,675.11 crore worth of equities on a net basis.

Selling in stock market, buying in primary market A notable trend was seen in FPI investment into the equity market — while foreign investors were selling heavily in the stock market or cash market, they remained purchasers mainly in initial public offerings (IPOs). In the cash market (up to December 27), FPIs sold Rs 1.19 lakh crore while investing Rs 1.21 lakh crore through the primary market route, the data showed. "The selling through exchanges was mainly due to the high valuations and investing through the primary market was mainly due to the fair valuations," said Geojit's Vijayakumar. At the start of the year, India, within the emerging market, had the highest premium in terms of valuation, which was justified by strong earnings outlook and GDP growth. However, during the later part of the year, there were some events with not-so-best outcomes, such as below-expectation GDP growth in Q2, weak quarterly earnings and elevated inflation levels. This indicated that the valuation premium which India enjoyed was not commensurate with economic news during the year. Due to this, foreign investors looked at booking profits in the secondary market, said Kotak Mahindra Asset Management's Jain.

"At the same time, there were new-age companies such as digital, renewables, electric vehicles, contract development and manufacturing organisation (CDMO), electronic manufacturing services (EMS), and food delivery and quick commerce in the primary market that caught the attention of foreign investors. Since there were some interesting companies, foreign investors were selling in the secondary market and buying in the primary market," he said. Purchase in the primary market includes buying through preferential allotment, rights issue, initial public offers and buyback of shares. Outlook for 2025 Analysts see a turnaround in FPI flows into India in 2025 on the expectation of a recovery in GDP growth, pick-up in government spending, improvement in corporate earnings and ease in inflation. They also expect the RBI to cut interest rates in 2025. "Everyone knows that India will be the best-performing market for the next 3, 5, 10 years. Therefore, FPIs cannot sell consistently. They will turn buyers in India when there are indications of growth and earnings recovery," said Vijayakumar. A recent RBI article said the country's growth trajectory is poised to lift in the second half of 2024-25, driven mainly by resilient domestic private consumption demand. In addition to this, sustained government spending on infrastructure is expected to further stimulate economic activity and investment. However, the headwinds for FPI flows into India in 2025 would be an appreciation of the US dollar and higher US 10-year bond yield, Vijayakumar added.

Rate cut would help revive economy without worsening inflation, says MPC member Nagesh Kumar

Nagesh Kumar, one of the three new external members of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), said that the slowdown in GDP growth during Q2 FY2025 was transient and the economy is likely to pick-up in the second half of the current fiscal. Kumar, who voted for a 25 basis points (bps) cut in the repo rate in the last two consecutive monetary policies, told Hitesh Vyas and George Mathew that a rate cut would revive economic growth without worsening the inflationary situation. If the RBI does not follow the process of normalisation when most other central banks have moved forward, it runs the risk of currency appreciation, said Kumar, who is Director and Chief Executive of the Institute for Studies in Industrial Development (ISID). Excerpts:

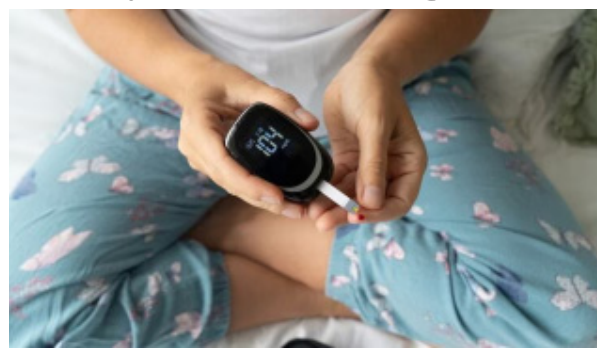
Given that the growth has been sluggish, do you believe a 50 bps reduction in the repo rate at this point in time would be a more effective step to stimulate the economy? Do you think RBI is behind the curve in cutting rates and boosting growth?

To some extent the sharp growth slowdown in Q2 was transient. We should expect an improvement in growth in the coming two quarters. The government capex, which saw a squeeze in the first quarter, has begun to revive in

the second quarter and should gain momentum in the third and fourth quarters. The government capex should, therefore, help to lift the growth rate in the second half of the year. Yet, there is a slowdown from the earlier projections of growth around 7 per cent or higher to around 6.5 per cent. I believe that it needed a policy response because it largely reflected the slow-down of the manufacturing sector. The agriculture growth rate actually improved from 2 per cent in Q1 to 3.5 per cent in Q2 and the services sector was still posting a robust growth rate of 7 per cent (even though slight moderation from 7.7 per cent).

The deceleration of manufacturing growth from 7 per cent to just 2.2 per cent was rather sharp. A reduction of the cost of capital through a reduced repo rate could help to revive the growth of private investment besides consumer demand. Keeping in mind the deceleration of the manufacturing sector, I made a case for a 25-basis point cut in the repo rate to start the cycle of normalizing the monetary policy. In addition I made a case for a 50-basis point cut in CRR, to help enhance liquidity. Expanding the manufacturing sector could also help in containing inflationary pressures by enhancing the supply capacity.

5 things you need to do immediately if you're diagnosed with pre-diabetes



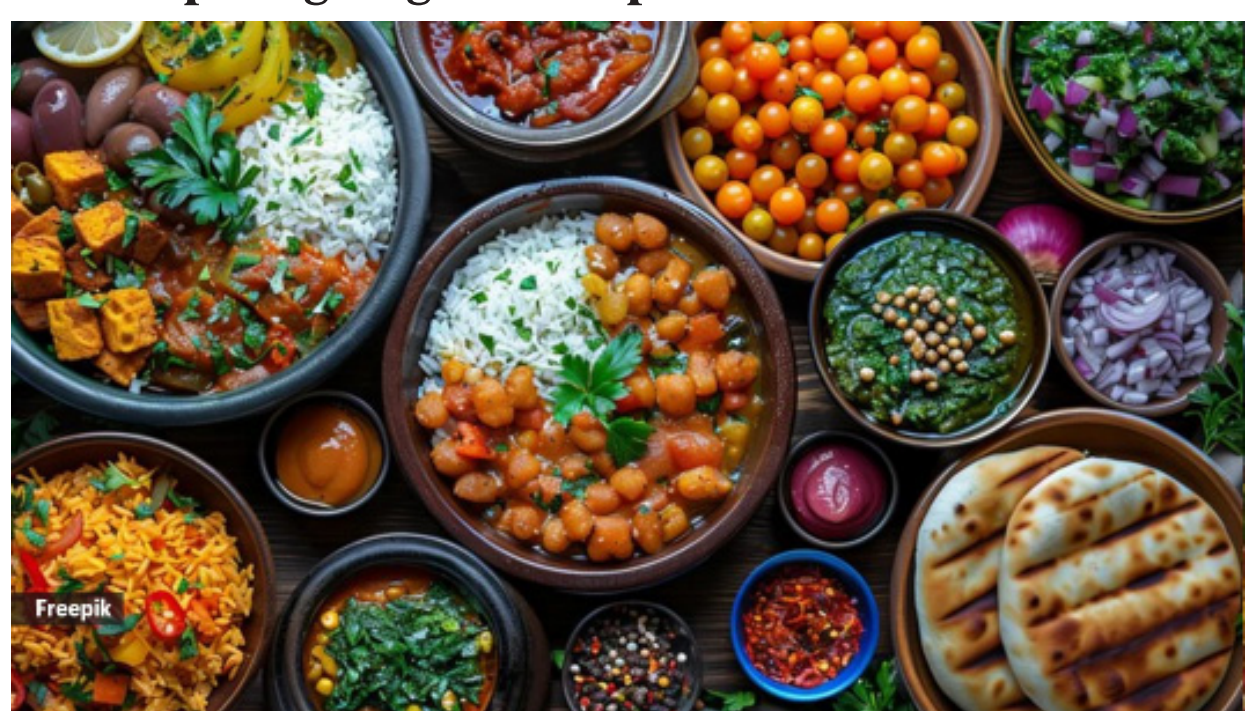
Learn the 5 crucial lifestyle changes to take immediately after a prediabetes diagnosis. Learn the 5 crucial lifestyle changes to take immediately after a prediabetes diagnosis. Being diagnosed with prediabetes is a wake-up call but not a life sentence. It's an opportunity to make significant changes to your lifestyle to prevent the progression to type 2 diabetes. Prediabetes often develops due to a combination of genetic factors and lifestyle choices. Following a foolproof plan to control the disease can reduce the risk of associated conditions like heart disease. Focusing on diet, exercise, weight management, and regular monitoring ensures a comprehensive approach to health. Here's a detailed plan based on expert advice from Dr Dheeraj Kapoor and Kanikka Malhotra, focusing on effective strategies for managing prediabetes.

1. Prioritise a Healthy Diet
Malhotra, a clinical nutritionist and diabetes educator, advises switching to a nutrient-rich diet focusing on whole, unprocessed foods. What to include: Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. What to avoid:

2. Get Adequate Sleep and Manage Stress
Both experts emphasised that poor sleep and high-stress levels can worsen insulin resistance. Sleep goal: Aim for 7-8 hours of quality rest each night. Stress management: Practice relaxation techniques such as meditation, deep breathing, or yoga. By acting early, you're not just preventing diabetes but also improving your overall well-being.

3. Focus on Weight Management
Kapoor said that if you're overweight, aim to lose 5-7% of your body weight. This modest reduction can improve insulin sensitivity and lower fasting blood sugar levels. Pair portion control with physical activity for better results.

4. Monitor Blood Sugar Levels
Track your progress regularly through blood glucose monitoring, Malhotra advised. How it helps: Monitoring keeps you informed about how your diet, exercise, and other changes impact your sugar levels. Use these insights to adjust your lifestyle and discuss results with your healthcare provider.



While discussing his dietary practices, Chhetri highlighted that excelling at a top level in sports requires a well-thought-out and nutrient-rich diet. When asked if he encourages children to play sports while observing a vegetarian diet, the former national team captain mentioned that simple meals are insufficient for the demands of intense training and competition. "So, why I don't talk about being vegetarian is for a single reason. Do not think that you can play by eating only, roti, onion, and lentils. And this is what generally comes to people's minds. The first thing people ask is, 'Where will we get protein from?' You already know the person has no knowledge or lack of knowledge," he said.

Chhetri continued, "So, people like Virat (Kohli) and me, have played for at least six years at the top level, physically, being vegetarian. So, that myth that vegetarians can't play has been debunked. But what I and Virat eat is extensive, expensive right now... and it's not easy to bring on the table." He stressed that their access to chefs and nutritionists helps them create extensive and balanced meals. "We eat a lot. We are really fortunate we've got chefs, we've got nutritionists (sic)." His diet consists of a variety of foods, including two to three types of vegetables, seeds, red rice, cereal, quinoa, salad, nuts, and fruits like pomegranate.

Despite the high costs of such diets, he emphasised that Indians have many affordable and nutritious food options, like ragi, idli, and red rice, that can be incorporated into a healthy lifestyle. Include tofu, almonds, and leafy greens for calcium intake. Include tofu, almonds, and leafy greens for calcium intake. Key nutritional challenges vegetarian athletes face and how to address them. According to Kanikka Malhotra, consultant dietician and certified diabetes educator, "Vegetarian athletes face several nutritional challenges, primarily related to protein, iron, vitamin B12, calcium, and omega-3 fatty acids." To address these issues without relying on expensive ingredients, she says that they can focus on: Diverse Plant Proteins: Incorporate beans, lentils, chickpeas, quinoa, and whole grains to meet protein needs. Iron Sources: Consume iron-rich foods like green leafy vegetables, dates, and fortified cereals, pairing them with vitamin C sources (e.g., citrus fruits) to enhance absorption. Cooking food in iron utensils will also help. Vitamin B12: Use fortified foods such as plant milks and cereals or consider supplements. Calcium: Include tofu, almonds, and leafy greens for calcium intake. Omega-3 Fatty Acids: Opt for axseeds, chia seeds, and walnuts to boost omega-3 levels. How can young, aspiring athletes design a balanced vegetarian diet to fuel their performance?

Malhotra says, "By emphasising whole foods and diversity, young, aspiring athletes can create a vegetarian diet that is balanced. To satisfy their protein requirements, they ought to incorporate protein sources such as chickpeas, lentils, tofu, and dairy products. For long-lasting energy, opt for whole grains like brown rice, quinoa, and whole wheat bread." To guarantee sufficient vitamins and minerals, she adds, it's crucial to include a diverse range of fruits and vegetables, giving priority to in-season products. Nuts, seeds, and avocados provide healthy fats that are vital for general well-being. "Finally, their performance will be supported by drinking lots of water and thinking about electrolyte-rich options like smoothies or coconut water. Meal planning in advance helps maximise athletic performance and preserve equilibrium."

Why mental health education should be prioritised in schools, colleges

The competitive and fast-paced landscape of modern academia has taken a toll on students. As a result, their mental health concerns have emerged that require immediate and sustained attention. A 2023 report by the World Health Organization suggests that more than one in three students experience symptoms of anxiety and depression. This reflects the widespread impact of stress in academia. In the Indian context, student suicides have increased over the past decade. National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data indicates that there has been a 50 per cent increase in male student suicides and a 61 per cent increase in female student suicides, as per a 2024 report.

These trends underline the need for providing mental health as part of the educational experience. Mental well-being and training could not only prove beneficial to academic success but also improve emotional resilience, boost creativity, and impact life-long satisfaction. Mental health in the Indian context, student suicides have increased over the past decade. Experts describe experiences in a mental health education program as a student that could help them learn crucial skills for development. Dr. Arvind Otta, Senior Psychologist & Mental Health Activist explains, that mental health education "is key since all students face emotions and challenges during their time in school which they must learn to manage and understand. It builds resilience,

counters stigma, and promotes prevention through early intervention which can help reverse potential challenges as far as mental health is concerned. "These experiences allow a student to thrive educationally, socially, and emotionally. In an education system that encourages students to outperform their peers, it becomes crucial to develop pressure management aptitudes. "Mental health education can avail such skills such as attention to detail, self-control, and other skills which can promote assertive communication to avoid peer conflicts. This approach can also help seeking professionals' help at the right moment," describes Dr. Otta.

The digital era and access to technology have democratized access to mental health education. This technology could prove to be the means used to bridge the gap in access to mental health services. It can be harnessed to destigmatize and normalize conversations around mental health concerns. Dr. Otta explains that "Mental health education can refute very simplistic views of mental health such as "mental health issues are signs of weakness" or "therapy is only for severe problems." It supports the argument that mental health care is essential and that help should be sought when needed. "It is imperative that schools and colleges prioritize students' mental health. By fostering open communication, trained educators, and accessible resources, educational institutes must create supportive environments for their students.

Naseeruddin Shah, Shabana Azmi fondly remember Shyam Benegal at his memorial meet



Mumbai: Days after the death of filmmaker Shyam Benegal, his frequent collaborators and friends Shabana Azmi and Naseeruddin Shah fondly recalled his "wide, warm smile" and how he remained dedicated to his creative vision till the end.

At a memorial service at Y B Chavan Centre in south Mumbai on Saturday, several film industry people, including Javed Akhtar, Kulbhushan Kharbanda, Ila Arun, Prahlad Kakkar, Urmila Matondkar, and Divya Dutta, gathered to honour Benegal. The veteran director died on December 23 due to a chronic kidney disease, days after celebrating his 90th birthday on December 14. He is survived by wife Nira and daughter Pia. Azmi, who made her acting debut with Benegal's first feature film "Ankur" in 1974, said the filmmaker was her mentor, "although a reluctant one".

"He didn't want to be called anyone's guru, but nevertheless he was my guru. He was my guru not only because he was my first director but by being around him I learnt so many lessons of life. I consulted him every now and then about a project that I should do or not. He wanted neither to be my guru nor my mentor. He was my friend, and equal and he created that space for this friendship. He gave me equal respect and ability to stand," she recalled.

The actor said her first memory of Benegal, who started out as an advertising professional, was when she visited him at the office of the ad agency ASP in 1973. "What struck me about him the most was his wide, warm smile as I went

to visit him at the ASP office where he was the creative director and was looking to cast for 'Ankur'."

After "Ankur", Azmi and Benegal went on to collaborate on a string of films like "Nishant", "Mandi", "Junoon", "Hari Bhari", "Susman", and "Antarnaad". "The last image I've of Shyam was on December 14, 2024, when he, Nira and Pia had organised a celebration for his 90th birthday. After spending a beautiful hour with us, he was whisked away with that same warm wide smile," she said. Shah, who worked with Benegal on classic movies like "Nishant", "Manthan" and "Mandi", said the filmmaker stayed true to his pursuit as a creative person. "Death is the unimportant part of life and what's important is what you do with the time you've. It is undeniable that Shyam used every single moment of his life, breath and iota of energy in a creative pursuit of some kind or the other," he said. Azmi also shared a lesser-known anecdote from Benegal's personal life.

"Not many people know that Shyam Benegal was a romantic man. He got to know that Nira loves yellow flowers. So the day they were supposed to get married, he sent her a bouquet of yellow flowers and a message written on it saying, 'Only 23 hours'. "Then the bouquet kept coming every hour till they got married. Can you imagine? If I were Nira, I would've postponed the marriage, it was so lovely!" she added. At the memorial service, actor-author Atul Tiwari gifted a book he had penned on the late director, "Maestro - A Tribute to Shyam Benegal" to his wife and daughter. Ad filmmaker Kakkar, who assisted Benegal on several ad films, said he admired Benegal for how he inspired everyone around him, from actors to writers. "His method was that if you are ever going to be a filmmaker, you could not have a designation, you could never say, 'This is not my problem'. That's the one thing he taught us, that everything to do with films, from serving food to cooking to cleaning to supervising carpenters to sitting with writers, everything is your job. I could never imagine his great generosity of spirit, and his capacity to teach, mentor and inspire. I've seen him inspiring actors, writers and people around him to perform on what they could do. That's the greatest gift to all of us," he said.

Karan Aujla responds as Asha Bhosle sings 'Tauba Tauba', recreates Vicky Kaushal's hook step: 'The living goddess of...'

Legendary singer Asha Bhosle recently performed at a concert in Dubai. While the 91-year-old artist managed to win hearts with her melodious voice, she took the internet by storm after she sang Karan Aujla's song Tauba Tauba from Vicky Kaushal's film Bad Newzz. Not just that, Asha Bhosle also recreated Vicky's hook step leaving the internet mighty impressed. After this iconic moment, Tauba Tauba singer Karan also reacted and shared on social media how this was quite a special moment for him. Karan Aujla wrote on his Instagram stories, "Asha Bhosleji, the living Goddess of music, just performed Tauba Tauba... a song written by a kid who grew up in a small village, with no music background and no knowledge of music instruments. A melody made by someone who doesn't play any instrument. This song has received a lot of love and recognition amongst not only fans but also music artists, but this moment is truly iconic and one I will never forget. I am truly blessed and thankful. This has really inspired me to keep giving you all such melodies and create more memories together." In another story, Karan also shared a video of Asha Bhosle's performance and wrote, "I wrote it at 27. She sang it at 91 better than me (folded hand emoji)." Reacting to Asha Bhosle's performance on Tauba Tauba, a fan wrote, "Asha Bhosle not only singing Tauba Tauba but also doing



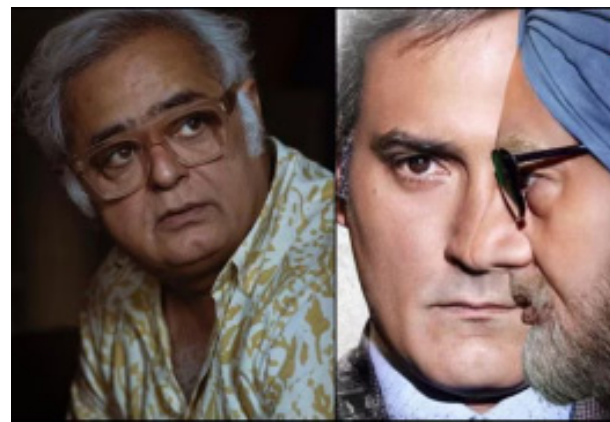
the dance step at her Dubai show was not on my 2024 bingo card!!! Legendary! (party emoji)." Another fan called it, "Iconic", and a third user also wrote, "Let's not forget she is doing all of that at 91... queen behavior." One of the users also commented, "What at 91... most elderly people I know in their early 60's can't even walk on their own and look at Asha Tai doing all of that with so much flamboyance and finesse (fire emoji) queen of everything."

Hansal Mehta on Anupam Kher's scathing comments, The Accidental Prime Minister controversy: 'Vitriol spread in the name of...'

Former Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh passed away on the late hours of December 26. A pall of gloom descended among those who felt the loss to be a personal one considering his stature in Indian politics. This included various film celebrities, who shared their memories about the former prime minister, and expressed their grief about his passing. However, this resulted in a war of words between actor Anupam Kher, who played Dr Singh in the film, The Accidental Prime Minister, and filmmaker Hansal Mehta, who served as a creative director of the film. It started with a post by journalist Vir Sanghvi, who called out the biopic as a film 'full of lies' and it was endorsed by Hansal. This didn't go down well with Anupam, who questioned the authenticity of the filmmaker. Hansal, in a detailed interview to Times Now, shared his response to the controversy.

Hansal revealed that he joined the project to honour a commitment made to the producer, who had earlier backed his film, Shahid. Not stepping away from his criticism about the film, Hansal reiterated that he worked within the limited capacity provided by the film's director and creative team, but it was a chapter that he left behind in his life. "It is unfortunate that my words shifted focus away from what was meant to be a somber reflection on my error in judgment and instead lead to abusive trolling," said Hansal. Clarifying his stance on the film, and Anupam, who played the titular character, Hansal said that it is completely okay for both to be critical of each other's opinion. Talking about withholding his criticism about the film during its release, Hansal said that it wouldn't have been right for the scores of people attached to the film. Even now, he argued, that he responded only because of the passing of the former prime minister.

Expressing his admiration for Anupam, and how the actor's debut film, Saaranish, is a reason why he became a filmmaker, Hansal said he'd have preferred if the veteran didn't resolve to 'unfounded insinuations and name-calling'. He asserted that his apology for 'inadvertently hurting him' isn't a sign of weakness or him stepping down from his stance. "Instead of respecting my dignified stand, he chooses to rake up old tweets, call me names, insinuate hidden agenda, etc... I believe the filmmakers consider it an exceptional film that achieved their objectives and was financially successful," pointed out Hansal. Delving deeper into things that went wrong with the film, Hansal shared that he didn't like the pacing, tone, execution, and the one-dimensional outlook. "I helped with the casting and managing the set, but beyond a point, the debutant director Vijay Gutte didn't seek my perspective or interpretation, and that is en-



tirely acceptable to me," said Hansal, adding that he was properly compensated for his commitments to the film.

Giving more insight into his conditions that made him accept working on the film, Hansal said that he was just teetering from the financial loss of Simran, suffered a health setback, and was part of litigation and debt. Adding that he accepted the film because of these constraints, and a commitment to the producer, who is still a friend, Hansal said, "I joined the film, and recommended Amit Masurkar as a writer. The film, as it was initially envisioned on paper, and what it ultimately became, were quite different. Does it mean one should walk away? I chose to stay." He added that if the circumstances were different, especially with his younger son also in a critical state in the same hospital as him, he might have made a different choice. Not wanting to discuss any hypothetical arguments, Hansal asserted that his acknowledgement about an error in judgment is all he can offer. Signing off with his opinion on celebrating people only after their deaths, Hansal called out the 'vitriol spread in the name of nationalism and pursuit of attention.' Recollecting the deaths of Zakir Hussain, and Shyam Benegal also, Hansal said that their legacies must be honoured instead of defiling them with negativity. "It is imperative that we come together to honour their memories and contributions, setting aside divisive rhetoric and focussing on the positive impact they had on our nation and the world," signed off Hansal. Sharing this interview, Hansal wrote, Here is a very detailed response to Mr. Anupam Kher, and to those who still believe in reading. For those who choose to troll without purpose or with one - get well soon. I'm done here for now." On the work front, Hansal, who recently made the Kareena Kapoor-starrer.

Shweta Tiwari says daughter Palak getting trolled due to link-up rumours scares her: 'Apparently, she is dating every third guy'



Actress Shweta Tiwari has had quite an illustrious if difficult journey in the TV industry. Now, her daughter Palak has also stepped into the film industry. While the actress has been quite strong as an individual, as a mother she does get scared seeing her daughter face trolling. During an exclusive conversation on SCREEN's Dear Me... Shweta opened up about Palak's link-up rumors. Talking about Palak's dating rumors, Shweta said, "Rumors don't bother me anymore, in all these years I have realized people's memory only last for 4 hours. They will forget the news after that, so why bother? As per rumours, my daughter is dating every third guy, and I am getting married every

year. As per the internet, I am already married thrice. These things don't affect me now, earlier they did when social media was not there and when some journalist never liked writing good things about you. Negativity about actors sell. After dealing with that era, this doesn't affect me." Shweta also spoke about Palak facing trolling on social media. "Earlier the audience was simpler, it was not difficult to convince them. But now in this era of social media, the audience has become aware, they bully you. I evolved because I had a daughter, and I have learned a lot growing up with her. My daughter learned how to deal with trolling first, during my time social media was not very happening, so I didn't know how to deal with trolls, but then I saw Palak handling them and that's how I learned."

Shweta added, "It does scare me at times. No matter how Palak looks, she is very innocent, she can never give it back to people. This era of trolling has gotten so ugly, even though she is strong, I wonder what if it affects her, if she gets underconfident, then what? That scares me. People have tried to pull her down, but she doesn't read comments. But you never know what can be hurtful. When she gets trolled, it affects me a lot." Talking about her bond with Palak, Shweta said, "Once my few friends were sitting and during a conversation, Palak said my mother isn't scared of anything. After that comment, I couldn't eat. I felt so pressured because it's not like I don't get scared, but her belief that I am strong, what if that breaks some day? So now I always put up a strong front, and I want both my children to believe I am fearless and standing with them forever."

Diljit Dosanjh dedicates Guwahati concert to former PM Dr Manmohan Singh: 'Hazaaron jawabon se acchi hai meri khamoshi'

Diljit Dosanjh concert, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh Diljit Dosanjh shared his views on former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh during his Guwahati Concert. Singer Diljit Dosanjh's Dil-Luminati tour in India is going strong and photos and videos from his concerts often make their way to the social media. Diljit's took the stage and impressed his fans at a sold-out concert at Guwahati's Sarusajai Sports Complex on Sunday. Not only his performance but also his heartfelt tribute to the former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh is making the headlines.

Dr. Manmohan Singh died on December 26 after a prolonged illness. Diljit made sure to take a moment to remember the highly esteemed political figure, and also dedicated the show to him. The singer shared a video where he praised the late leader and called him 'a simple and graceful man'. Diljit also praised the late PM and urged the youth to tackle tough situations like he did.

In the video, Diljit said a couplet about the late PM keeping silent in face of hate, "Hazaaron jawabon se acchi hai meri khamoshi, na jaane kitne sawaalon ki aabru rakhe (My silence is better than thousands of answers, I don't know how many questions I have to respect)". Diljit reflected on Manmohan Singh's dignified life and career and shared, "Agar main unki life ki journey ki taraf dekhun, toh unhone itna saada jeewan jia hai (If I look at his life, he led a very simple one)." He added, "Agar unko kisi ne bura bhi bola, toh unhone kabhi ulta jawaab nhi diya. Halanki politics ke career me ye sabse mushkil kaam hai (Even if someone spoke badly to him, he never replied back. However, this is the most difficult thing in a career in politics)." Diljit also added



in Hindi, "I think today's youth should learn from it, I should too. We should focus on our goals even if people speak worst about us and try to distract us. The one who is speaking badly about us is also an avatar of God. You are being tested on how you react to it." Diljit also emphasized how Manmohan Singh's legacy is deeply ingrained in Indian history. Reacting to the clip, a fan wrote, "History will be kinder to him than the contemporary media," while another posted in the comment section, "A legend paying tribute to another legend." Diljit Dosanjh's Dil-Luminati tour in India started in Delhi in October and over the months he performed in Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Pune, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Indore, and Chandigarh. His next stop is Ludhiana on December 31st.

Allu Arjun film flexes big in India; beats combined collections of Baby John, Marco, Max

Pushpa 2 Box Office Collection Day 25 Allu Arjun-Sukumar's Pushpa 2 continues to remain in pole position even in fourth week since release. The story of 2024 is undoubtedly the blockbuster success of Pushpa 2: The Rule, and the offscreen controversies surrounding the film and an untoward incident that happened during its premiere show in Hyderabad. While the dust seems to have settled about the offscreen conversations, the success of the film continues to resonate in the numbers even in the fourth week since its release.

In its fourth week, Pushpa 2 has made Rs 37.25 crore — 8.75 crore (Friday), 12.5 crore (Saturday), and 16 crore (Sunday) in India. In comparison, Baby John, in its five-day run since Christmas has made Rs 28.97 crore with Rs 12.75 crore over the same weekend. The biggest Malayalam film, Marco, made Rs 8.2 crore. The biggest Kannada film, Max, made Rs 14.95 crore. So, it takes all these films, which released during the Christmas weekend to beat the weekend collections of Pushpa 2, which released in the first week of December. Now, if this doesn't showcase the strength and pull of this Allu Arjun-starrer, then what will?

Pushpa 2 box office collection has comfortably sailed past many existing records to reach the pole position in the domestic market. It not only became the highest grosser of Indian cinema in 2024, but also became the first Hindi film to cross Rs 100 crore in its third week. And the clincher, it is the dubbed version of the Telugu original that is making waves in the Hindi market. This has led to a major introspective moment for the movers and shakers of the Hindi film industry, who were not ready for the Pushpa juggernaut to take over all existing markets. At the global box office, Pushpa 2 has comfortably sailed into the Rs 1700 crore club, and has amassed Rs 1719.5 crore at the end of Week



3. It is safe to assume that the worldwide collection is closing on the Rs 1800 crore club, and it might just be breached around the New Year's mark. In fact, with no big releases in sight, this golden run of Pushpa 2 in the Hindi market might just continue longer. There are reports that the dismal run of Baby John might push the stakeholders to enable a wider release for the Hindi dubbed version of Unni Mukundan's Marco, which is creating 'bloody' waves in the South. Directed by Sukumar, and starring Rashmika Mandanna, Fahadh Faasil and Sreeleela alongside Allu Arjun, Pushpa 2 is set to face a largely obstacle-free run in most states till the second week of January where there are a flurry of releases for the festive occasion of Pongal and Sankranti.

'We can compete with Hollywood,' says Mohanlal; recalls creating one of the first pan-Indian films

In an exclusive interview with SCREEN, actor-turned-filmmaker Mohanlal shares his reasons for pursuing Barroz despite the many hurdles and his other commitments. Malayalam superstar Mohanlal on the sets of Barroz with which he made his directorial debut recently. Malayalam superstar Mohanlal is currently overjoyed to have made his directorial debut, 44 years after beginning his journey in cinema as an actor. Interestingly, his first film as a director, Barroz, a 3D children's fantasy, premiered on December 25 — the same date he made his acting debut in Manjil Virlinji Pookkal (1980). The story follows Barroz, a ghost who has guarded da Gama's treasure

in Goa for 400 years, waiting to hand it over to its rightful heir so he can finally be free from his duties. The project, first announced in 2019, faced multiple hurdles during production, including delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. At one point, the film was nearly shelved, but Mohanlal revived it, pursuing it with unwavering determination until its release 68 months after its initial announcement. In an exclusive interview with SCREEN, the actor-turned-filmmaker shared his reasons for pursuing Barroz despite the many hurdles and his other commitments. He credits the same to his dedication to the immense love and support he has received from his audience over the past four decades. "

Is the Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli retirement announcement round the corner?



GNS News Agency, Jan 3

"This is isn't the time for I told you so, but of sadness," the 78-year old Jim Maxwell, the ABC radio commentator for 51 years now, says. A day before he had said how Kohli just hasn't showed the mental discipline and how Rohit is "sadly past it". A day later, there is a measuredness in his voice. "There has been a shoulder barge, luckily there was a hundred at Perth, but my takeaway of Kohli isn't anything from this series; I shall happily takeaway memories from what he has done here in the past. We Australians haven't seen the best of Rohit in Tests, but as said, he seems past it." It's no longer a case of if but when will Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma call it a day? There is the 50-over Champions Trophy in 50 days time; after that? Or will they announce a Test retirement first in Australia at the end of the fifth Test at Sydney or something more drastic ...?

And to think that Rohit started the fourth day rather well, the best he has seen in this series. The first good sign came in the fourth ball of the fourth over when his left foot stirred, slid out forward a bit as he patted down a Pat Cummins delivery. He got off the mark in the fifth over with a tap to left of mid-off. The deliveries weren't deviating a great deal on the fifth-day pitch and he didn't have to do any last-instant adjustments with his hands, but play the line – the thing he is most comfortable doing. Slowly, the feet were moving a touch – nothing striking but for a batsman who has been stuck at the crease almost, this was better. He played out Cummins's first spell of three overs and had played just one ball off Mitch Starc's first three overs. When he came on strike to Starc again in the 8th over, he went for a drive but squirted it past backward point for three runs. He steadied himself once again.

India's captain Rohit Sharma bats during play on the last day of the fourth cricket test between Australia and India at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Melbourne, Australia. (AP) India's captain Rohit Sharma bats during play on the last day of the fourth cricket test between Australia and India at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Melbourne, Australia. (AP) Scott Boland got a couple to kick up from back of length and straighten. Rohit would get a tad squared-up but would instinctively yank his bottom-hand off the handle – and the resultant edge would die well before the slip cordon. In between, he would occasionally walk across to chat with his

partner Yashasvi Jaiswal when he sensed a mental error from the youngster. Just a slow walk, a quiet word or two, and back. And for most part at the non-striker's end, he would stand, resting on his bat, his legs crossed.

But if he wanted to play the waiting game, almost imitating KL Rahul's way of batting, then why open and disturb the applearc?

Meanwhile, he did look more serene than ever on this tour and came his best shot in the 11th over. Pat Cummins had brought himself back from the other end, and Rohit leaned forward to punch the wobbling-seamer rather crisply to mid-off. No run came, but it felt like the past had revisited him, a memory from better days. Rohit Sharma, MCG, India's captain Rohit Sharma watches the ball after playing a shot during play on the last day of the fourth cricket test between Australia and India at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Melbourne, Australia. (AP)

Drinks break intervened and something was immediately off. The first ball Boland delivered in the channel, Rohit had a poke and miss. Next ball, the bat-face shut early for an inward moving ball on the off but he crossed over for a single towards midwicket. Next ball he faced was the first by Cummins in the next over. Tempted perhaps by the length for it was a very full delivery, and sucked in by the initial angle for it seemingly coming inwards, he decided to disregard its line or wait and watch for the late deviation if any. It was moving in from outside off to home in on the off, and he waved his hands for across the line whippy-flick, but the ball just about straightened to take the edge and flew to gully where Mitch Marsh cupped his arms and caught it on the rebound. When KL Rahul fell in the same over, it brought in Virat Kohli. Before he could face his first delivery in the next over, the Australian section of the crowd rang out boos. Almost immediately, the Indian section started chanting 'Kohli Kohli!'. The action moved towards the final over before lunch. Mitch Starc slipped in a full ball well outside off – the tempter, the sucker ball, but at this stage in the series, in the form he is in, it should neither have tempted or sucked in Kohli. It was as obvious a play as anything can be in this game. And yet, as Maxwell the radio veteran would say, that mental discipline has been lacking. The mind knows, the brain is aware, but something snaps in him and he goes chasing. And off he went for a big booming drive and was nicked off. Virat Kohli India's Virat Kohli reacts as he run between the wickets to score during play on the last day of the fourth cricket test between Australia and India at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Melbourne, Australia. (AP) An across-the-line ambitious flick, and a wide chaser squeezed in pressure on the Indian team and left two star players staring at the finish line. R Ashwin has already retired and left mid-series; what would his contemporaries do? Kohli, the modern-day great Test, and Rohit, a man who for a couple of years had flirted with Test stardom, but will go down as a Test batsman who never quite fulfilled the promise he had shown in his younger years. The curtain is beginning to slide down from above; will they give themselves one more Test at Sydney with BGT still open and out there for the taking or ...?

Magnus Carlsen takes a U-turn, says will participate in the World Blitz Championship: 'I'm definitely playing in jeans'



GNS News Agency, Jan 3

A couple of days after pulling out from FIDE World Rapid and Blitz tournament, Magnus Carlsen has taken a U-turn. Carlsen has confirmed that he will participate in the World Blitz Championship and after a few alterations to the rules, he will play in the jeans. Speaking to Levi Rozman from "Take, Take, Take" at the playing venue on Wall Street, Carlsen said: "I am playing at least one more day here in New York and, if I do well, another day after that". "We had a lot of discussions yesterday and we have a good relationship with FIDE President Dvorkovich... Speaking to Dvorkovich and the main sponsor Turlov it did feel we could

have some fruitful discussions and in the end of the day I decided to play," Carlsen said. FIDE in a statement has also confirmed that Magnus Carlsen will participate in the FIDE World Blitz Championship. "FIDE looks forward to continuing our collaboration with Mr. Carlsen and the global chess community to enhance the conditions and atmosphere of FIDE competitions, ensuring the best possible experience for players and fans alike," read the statement. "This is great news for the chess world. We are delighted that the reigning World Blitz Chess Champion will be competing to defend his title and aim for another crown at the highly anticipated event in New York." Magnus Carlsen pulled out of the FIDE World Rapid and Blitz tournament on Friday night after he was fined by the global governing body of the sport for wearing jeans. Magnus Carlsen has also made it sure that as a matter of principle he will be playing in the jeans only. "The only reason that we were having these discussions at all is that I realised when I woke up that not only did we speak to some more reasonable people, I also love playing Blitz. That's why it's still a thing," he said. "I want to give the fans as well an opportunity to see this. I don't know if it's going to be the last time, who knows. But for now, I'm here." And there have been some, I think, slight alterations to the rules. As a matter of principle, I'm definitely playing in jeans tomorrow. But yeah, here we are."

It's India vs Pakistan in ICC's men's T20I cricketer of the year award

GNS News Agency, Jan 3

ICC has named the nominees for the ICC Men's T20I Cricketer of the Year award, and Indian pacer Arshdeep Singh joined Travis Head, Babar Azam and Sikandar Raza in the list. Fulfilling India's need for a left-arm pacer, Arshdeep Singh has performed exceptionally well donning the blue in T20Is. He scalped one less wicket than Bhuvneshwar Kumar, making him the second highest wicket taker in T20Is for India in a year. His performances in the bilateral series, preceded by his performance in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup saw him make his way in the list. It is for the third time that the Zimbabwe all-rounder has made his way into the list. Under his leadership this year, Zimbabwe orchestrated surprising wins against the likes of Pakistan and recently World Cup winners India. In the sub regional qualifiers, Sikandar Raza got his first T20I century and five wicket haul.

Travis Head this year proved to the Australian management that he is worth being a consistent player in the line-up of the T20I squad as well. Playing at a strike rate of 178.47, he became the second highest run scorer for Australia in T20Is in a calendar year. He started the year off with an explosive display against New Zealand, and car-



ried that momentum into the Indian Premier League and later on, the T20 World Cup.

Babar Azam had a rollercoaster of a year in T20 cricket, but he was the best of the lot from his team. He secured six fifties and made sure the ball reached the boundary ropes almost a hundred times, the batter's strike rate has drastically improved. Their tour to Ireland marked one of his best performances this year. He went on to score 75 runs in 42 balls, which helped Pakistan secure the series after chasing a target of 179.

India vs Australia Boxing Day Test sets new record for crowd attendance at the MCG

GNS News Agency, Jan 3

MCG, MCG crowd, Australia vs India This Test now holds the all-time record for attendance figures at the MCG, crossing the previous record of 350,534 set back in 1936-'37. The Boxing Day Test between Australia and India at the Melbourne Cricket Ground entered the history books on Monday, the fifth and final day of the match. This Test now holds the all-time record for attendance figures at the MCG, crossing the previous record of 350,534 set back in 1936-'37. During the first session, as per Fox Cricket, the attendance figures over the five days of this match stood at 350,700. As per Cricket Australia, this is now also the greatest attendance for any Test match played in Australia. "We've officially surpassed the attendance record set in 1936/37 when Australia faced England — a Test which spanned six days," MCG's X account posted towards the end of the first session on Monday morning. Adam Gilchrist on Fox Sports commentary noted that the final number could still increase. India were however in a spot of bother at lunch on Day 5. Set a record of 340, India were reduced to 33/3 in 26.1 overs, staring at a defeat and going behind 1-2 in the series before the final Test in Sydney at the turn of the new year. The attendance of 43,867 on Day 4 brought the total to 299,329, making it the largest Boxing Day Test crowd in history.

The opening day, Boxing Day of course, was expected to witness record-breaking numbers and the final Day 1 attendance figure stood at 87,242 despite severe heat forecast during the day. That was a record for one day of Test



cricket v India in Australia. Day 3 witnessed another record, with a final attendance of 83,073. That was the largest Day 3 crowd ever for a Boxing Day Test. It was also the largest Day 3 crowd for an MCG Test since January 1937, when it was recorded at 87,798, with Sir Don Bradman 56* at stumps. That brought the total attendance to 255,462. Joel Morrisson, CA EGM Events and Operations said: "We've been blown away by the support of fans across the Boxing Day Test. Our partnership with the MCC and Victorian Government is a special one, and it's been a great team effort to achieve this result." The Border-Gavaskar Trophy is a blockbuster event, and it has been fantastic to see such strong attendances right across the summer. "A big thank you to Australian cricket fans for your ongoing support of our great game."

FIDE President on Magnus Carlsen jeans controversy: 'I sincerely regret that this situation escalated'

GNS News Agency, Jan 3

FIDE President Arkady Dvorkovich has given clarification regarding the dress code controversy surrounded by Magnus Carlsen. The Fide president regretted that the way situation escalated and called the withdrawal of Magnus Carlsen "extremely unfortunate." However, Magnus Carlsen on Sunday has confirmed that he will be playing in the World Blitz Championship a couple of days after he pulled out because he was fined by FIDE for violating the dress code rules by wearing jeans on day 2 of the event. "It is unfortunate that the implementation of dress-code rules, while being legally sound and consistent, has left some feeling this is disproportionate and caused the situation everyone would have preferred to avoid, including some of the words being said at the peak of emotions that one would most probably regret afterwards," said Dvorkovich in a statement released by FIDE. Magnus Carlsen best chess player in 100 years Magnus Carlsen gives his acceptance speech at the FIDE 100 Gala with Arkady Dvorkovich, former Deputy Prime Minister of Russia and current president of FIDE, standing in the background. (FIDE/Michal Waluszka)

"The withdrawal of Magnus Carlsen, who has played an exceptional role in elevating the sport of chess to the new heights during the last several years, was an extremely unfortunate consequence of this disconnect. I sincerely regret that this situation escalated without a resolution be-

ing found by both sides in time to prevent Magnus's withdrawal. Having said that, FIDE remains committed to taking concrete steps to ensure that all players feel supported and valued, recognizing their vital role in inspiring fans and advancing the game worldwide," he said. Dvorkovich also explained why the dress code rules are needed to preserve the integrity of chess. Let me begin by thanking all of you for your commitment to compete fairly and for bringing joy to millions of spectators all over the world. "I also hope that the active position of many other players now would lead to improving this important framework in the best interests of the fans, players, the partners and the media."

"The concerns raised by Magnus Carlsen highlight the need for further discussion about how to modernize the current approach, to ensure that our rules and their application reflect the evolving nature of chess as a global and accessible sport. "This includes a continued dialogue with players, sponsors, and the broader chess community, to align expectations and minimize the potential for conflicts in the future. Mutual respect and trust is a critical pre-condition to making this dialogue effective. "We must collectively strive to preserve the integrity of chess while also ensuring that the sport remains inclusive and appealing. I look forward to seeing Magnus Carlsen and other top players continue to grace the chessboard in major international events, bringing excitement and inspiration to millions of fans worldwide."

Goals scored directly from corners:

Could the rarest of rare 'Olimpico' become a more frequent occurrence in football?

GNS News Agency, Jan 3

When the ball began to dip from the corner kick of Wolverhampton Wolves' Matheus Cunha, Manchester United goalkeeper Andre Onana thought he had the flight and angle covered. In mid-air, he punched the ball but only swiped the air as the ball swirled and snapped past him and nestled in the far corner. A bemused and agitated Onana protested that he was impeded by a pair of Wolves men. But the goal stood, and Cunha celebrated as though he had achieved a rare feat. In fact, he did score the rarest of rare goals. A goal scored directly from a corner. Without a deflection, without a nod or nudge. Rarer than the Rabonas and Panenka, bicycle kicks and 'dry leaf' free kicks. A goal which the football lexicon terms Gol Olimpico (Olympics Goal) because the first recorded instance of it came against the Olympics gold medalist Uruguay in 1924, the year direct goals from corners were made legal. The scorer, in a fractious match in Estadio Sportivo Barracas in Buenos Aires that saw violence in the stands and outside it, was Argentina's winger Cesáreo Onzari. He later admitted that the goal was a fluke. "To be honest, when I saw the ball go in I couldn't believe it," he said. "Maybe the goalkeeper got out of the wrong side of the bed that day, or there were players blocking his path because I never scored a goal like that again." The first impression is that a Gol Olimpico should be accidental. A collective misjudgment of the goalkeeper and the defenders. In this most recent case, United midfielder Manuel Ugarte didn't leap high enough to thwart the ball at the near post. Two Wolves players, Matt Doherty and Hugo Bueno, had blocked Onana's vision and denied him the space to leap at full pelt. Gonçalo Guedes was searing towards the far post but left the ball undisturbed on its net-bound journey. But unlike Onzari, Cunha insisted that the goal was intentional. His manager Vitor Pereira would say: "We worked on this corner but you can work a lot and in the end, nothing happens. But with this kind of player, things can happen." He had a facsimile attempt blocked by Onana in the first half too.

Some of the Olimpico specialists are offended when asked whether the goals were designed. Like the sultan of Olimpico, Charlie Tully, of Northern Ireland and Glasgow Celtic, a doughty midfielder and a wind-up merchant with an incredible sense of humour. In a club game, he scored directly from a corner, but the referee ordered a re-take. He repeated the kick. He scored only 32 goals for Celtic in 220 appearances; of those 12 were from direct corners.

Whether anyone has netted more such goals is doubtful. Indirect goals from corners itself is a relatively rare occurrence—Opta Joe says only 3.2 percent of all corners result in a goal. Direct ones, thus, are rarer. It's a difficult art. First it needs to bend inwards deviously at high pace. Often speed compromises movement. Then it has to bend at the right time. The ball has to beat the first man at the near post, the other defenders in the box and then the goalkeeper. It should rise above them all and then bend under the cross-bar. And then a bit of fortune too. The ball should have ample height but not high enough to elude the post. It should be a flat, quick bender rather than a floaty curler. Thus, managers prefer the stapler outlets. Swing the ball into the crammed box, or ping it short, or startle the opponents with a whacky move from the training ground, but seldom ever directly. One of its finest exponents, Alvaro



Recoba, the Uruguayan playmaker, once detailed his method. "It makes no difference if there are players on the posts. The ball comes in dipping and spinning, and generally, teams don't put tall players on the line anyway. If I hit it well, it's very hard for an outfield player to stop unless he's hanging from the crossbar," he elaborated. All he saw, he says, was the corner of the far post. After every practice session, he devoted an hour on honing the elusive craft. For just six goals in 417 appearances for clubs and 69 for his country. The Wycombe Wanderers full-back Joe Jacobson used to hit over the top of the ball, "a bit like top-spin in tennis, and so it wouldn't curl miles out and then curl back in," he once told The Athletic. "I'd over-hit a lot and I'd under-hit a lot, but when I got them right, the angle meant that I wouldn't worry about where the ball would end up directionally. I knew that if I ran up at that right angle, the ball would end up in an area where I'd want it to end up," he explained. A YouTube search would fish out a whole lot of them, including those from set-piece virtuosos, such as Roberto Carlos, Zico, Ronaldinho, Diego Maradona, Juan Roman Riquelme, and most famously by Megan Rapinoe (an Olimpico at the Olympics). Most would admit it was accidental, or an odd trick they tried in an inconsequential club game in America or Arabia. But two goals in the space of a week—Manchester United were the recipient of another corner-kicked goal in the EFL Cup—suggests that the Olimpico could be a more frequent occurrence, harnessed into a more potent weapon.

India stare at defeat after top order flops yet again

Melbourne: Skipper Rohit Sharma's ultra-defensive approach and Virat Kohli's unending saga of failures outside the off-stump left India reeling at 33 for 3 at lunch after Australia set the visitors a challenging 340-run target on day five of the fourth Test here on Monday. Rohit (9 off 40 balls) did all the hard work during the first hour before opposition skipper Pat Cummins (2/10) got his bunny for the tenth time in Test matches. Kohli (5 off 29) could never control his urge of playing the cover drive again and was caught at first slip after Mitchell Starc pushed one across with the angle. Rahul was out without troubling the scorers after getting a second good ball in the game. Yashasvi Jaiswal, who didn't look convincing at all, survived 83 deliveries to score 14 going into lunch. The approach by the Indian team was also a reflection of its mindset as a slim chance of victory evaporated in the morning session. Shortly after play began on day five, Jasprit Bumrah completed his 13th five wicket haul in Test cricket as Australia were all out for 234 in their second essay.