INDIAN CHRONICIA

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Man caught for hoax call to blow up Telangana Secretariat

Hyderabad: A man was arrested on charges of threatening to blow up the Telangana Secretariat here on Tuesday. As per available information, one Syed Mir Mohammed Ali (35), a resident of Langar Houz, had been calling the Secretariat claiming to have planted a bomb in the premises and that it would blow off soon. Even on Tuesday, after one such phone call, the Secretariat officials alerted the Telangana Special Police Force (SPF), who along with the City Security Wing (CSW) and Anti-Sabotage Teams checked the premises and confirmed there was no bomb. It was only after the confirmation, authorities relaxed Based on the phone number and location, the police tracked Mohammed Ali and arrested him from Langar Houz

Two motorists killed in separate road accidents in Medchal

Hyderabad: Two motorcyclists died and two others were injured in separate road accidents reported from Medchal police station limits on Tuesday morning, police said. In Medchal industrial area, three persons travelling on a motorcycle met with an accident when an unidentified vehicle hit their motorcycle. While M Ushappa (40) died on the spot two others Srikanth and Srinivas were critically injured. All the three hail from Karnataka and were working as construction workers. The incident occurred when Ushappa, who was driving the bike, had slowed down at a junction to take a 'U' turn. A rashly driven vehicle, suspected to be a truck rammed into their bike.

Used money to build India, not 'Sheeshmahal': PM Modi jabs Kejriwal's Delhi model



GNS News Agency, Feb 4

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said that his government has consistently strived to uplift the living standards of people as well as enhance their financial power, unlike the previous governments which focused on filling their own coffers and letting corruption thrive under their watch. Replying to the Motion of Thanks on President's address, PM Modi cited many public-driven projects and schemes to harness the country's resources and said that his government used the money to build the nation, and not 'Sheeshmahal', a luxurious palace for former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal allegedly built on the taxpayers' money." Earlier, the newspapers were filled with news of scams and corruption. In the past 10 years, we have saved crores of rupees which have been used for the public. We have not used that money to build a have saved Rs 70,000 per family in a year.

'Sheeshmahal', instead we used that to build the nation,' said the Prime Minister, amid vigorous desk thumping by the treasury bench members. The Prime Minister also took a swipe at a former Congress PM and mocked his obsession for becoming 'Mr Clean'.

"A former PM used to say that when Rs 1 was sent from Delhi, only 15 paise reached the bottom. Everyone can understand who was getting the 15 paise," he said while stating that it happened at a time when there was only one party from the panchayat level to the central level. The PM was referring to ex-prime minister Rajiv Gandhi.PM Modi asserted that his government tried to find a solution and not merely keep the situation lingering for decades. "Our model is 'Bhachat bhi Vikas bhi', 'Janata ka paisa janata ke liye," he asserted.PM Modi listed several schemes like JAM Trinity while talking about ethanol as an alternative to fuel and explained they have proven to be big money-minting

"Under the Jan Aushadi Kendra, 80 per cent discount is available on medicines. Beneficiaries are saving about Rs 30,000 crore in medicines," PM Modi pointed out."Because of our intensified focus on LED bulbs and energy saving, the prices of LED bulbs have come down from Rs 400 to Rs 40. Countrymen have saved a whopping Rs 20,000 from this," the Prime Minister said.PM Modi also quoted a UNICEF survey and said that the world body found that those families being part of the sanitation drive

Owaisi Warns Government Against Waqf Amendment Bill

GNS News Agency, Feb 4

In a strong address on Monday, Asaduddin Owaisi, the Chief of All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (AIMIM), warned the Indian government against tabling the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, in its current form, stating that it could result in social instability across the country. Owaisi expressed his concerns over the proposed Bill during his speech in the Lok Sabha, emphasizing that the entire Muslim community had rejected the amendment. He highlighted that the Bill's provisions would violate key constitutional articles, specifically Articles 25, 26, and 14, which guarantee the freedom of religion, the management of religious affairs, and equality before the law."I am cautioning and warning this government – if you bring and make a Waqf law in the present form, which will be a violation of Article 25, 26, and 14, it will lead to social instability in this country," Owaisi asserted. "It has been rejected by the entire Muslim community. No Waqf property will be left, nothing will be left," he added. He further accused the government of attempting to revert India to the political climate of the 1980s and early 1990s, a period marked by significant communal tensions. "You want to make India 'Viksit Bharat', we want 'Viksit Bharat'. You want to take this country back to the '80s and early '90s, it will be your responsibility," said Owaisi.

The AIMIM chief also made a personal stand on the issue, stressing that as a proud Indian Muslim, he would not allow the government to take away any property associated with his faith. "As a proud Indian Muslim, I will not lose an inch of my Masjid...I will not lose an inch of my Dargah. I will not allow that," Owaisi declared. He reaffirmed that Waqf properties were an integral part of his religious worship, asserting, "It is my property, not given by anyone. You cannot snatch it away from me. Waqf is a form of worship for me."In another related development, opposition Members of Parliament (MPs) Kalyan Banerjee and Md.



of key portions from their dissent notes regarding the Wagf (Amendment) Bill, 2024. Both MPs had submitted their objections to the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC), but their dissenting views were deleted without any prior notice or explanation.

The MPs have written a letter to the Lok Sabha Speaker, Om Birla, expressing their dismay over the issue. "To our dismay and utter surprise, we found that the following objectives and dissent notes have been deleted by the Chairman without informing us and without our consent," Banerjee and Haque stated in their letter dated February 3, 2025. The allegations have sparked further controversy, as the opposition claims that the government's actions could undermine transparency and the democratic process in Parliament. The Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, has become a flashpoint in the ongoing political discourse, with both opposition MPs and leaders like Asaduddin Owaisi fiercely opposing its provisions. As the debate continues, the government's next steps in navigating this sensitive issue will be closely scrutinized, given its potential to impact both religious freedoms and the social fabric of India.

Congress MLC burns Telangana Chief Minister's statement on caste survey



GNS News Agency, Feb 4

Hyderabad: Even as the Congress government is boasting about having conducted a transparent "Socio, Economic, Educational, Employment, Political and Caste Survey", Congress MLC Teenmaar Mallanna dubbed it fake and went to the extent of burning a copy of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's statement on the survey report.

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy had made a statement in the Assembly on Tuesday on the report. However, the report was not tabled in the House. He explained the methodology adopted in conducting the survey and data outcomes from the survey, which was conducted with a cost of Rs 160 crore. However, the Congress MLC called the survey a conspiracy to bury the socio-political aspirations of BC leaders. It was all fake figures, he said, adding that the intentions of the government were exposed and no justice would be rendered to the BCs, he charged in a video

that is going viral on social media platforms. "Compared to the voters list, there is lot of variation in the BC population figures. This is done deliberately and is humiliation to the BCs. I will not accept this survey," Mallanna said and burnt a copy of the Chief Minister's statement.

Five shot at adult education centre in Sweden



GNS News Agency, Feb 4

Orebro (Sweden): Five people were shot at an adult education centre in Sweden on Tuesday, police said. Authorities said that the danger wasn't over and urged the public to stay away from the school. The extent of the victims' injuries wasn't immediately clear. The adult education centre is about 200 km (125 miles) west of Stockholm. Students are being sheltered in nearby buildings. Other parts of the school were evacuated following the violence.

Caste Survey report approved by Telangana Cabinet, CM Revanth introduces it in Assembly



GNS News Agency, Feb 4

Telangana Cabinet approved the Socio, Caste, Economic, Education, Employment and Political survey report on Tuesday (February 4, 2025). Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy introduced it in the special session of the Legislative

Reading out findings of the survey, the Chief Minister

said that Backward Classes in A, B, C, D and E categories (including Muslims) constituted 56.33% in the State. There were 35,76,588 Muslims in Backward Classes (BC) category which constitutes to 10.08%. Number of people, other than Muslims, belonging to Backward Classes (BC) were 1,64,09,179 (46.25%); people belonging to Scheduled Castes were 61,84,319 (17.43%); 37,05,929 people belonged to Scheduled Tribes (10.45%) and 56.01,539 people, including Muslims, belonged to Other Castes (OC) which constitutes to 15.79%.1.12 crore families coveredThe survey was launched on November 6, 2024 to assess Socio, Caste, Economic, Education and Political status of people in households across the State. Enumerators [1.03 lakh] visited door-to-door with forms containing 57 questions (75 fields including sub-questions) to collect details. A total of 1,12,15,134 families were covered in 50 days, including 66,99,602 families in rural areas. The coverage was 96.9%. Report introduced 1 year after resolutionThe Chief Minister said that the Cabinet approved report was introduced exactly one year after the State Cabinet on February 4, 2024 approved to con-

KT Rama Rao slams Telangana Congress government for deceiving Backward Classes

GNS News Agency, Feb 4

Hvderabad: BRS working president KT Rama Rao lashed out at the Congress government for deceiving Backward Classes (BC) by failing to introduce a Bill for 42 per cent reservations in the Assembly, as promised in the Kamareddy BC Declaration meeting. He said the government made a mere announcement and avoided taking real legislative action. Participating in the discussion on the Chief Minister's statement on the Social, Economic, Employment, Education, Political, and Caste Survey-2024 in the Assembly on Tuesday, Rama Rao said BCs across the State had anticipated that the Congress government would introduce a Bill in the special legislative session to implement 42 per cent reservations in local body elections. However, the government had only issued a statement without taking concrete steps. "Instead, they issued a mere statement and are calling it historic. BCs will never accept this deception. A mere statement cannot be called historic," he declared.

In response to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's remarks, the former Minister recalled that when the Comprehensive Household Survey (CHS) was conducted under the BRS regime, Revanth Reddy publicly urged people not to provide their details. He pointed out that the CHS was conducted by the previous BRS government and had the authentic numbers of social categories which were placed in the public domain on the government website. "How can the present government refuse to recognise the data collected in an open and transparent survey?" he asked. Rama Rao explained that according to the CHS, a total of



1.03 crore families and 3.68 crore people participated in the data collection. The survey identified that BCs make up 51 per cent of the population, which increases to 61 per cent when BC Muslims are included. He slammed the Congress government for manipulating statistics, questioning how the BC population dropped from 51 per cent to 46 per cent in the present survey conducted by the Congress government. He charged the Congress government with misleading the public by making false prom ises about BC reservations and the BC Sub-Plan, which was expected to benefit BCs. He pointed out that a Congress MLC had even called for the burning of the current official survey report, raising concerns over the transparency of the data presented by the ruling party. He stated that BC organisations across Telangana were demanding accountability from the government.

BRS MLC Kavitha demands clarity on BC quota in local body polls

GNS News Agency, Feb 4

Hyderabad: BRS MLC K Kavitha on Tuesday demanded a clarification from the Congress government regarding its promise to increase reservations for Backward Classes (BCs) in local body elections. She wanted the government to clarify whether local body elections would be only after increasing reservations. Participating in a discussion in the Legislative Council on the recent caste census in Telangana, Kavitha criticised the government for merely repeating previous statements without announcing concrete steps.

"Everyone expected the government to outline its next course of action on the caste census. Instead, it simply reiterated what Cabinet Sub-Committee chairman Uttam Kumar Reddy said in a press conference two days ago. What is the use of such an announcement in the Council?" she questioned. Criticising the government's stance on BC and BC Muslim population in the State, the BRS MLC said the data was being manipulated to underestimate the actual numbers. She found fault with the government's claims that there was no definite data. "The 2011 Census is available, and global and national trends suggest a 13.5 per cent population increase per decade. By that estimate,



Telangana's population should now be 4.18 crore. However, the government's survey shows a decline in SC, ST, and BC populations, while indicating an increase in the OC population. How can only one category grow while others shrink?" she asked. Raising concerns over the survey's accuracy, Kavitha pointed out that many people complained that enumerators never visited their homes. "The government must explain what steps it is taking to re-survey and collect missing data," she demanded.

16 Indian workers return from Libya after months of ordeal

GNS News Agency, Feb 4

Sixteen Indian workers who have been stuck at the Libyan Cement Factory's plant in Benghazi for almost six months without pay and held in what they described as "prison-like" conditions for protesting long work hours, unscheduled shifts and erratic pay are expected to arrive in New Delhi in the early hours of Wednesday (February 5, 2025). The workers were on a Turkish Airline flight from Benghazi to New Delhi, with a stop-over at Istanbul.

In its weekly briefing on December 20, 2024, a day after The Hindu reported on the plight of the workers, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), acknowledged their "difficulties" and mentioned efforts were on to address the workers' immediate concerns of safety, food and water. Twelve days after The Hindu's reporting, on New Year's Eve, the workers were shifted to what appeared like two garages on a video call with this reporter. "At first, we were told it's for a medical check-up. We were hustled into two buses with all our belongings, and they brought us here," said Mithilesh Vishwakarma, one of the workers over the phone. They believed it was the backyard of a man they described as their contractor, a Libyan national named Abu Bakkr, who facilitated the worker's tourist visas from Dubai to Benghazi.In subsequent communications, the MEA acknowledged that efforts were on to repatriate the workers, but that Libyan formalities, such as "exit cards" for those without legal work authorisation were required.

Indian Chronicle

English Daily

Sobering Survey

The pre-Budget Economic Survey offers a sobering picture of the Indian economy, which is expected to exand by a modest 6.3-6.8 per cent in the coming financial rear. This figure is nowhere near the growth rate of nearly per cent that is required over the next two decades to chieve the grand goal of becoming a developed nation Viksit Bharat) by 2047. India continues to be the fastestrowing major economy in the world, but sustaining the nomentum would not be easy in the face of international rade tensions and Trump-induced protectionism. The survey has insisted on greater deregulation and reforms o enhance economic freedom and spur growth. The mesage to the states is loud and clear: Liberalise standards and controls on businesses to improve ease of doing business. This is an unusual throwback to then Finance Min ster Manmohan Singh's landmark 1991 Budget, which had unleashed the animal spirits of the economy. It seems he BJP-led Union Government has not managed to renain oblivious to MMS's pathbreaking policies, which have vitnessed a revival of keen interest after his recent death

The 'Make in India' initiative, launched in 2014 with he objective of transforming the country into a global hub or design and manufacturing, remains a work in progress. t's a major challenge to dovetail this flagship mission with he 'Make for the world' goal, which needs a booster shot o scale up India's export competitiveness and enhance is participation in global supply chains. The facts are inescapable: Merchandise exports have grown moderately due o sluggish global demand, while imports have increased significantly amid strong domestic demand. When it comes o trade deficit — the difference between imports and exports — India finds itself in an unenviable position visatis the majority of its top trading partners, particularly China. Signs of a thaw in bilateral ties might further skew the trade situation in favour of Beijing.

GBS outbreak in Pune: Private water tanker services found to be supplying contaminated water in city



The Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) has introduced a slew of measures to ensure clean and safe water for its citizens in light of the recent GBS cases. The administration has been testing water samples from various sources and overhead tanks besides examining the tap water in localities where the outbreak has been witnessed.

GNS News Agency, Feb 4

GBSThe civic water supply department supplied clean, treated water in GBS-affected areas of Kirkatwadi, Nanded, Nandoshi and Dhayari. Till now, these areas received only untreated water which was only chlorinated. Testing of water samples in Pune in the wake of the recent outbreak of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) has led to the identification of 15 private tanker services in the city whose supply is allegedly contaminated.

The Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) has introduced a slew of measures to ensure clean and safe water for its citizens in light of the recent GBS cases. The administration has been testing water samples from various sources and overhead tanks besides examining the tap water in localities where the outbreak has been witnessed. "We were provided with samples from 15 private water tankers and tests have revealed the presence of bacteria in them. A report has been submitted to the civic water supply department," said civic chemist Mandar Sirdeshpande, adding that the matter is of grave concern as many citizens availed of services from private water tankers. Civic water supply department chief Nandkishore Jagtap said the administration had no information regarding the total number of private water tanker services in the city or the source they rely on. "A meeting of all private tanker services was convened but it was met with poor response. We are now serving notices to them and taking action as per instructions from higher authorities," he said. The private tanker service providers have now been requested to use disinfectants provided by the civic body till they are able to make their own arrangements, Jagtap added. Sirdeshpande, meanwhile, said the testing of water samples from various localities indicated certain things. "We have noticed that many housing societies are not cleaning their water tanks. Many also mix the borewell water they get from private tankers with the water supplied by the civic body and it is evident from the test reports that these samples were collected from GBS-affected localities," he said. The civic body is currently trying to create awareness among citizens about these issues. Meanwhile, the civic water supply department supplied clean, treated water in GBS-affected areas of Kirkatwadi, Nanded, Nandoshi and Dhayari. Till now, these areas received only untreated water which was only chlorinated. Story continues below this adThe administration also pointed out that increasing urbanisation was polluting the Khadakwasla dam from which the civic body draws the water required for the city.

The PMC has also appealed to citizens to test the water in their localities by sending samples to the civic laboratory. Citizens have to pay Rs 340 for testing the biological content of water and Rs 1,620 for a detailed chemical analysis. Sirdeshpande, however, said that despite the outbreak, there wasn't much of an increase in the water samples submitted for testing. "We get around 540 samples per day for testing as against 450 last year. The civic water supply department is also providing 100 samples a day since the GBS outbreak," he said, adding the laboratory is short-staffed so they are working in two shifts."We test 18,000 samples every month," said Sirdeshpande, adding that their "manpower has not increased in the last one and half decades."GBS is a rare neurological disorder triggered by viral and bacterial infection. Its symptoms include diarrhoea, abdominal pain, fever, nausea or vomiting.

BMRCL erects composite steel girders over railway track near Rainbow Hospital



GNS News Agency, Feb 4

The Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) Friday informed that it has successfully completed the erection of four composite steel girders over the railway track near Rainbow Hospital, between the ISRO and Doddanekkundi metro stations. The operation, which was carried out between January 27 and 30, was a crucial milestone in the ongoing Phase 2A and 2B metro construction. The newly erected 65-metre-long girders are designed to accommodate the existing railway line and future railway projects under K-RIDE. The Commissioner of Metro Rail Safety (CMRS), Southern Circle, had approved the launching scheme and temporary staging before the work commenced.

"The project posed significant challenges due to the lack of a service road and restricted access through the

railway underpass. Additionally, the road at this location crosses the railway track at an angle, further limiting crane operations. Under normal circumstances, two 400-500 MT cranes would be deployed on either side, necessitating a full road closure. However, to minimise traffic disruption, BMRCL used a single 700 MT crane and divided the 65metre span into three sections – two 14.5-metre segments on either side and a central 36-metre portion over the railway track," said a press release issued by the BMRCL.BMRCL in its press statement further said that the newly erected railway span measures 65 metres in length, with a total weight of 575 MT, comprising four girders, each with a depth of 3.4 metres. To ensure the safe erection of the girders, both road and railway traffic were temporarily blocked. The Bengaluru traffic police permitted night-time road closures from 9.00 pm to 6.00 am, diverting traffic onto the opposite carriageway with temporary barricades. The South Western Railway granted a rail traffic block from 11.30 pm to 3.30 am, with railway engineers overseeing safety measures. The first 36-metre girder was installed on January 27, followed by two girders on the night of January 28, and the final girder on January 29. "The operation required precise alignment at a height of 14-15 metres with zero tolerance for deviation. A backup crane was kept on standby for emergencies," said a BMRCL source.BMRCL stated that the remaining work – including the erection of the final 14.5-metre girder portion, deck slab, and parapet - will be completed in the next two months, after which all road obstructions in the area will be removed.

Cash, liquor, drugs worth Rs 194 cr seized ahead of Delhi polls

GNS News Agency, Feb 4

Valuable items such as cash, liquor, drugs, precious material and freebies worth Rs 194 crore have been seized to date, ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls, reveals data shared by the Chief Electoral Office of Delhi.Addressing a press conference Friday, Delhi CEO Alice Vaz said the commission received 5,244 complaints online through the Cvigil app and over 100 complaints offline for violating the Model Code of Conduct.

"A total of 1.2 crore monetary value of cash, liquor, drugs, precious material and freebies have been seized at 175 inter-state border checkposts. The total value of seizure made till date is Rs 194 crore... this includes Rs 8.92 crore intercepted by the Flying Squad Team (FST/SST). Further, around 15,65,550 posters/banners and other defacement material were removed by local bodies," she said. As per the data, of the total complaints received to date, the highest was from North District (1,049) and the lowest from Shahdara (136).

Sharing details about arrangements for polling day, Vaz said 210 polling stations across Delhi will be equipped with upgraded facilities to ensure a seamless and voter-friendly experience. Moreover, 70 polling stations - one in each assembly constituency — will be fully managed by women staff. Another 70 polling stations will be operated entirely by persons with disabilities to promote inclusivity. Story continues below this adThe CEO office also said 6,488 senior citizens aged 85 years and above and 1,051 persons with disabilities opted for the vote-from-home facility. "To assist voters in finding their designated polling stations easily across multiple booth premises, all District Election Officers will set up polling stations following a colour code. The specific colour code assigned to a particular polling station will be mentioned in the voter information slips distributed to voters. This initiative aims to reduce confusion, minimise



delays, and ensure a smoother voting process on election day," said Vaz. Data also shows that a total of 21,584 ballot units (BUs), 20,692 Control units (CUs) and 18,943 VVPATS have been prepared for the election and commissioning is completed. "Mock polls were also conducted in EVMs selected at random in the presence of contesting candidates/their representatives as per the guidelines of Commission... Due to more than 16 contesting candidates in two Assembly constituencies — Janakpuri and New Delhi — double BUs will be used in every polling station," said Vaz. Story continues below this adShe added that political parties and candidates were also informed in advance at every stage of EVM activities and were involved in the mock poll process. Further, the Delhi CEO launched a Queue Management System app and a web page for the first time in India which will allow voters to monitor real-time crowd levels at polling centres on poll day. "Due to crowds and long queues, voters often leave without casting their ballots. Through this app, voters can get live updates about the crowd at the polling stations and plan accordingly... The app 'Delhi Election - 2025 QMS' is available on Google Play

After 6-month-long hearings, Bombay HC reserves verdict on death confirmation pleas and appeals against convictions

GNS News Agency, Feb 4

After six months of hearings, the special bench of Bombay High Court Friday reserved its judgment on death confirmation pleas filed by the state and appeals by the accused against their conviction in the 7/11 train blasts case of 2006. The high court will pass the verdict in due course. The pleas were filed in the high court after the special court in 2015 convicted the accused and the matter had been pending since then. The accused persons have been in jail for over 18 years.

On July 11, 2006, a series of bombs ripped through seven western suburban coaches, killing 189 commuters and injuring 824. After an over eight-year trial, a special court under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crimes Act (MCOCA) in October 2015 awarded the death penalty to five of the convicts and life terms to seven others. The death row convicts included Kamal Ansari from Bihar, Mohammad Faisal Ataur Rahman Shaikh from Mumbai, Ehtesham Qutubuddin Siddiqui from Thane, Naveed Hussain Khan from Secunderabad and Asif Khan from Jalgaon in Maharashtra. All of them were found guilty of planting the bombs. The seven awarded life imprisonment were Tanveer Ahmed Mohammed Ibrahim Ansari, Mohammed Majid Mohammed Shafi, Shaikh Mohammed Ali Alam Shaikh, Mohammed Sajid Margub Ansari, Muzammil Ataur Rahman Shaikh, Suhail Mehmood Shaikh and Zameer Ahmed Latiur Rehman Shaikh. One of the accused, Wahid Shaikh, was acquitted by the trial court after nine years of jail. In 2015, the Maharashtra government approached the high court, seeking the confirmation of death row granted to the five convicts, who also filed appeals challenging their convictions. However, Ansari died due to Covid-19 in Nagpur prison in 2021. The convicts who were sent to life imprisonment have also filed appeals against the same in the high court. After the accused sought early disposal of the matter, In July 2024, a special bench of Justices Anil S Kilor and Shyam C Chandak was formed and has been hearing the death confirmation pleas and appeals against convictions since then and concluded the same on Friday.

Story continues below this adThe state government had in 2022 told the high court that the hearing on confirmation petitions would take at least five to six months as there were 92 prosecution witnesses and over 50 defence witnesses. Evidence in the case ran over 169 volumes and judgments of death sentences nearly 2,000 pages. Advocates Yug Mohit Chaudhry and Payoshi Roy, who argued for all accused persons for over three months, submitted that their extra-judicial confessional statements

obtained by the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS)



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through 'torture' were inadmissible in law. They said that while the accused had not initially confessed, their extrajudicial confessions were obtained after MCOCA was invoked against them, and the same raised suspicion about the probe

Appearing for two of the convicts - Muzammil Shaikh and Zameer Shaikh - senior lawyer S Muralidhar (former Delhi HC judge) earlier this month argued that they were innocent and had been languishing in jail for 18 years without any sufficient and substantial evidence to prove charges against them. Muralidhar had said that the prime years of the accused are gone in incarceration. On Friday, during the last hearing, one of the accused Navee Hussain, lodged at Nagpur Central Prison, appeared before the court through virtual mode and alleged that he was falsely implicated in the case and had no role in the same. He said that "while the people lost their lives in the train blast, retribution should not mean that innocent people are hanged."Senior advocates Nitya Ramakrishnan and S Nagamuthu representing other accused also argued that cases against them were false and the trial court erred in convicting the accused persons. Senior advocate Raja Thakare, appointed as special public prosecutor (SPP) representing Maharashtra government, had sought confirmation of death penalties citing that sufficient evidence was produced by the probing agency to show it was a 'rarest of rare' category case.

Won't release film without CBFC nod, trailer to have disclaimer, 'Delhi 2020' producers assure high court



GNS News Agency, Feb 4

Contesting the challenge to the release of 'Delhi 2020' film, purportedly based on the 2020 communal riots in the national capital, the production house assured the Delhi High Court on Friday that the movie will not be screened in any theatre or on social media platforms without a CBFC certification, and that they will be adopting a disclaimer for the trailer and the film if and when it is released.

The assurance came even as Additional Solicitor General Chetan Sharma, appearing for the Union government's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting as well as the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), informed Justice Sachin Datta that no CBFC certification is required for the release of the film's trailer on social media. It is only a requirement for the release of trailers in theatres. Justice Datta is expected to pass an order later in the day.

On Thursday, activist and 2020 Delhi riots accused Sharjeel Imam and six others had moved three petitions before the Delhi High Court seeking a stay on the release of the movie, which is slated for February 2.One of the petitions was moved by five people — riot victims Sahil Parvez, who lost his father, and Mohd Saeed Salman, whose mother was burnt alive; and three accused in the riots cases, namely, Akil Ahmed, Sonu and Tasleem Ahmed (who is still in jail).

Imam's petition seeks the court's direction to take down all pre-release material such as posters, images and trailers, among others, until his trial is completed. Both petitions seek a stay on the release of the film until the trial in the cases involving the complainants or the accused are completed. The third petition, filed by an independent candidate contesting the Delhi polls from Rajinder Nagar, Umang, is seeking a stay or ban on the release of Delhi 2020 in cinemas, on television, and on OTT platforms, and an order to remove the trailer of the film from YouTube and other social media platforms. He has also sought the revocation of the film's certification under the Cinematograph Act, 1952, and action against the filmmakers and others responsible for launching the film and sharing videos, which he said has the potential to create communal disharmony.

The production houses for the film – Midas Touch Films and Visual Birds Studio - represented by senior advocate Jayant Mehta, emphasised before the court that the film is inspired by the true events of the Delhi riots of 2020, as the trailer claims, and that it is only "inspired by and is not a true depiction." Mehta went on to add that they have applied for certification before the CBFC but have not vet received the same. Both Mehta, as well as ASG Sharma contested the maintainability of the petitions, adding that it is premature in the absence of CBFC certification, and that such a challenge cannot be made without taking recourse under the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules.Pressing to take down the trailer, Imam's counsel Warisha Farasat pointed out, "He (Imam) is the main person who is being shown in the trailer...and why the trailer should go is, the very beginning of the trailer it starts with him... This will greatly prejudice me... Parts of chargesheet has been referred to, such as "chicken neck musalmano ka hai"..this is what I've been accused of in the chargesheet...""Visual medium can have a huge impact and all of these things become fundamental... (I have a) right to fair trial... Please look at the trailer... They have not tried to hide my identity, they have not tried to show that it is not me... Everything in the movie (trailer), points to the fact that it is me, right from the comments duplicated from chargesheet attributed to me... There's no way to camouflage the identity... There may be more prejudicial things in the movie." Advocate Amit George, appearing for the independent candidate petitioner, also argued before the court, "Today MCC is in operation... I have a curated prayer, my submission is a trailer of this nature and of course the film skews the demographic pattern, impacts the electoral process adversely as it creates disharmony and in the time that the MCC is in place other fundamental rights have to go down for the overarching need of free and fair elections."

Unemployed youth protest against Congress government at Osmania University campus

GNS News Agency, Feb 4

Hyderabad: With a slogan 'Congress party Hatao, Job Calendar Bachao', unemployed youth vowed to campaign against the grand-old party in the ensuing MLC and local body elections in the State.

"The unemployed youth will ensure that Congress does not get a single vote in the local body elections as it failed to release the job notifications as assured," said Mothilal Naik, leader of OU JAC.The unemployed youth, along with Osmania University (OU) students, staged a protest demanding the State government release the job calendar and recruitment notifications at OU Main Library here on Friday. The protesters wanted notifications for 12,000 VRO, 1,000 deputy surveyor, 10,000 power sector, DSC and Group – I, II and III vacancies.

Stating that they were silent due to SC sub-classification and BC reservation implementation issue, the Naik said the unemployed youth would now be staging indefinite rallies, demanding the release of job notifications.

The Congress government cannot be trusted as it went back on its assurance on job notifications to unemployed youth, he said, adding that "Why should the unemployed vote for Congress when it did not issue the job notifications? Rallies will be conducted in Ashok Nagar, Dilsukhnagar and all libraries in the State. This is a peaceful protest, which will be held until the government issues notifications," he said.

Special CBI court holds 2 former Punjab Police officers guilty for murder in 33-year-old fake encounter case



GNS News Agency, Feb 4

The special court of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Friday convicted two former Punjab Police officers in a 33-year-old fake encounter case. The court also acquitted two former police officers in the case. The court of special CBI judge Rakesh Kumar Gupta convicted Gurbhinder Singh, former Majitha (Amritsar) Station House Officer (SHO), and Parshotam Singh, a former assistant sub-inspector (ASI), for killing two men in a fake encounter in September 1992. The court will pronounce the quantum of the sentence on February 4.

Gurbhinder Singh and Parshotam Singh have been convicted under Section 302 (murder), and 120-B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Gurbhinder Singh was also convicted under Section 218 (public servant framing incorrect record) of the IPC. The court acquitted former inspector Chaman Lal and deputy superintendent of police (DSP) S S Sidhu giving them the benefit of doubt. It was claimed by the senior police officers at that time that both the deceased were hardcore terrorists having rewards on their heads and were involved in over a hundred cases of murder, extortion, and dacoity, including the killing of Harbhajan Singh alias Shindi, son of Gurmej Singh, the then Cabinet minister in the Beant Singh-led Punjab government.

Investigation of this case was taken up by the CBI in 1995 on orders of the Supreme Court. During the investigation by the CBI, it was established that Baldev Singh Deba, an Army personnel who had come home on leave, was picked up from his house at Baserke Bhaini village on September 6, 1992, by the police party headed by SI Mohinder Singh and Harbhajan Singh, the then SHO of Chheharta

police station. Similarly, Lakhwinder Singh Lakha Ford, a resident of Sultanwind village, was also picked from his rented house at Preet Nagar, Amritsar on September 12, 1992, along with one Kulwant Singh by the police party headed by SI Gurbhinder Singh, the then SHO of Majithia police station, but Kulwant Singh was later released. During the investigation, CBI found that the police of Chheharta police station falsely implicated Deba and Lakha Ford in the murder case of the minister's son who was killed on July 23, 1992. On September 12, 1992, the Chheharta police arrested Baldev Singh Deba in that murder case, and on September 13, 1992, both he and Lakha Ford were killed. The police concocted the story that while taking Baldev Singh Deba near Sansara village for recovery of arms and ammunition, an encounter took place with militants in which Baldev Singh Deba and one attacker were killed. The other deceased was later identified as Lakhwinder Singh alias Lakha alias Ford.

CBI concluded that both were picked, kept in illegal custody, and then killed in a fake encounter. The central investigating agency also found that there was no entry in log books regarding the visit of police vehicles at the alleged encounter site. Even though it was shown by the police that the unknown militant killed during the encounter was identified by injured Baldev Singh Deba, as per the postmortem report, Deba died instantly and so identification by him does not arise. On November 15, 1995, the Supreme Court ordered a CBI inquiry into the matter of the cremation of large-scale dead bodies by the police as unclaimed. In pursuance of these orders, a case was registered by the CBI and on August 30, 1999, CBI filed charge sheet against S S Sidhu, Harbhajan Singh, Mohinder Singh, Parshotam Lal, Chaman Lal, Gurbhinder Singh, Mohan Singh, Parshotam Singh and Jassa Singh for kidnapping, criminal conspiracy, murder, and preparation of false record. But statements of witnesses were recorded after 2022 as the case remained stayed owing to the orders of higher courts. Sarabjit Singh Verka, counsel for the victims' families, said, "Although CBI cited 37 witnesses in this case, statements of only 19 witnesses have been recorded during the trial as most of the witnesses cited by the CBI had died during delayed trial and finally after 32 years of the incident, justice is delivered."Similarly, during this delayed trial, the accused namely Harbhajan Singh, Mohinder Singh, Parshotam Lal, Mohan Singh, and Jassa Singh had also died, and accused S S Sidhu, Chaman Lal, Gurbhinder Singh and Parshotam Singh faced the trial.

Son kills father's 'paramour' at EM Bypass tea stall, his mother among 3 held

GNS News Agency, Feb 4

A minor who "discovered his father's extramarital affair with a young woman" allegedly attacked and murdered the woman while she was with his father at a roadside tea stall on Kolkata's EM Bypass in full public view on Thursday. "On Thursday around 9 pm, a 24-year-old woman was taken to the NRS hospital from the Bypass Dhaba Pragati Maidan PS area with a sharp object injury. Later, she succumbed to her injuries. Three persons have been arrested," said a senior police officer. Police said the man's wife, his son, and a 22-year-old man had arrived at the spot and have now been arrested for murder. The instant case was recorded on the complaint of one Tanisha Kar of Seal Lane. Sources in the police said the wife and son had "discovered the affair" and tracked his car using GPS.A senior police officer said the weapon used in the alleged crime was recovered. The murder has now triggered a political uproar, with the Opposition questioning the law and order situation in the state.

BJP state president Sukanta Majumdar took to X and wrote, "Failed Chief Minister (Mamata Banerjee) please react and resign! In the middle of the night, a young woman was openly chased on the street and brutely attacked with a sharp weapon, yet the incompetent, sycophantic Kolkata police under her leadership failed to take any immediate action? Whether it is the restroom for female doctors in a



government hospital or a crowded area in Kolkata, this state is gradually turning into a death trap for women. No matter how much the incompetent Chief Minister falsely claims that Kolkata is the safest city, the reality is that under her tenure, women in the state have suffered the most." Senior TMC MP leader Sudip Bandopadhyay hit back and said, "Kolkata's law and order situation by far is the best in the country. Before making statements, the BJP should first see the law and order situation of their states, and see what happened in Kumbh. Thet still have the audacity to speak. Yes, this incident in Kolkata is very unfortunate. The police have arrested the culprits. The BJP will not gain anything by raising fingers at Bengal's law and order as people are not fools."

Day after meeting Eknath Shinde, ex-Pune MP Ravindra Dhangekar clarifies, 'not leaving Congress'



GNS News Agency, Feb 4

A day after he met Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister and Shiv Sena chief Eknath Shinde in Mumbai, triggering speculation of his possible exit from the Congress, former Pune MP Ravindra Dhangekar on Friday denied any such move. "No, I am not leaving the Congress...If I had to

leave the Congress, I would not hide it. I will say it openly," Dhangekar "I met the deputy chief minister yesterday in connection with some work," he said. When asked about the work, Dhangekar shot back, "I have a big list. Do you want to know all of it?"The Shiv Sena has reportedly launched 'Operation Tiger' to rope in leaders from the Congress, the NCP (SP) and Shiv Sena (UBT) into its fold with senior party leader Uday Samant being entrusted with the task.Dhangekar has been sulking ever since he lost the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.

After winning the Kasba Assembly seat in 2023, Dhangekar had infused life into the crestfallen Congress rank and file. Since then, the Congress has been banking on him to uplift the party morale in Pune where its performance has been on a downward trend. Congress leader Mohan Joshi, who rushed to Dhangekar's residence on Friday, also maintained that he would not quit the party. "He had some work with Shinde and that is why he met him," he said.

4 professors, Gujarat college principal booked after 19-year-old homeopathy student dies by suicide in Mehsana

GNS News Agency, Feb 4

Four professors and the principal of Merchant Homeopathic Medical College in Gujarat's Mehsana have been booked for alleged abetment to suicide after a 19-year-old first-year BHMS student died Professor Vipakshi Sureshrao Vasnik, Professor Prashant Chandmalji Nuval, Professor Y Chandra Bose, Dr Sanjay Rithe, and the principal Dr Kailash Zinga Patil have been booked under Bharatiye Nyaya Sanhita Section 108 (abetment to suicide) and 54 (abettor present when an offence is committed) as well as under section 3(2)(v) of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. The Indian Express has learnt that they have been detained for questioning.In his complaint to Mehsana Taluka police, the deceased's father Pravin Shankar Shrimali, a 52-year-old

advocate and resident of Nagvada village of Dasada taluka in Surendranagar, said his daughter Urvashi was being harassed by her professors for the last two months. Shrimali stated in the FIR that on January 29, he was present at the Patdi court when he got a call from the college, situated in Basna, saying his daughter had attempted suicide in her room. The caller said Urvashi had survived and was being taken to the Mehsana Civil Hospital. When Shrimali reached the hospital with his wife, they found her dead. The FIR further stated that Urvashi had gone on a college trip between January 5 and 13. Subsequently, she had allegedly told her parents that Professor Vasnik used to shout at her and threaten to fail her. The FIR also alleged that medicine department Professor Prashant Nuval would make her write things three times over .

Gujarat university sacks professor over charges of 'sexual and mental harassment' of female colleague



GNS News Agency, Feb 4

gtu, gujarat technological university, ahmedabad, The complainant alleged that Panchal would harass her during her research and when she did not heed his demands, the harassment aggravated and led to mental distress. The Gujarat Technological University, Ahmedabad, has terminated the services of a professor after an internal inquiry into allegations of sexual and mental harassment by a female faculty member. A six-member Internal Inquiry Committee report led to the termination of Professor S D Panchal, director of the School of Engineering and Technology, His colleague had filed a complaint against him in August with

"documentary evidence, including messages, e-mails and chats".

"Based on the complaint, the committee conducted a detailed inquiry, including the hearing of over 30 witnesses, and submitted its findings which were sent to both parties. As per the findings, the executive authority under the Board of Governors agreed with the report, and looking at the severity of the case, the university terminated the services of Prof S D Panchal," GTU Registrar K N Kher told Kher said that this is the first case of sexual harassment against a faculty member at GTU, and the first termination. However, it was revealed that 2-3 anonymous complaints were filed in the same case before a formal complaint was filed by the female faculty member who was working under him.

He was her supervisor when she was undertaking research for her PhD. The complainant alleged that Panchal would harass her during her research and when she did not heed his demands, the harassment aggravated and led to mental distress. Panchal would allegedly threaten to get her research cancelled. After the completion of her PhD, she filed the complaint.Panchal had also filed an appeal with the appellate committee. Authorities said that a four-member appellate committee was approached in November last year within 30 days of the ICC report. Following the hearing, the appellate committee too agreed with the ICC report.

Karnataka cabinet approves withdrawal of Premium FAR Bill amid concerns over TDR and urban planning

GNS News Agency, Feb 4

The Karnataka Cabinet Thursday approved the withdrawal of the Karnataka Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Bill, 2024, which proposed the introduction of the Premium Floor Area Ratio (FAR). The move comes after Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot returned the Bill, seeking clarifications on legal aspects, particularly its potential impact on Transferable Development Rights (TDR) and urban planning norms. The Bill, which was passed in both Houses of the legislature in February 2024, aimed to allow developers to purchase additional FAR of up to 60 per cent over the permissible limit based on road width, with the revenue benefiting the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP). However, urban planners and stakeholders raised concerns that Premium FAR could undermine the TDR system, promote haphazard growth, and contradict transitoriented development (TOD) policies.

The government was reportedly hopeful about the Bill's revenue potential, as developers would have had to buy Premium FAR directly from the civic body based on the guidance value of the property. However, the Governor raised concerns that this provision would impact landowners compensated with TDR for land lost to public projects. Under the current system, developers looking to exceed their allowable FAR must buy TDR from the open market, benefiting landowners who have given up land for infrastructure projects. The introduction of Premium FAR would have created an alternative, potentially devaluing TDR and making it harder for landowners to monetize their compensation, according to government sources. Additionally, urban planners and mobility experts opposed the Bill, warning that it could lead to unplanned densification in areas without adequate infrastructure. The Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (BMRCL) and other agencies have been advocat-



ing for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), which concentrates higher FAR allowances along metro corridors to ensure planned densification. The Comprehensive Mobility Plan (CMP), which aligns with this approach, allows FAR up to five near metro stations to promote sustainable urban growth. However, Premium FAR, critics argued, would enable excessive construction even in areas with narrow roads. Pointing out that additional construction due to additional FAR may result in congestion on smaller roads, BJP MLA K S Naveen had argued, "This will increase strain on Bengaluru's infrastructure and hence the government should pass the Bill only after detailed deliberation by a review committee."

The debate over Premium FAR vs TDR has persisted for years. In 2021, the previous BJP government had introduced a similar Bill, which was also not approved by the Governor. The current Congress government reintroduced the Bill with modifications, but faced similar objections. Despite BBMP's argument that Premium FAR could include a mandatory TDR component, the Governor did not accept the proposal, leading to the Bill's withdrawal.

'His apartment has a space dedicated to gods': FBI director nominee Kash Patel's uncle says he is 'beyond resilient'

GNS News Agency, Feb 4

Late on Thursday night, when Kashyap 'Kash' Patel faced the US Senate Judiciary Committee at Capitol Hill for his confirmation hearing for the post of Director of Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), back in Gujarat's Vidyanagar, his maternal uncle sat through the live proceedings, unsurprised at the "resilience" with which his nephew fielded the questions. The uncle, who wishes to remain anonymous said the family is "anxiously waiting" for the 44-year-old's confirmation as his success is "self-made".

Speaking to Kash Patel's 69-year-old who is currently visiting India, said Kashyap, a Republican, is a first-generation 'politician' as both sides of his family have no political links in India or the United States of America. "I watched the hearing along with my wife from 8 pm till 1.40 am... He started his career as a public defender in Miami Dade, where most of his clients were accused of drug dealing. His familiarity with the US judicial system developed from there..., he said. "Then he went to Washington DC, appointed by the Obama administration as a senior advisor to the Congresselect committee on security and anti-terrorism. His daily task was to brief the select committee and then President Obama. His specialty lies in anti-terrorism. Kashyap has seen gradual growth and is way beyond resilient. It is not self-evident when you meet him but we know that this job (FBI Director) is not going to put any pressure on him. He will be able to deal with it," he added.kash patel US Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC) shakes hands with Kash Patel as they break for a vote on the day Patel testifies before a Senate Judiciary Committee confirmation hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington. (Reuters) Stating that the family, which is based in Anand district, is anxiously waiting for Kashyap's confirmation, he said, "None of the two families on the side of his mother and father have a political background. So, whatever Kashyap has done is self-made. People in India are now aware of the allegiance he has to Donald Trump but we do not discuss the dynamics of that association."

On Thursday, Kashyap greeted his parents with a "Jai Shri Krishna" at the beginning of the hearing and was seen touching their feet at the end of the hearing, leading to media discussions about his regular emphasis on his "Indian roots". Kashyap mentioned that his parents — Pramod and Anjana— had "travelled all the way from India" to be with him during the hearing as they were in the country on an annual vacation since the dates for the hearing were not confirmed when they planned the visit. Kashyap also acknowledged his sister Nisha who "travelled the oceans" to be by his side. His uncle said, "My sister (Anjana) and brother-in-law (Pramod) were in Vadodara, where they own an apartment and visit regularly. They were unsure about the dates of the confirmation when they arrived in India but were able to go



back in time once it was confirmed. Nisha is based in London and wanted to be with her brother on the big day..."

"Kashyap's inclination towards Indian culture is a deep personal belief system that the family follows, which is of Hindu culture. Although two generations of the family have grown up outside India, the family associates with Indian culture. The current generation of the family, to which Kashyap belongs, is mostly adaptable; it depends on where they are. If we are at an Indian event, one would not be able to tell that (they have not grown up in India)," he added. According to the uncle, Kashyap visits India regu-

Kashyap is a devotee of Shiv, Hanuman and Ganesh. At his apartment in Washington DC, he has a separate temple space dedicated to the gods...He is known as 'Kash' across the world but for the family he is Kashyap."While Kashyap's family had migrated to the US after fleeing from Uganda during the Idi Amin coup in 1971, he stated that his parents married after Pramod had settled in the US."Pramod Patel lived in Jinja in Uganda and worked as an accountant

He fled in 1971 and arrived in the US via Canada. It was in 1977 that he came to India and married my sister and she moved to the US. My sister and I were born in Zanzibar and we lived in Tanga in Tanzania where my father was with our grandparents but my father had sent my sister to India for education so she studied at MS University and lived here when we moved from Tanzania. Pramod (Kash's father) is also an almunus of MS University's Faculty of Commerce", he recalled. "While we lost our father in 1983, after her marriage, I moved to the US in 1985 and my mother and younger brother joined me separately later. Now all of us are settled in the US, including Pramod Patel's siblings... but we have homes in India, which we visit annually," he said.

Kasheli Creek bridge on Mumbai-Nashik Expressway to undergo repairs on Sunday; traffic delays likely



GNS News Agency, Feb 4

Commuters travelling on the Mumbai-Nashik Expressway this Sunday should brace for potential delays as the Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC) will be undertaking essential repairs on the Kasheli Creek bridge. The bridge serves as a crucial link on the expressway, facilitating vehicle movement between Mumbai, North Maharashtra, and further towards North India.An MSRDC official confirmed that all necessary traf-

fic permissions have been secured, and work is set to be gin around 9 am.

"One lane of the bridge will remain closed while repairs are underway, but we have not imposed any restrictions on overall traffic movement," the officer stated. The Kasheli Creek bridge, part of the old National Highway 3 (Agra-Bombay Road), has been under scrutiny since January 18, when a section of its median collapsed. Despite the damage, officials have assured that the structure remains safe for commuters. The bridge is a key access route for vehicles travelling to and from Bhiwandi, a major logistics hub. The affected portion—a 30-metre section of the median—belongs to an additional structure built in 1985. Currently, the four-lane bridge accommodates two-way traffic. However, once a new parallel bridge is completed, the existing structure will handle Thane-bound traffic, while the new bridge will serve vehicles heading toward Nashik and beyond. The new bridge is part of a broader Rs 1,000-crore expansion project for a 23.5-km stretch of the Mumbai-Nashik highway, initiated in 2022. As of now, 70 per cent of the new bridge is complete, with the Kasheli Creek segment accounting for Rs 100 crore of the total budget.

A towering Saraswati idol in West Bengal to be 'world's tallest', say puja organisers

GNS News Agency, Feb 4

Made of bamboo, jute, thermocol, and paper, this Saraswati Puja in a small town of West Bengal will boast the world's tallest idol of the goddess, measuring 111 ft in length, according to the organisers. To make the idol, two clubs of the Batanagar area of Maheshtala municipality merged and formed a new committee. The two clubs are "Batanagar Creation" and "Batanagar squad". Local councillor (34 number ward) Gopal Saha became the convenor of the committee. Saha said, "We wanted to erect our devi for education to such a height that it will be the tallest in the world. Our catchline is, 'We bow down to our mother. Saraswati of Batanagar is the tallest'."In the past in West Bengal — in Deshapriya Park of Kolkata as well as at Kalyani of Nadia district — administrations have forced organisers to stop constructing tall goddess Durga idols because of possible security breaches and a "stampede-

"We are organising this puja at the Newpand maidan area. This area has more than 25 acres of vacant land. We are erecting the idol in the centre of the ground, supported by a huge crane from the back of the statue. To avoid any stampede, we are marking a 'D' area of 130 ft in front of the idol. No one can enter this area," he said. He further added, "We will make arrangements for a fire brigade and a proper traffic and crowd management system so that no chaos



can be created."Saha said, "The structure of the idol is made up of hollow iron pipes and bamboo. That will be covered by jute cloth and paper. Then the whole structure will be covered by thermocol."The Maheshtala municipality area falls under the Diamond Harbour Lok Sabha constituency where the number two of TMC and nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Abhishek Banerjee, is the MP. Saha said, "We got the courage to make such a huge idol from our leader. We invited him to inaugurate the idol on February 1, but he will not be able to be present as the budget session of the Parliament will start. Instead of him, a bunch of Tollywood artists will come to inaugurate the huge idol of Saraswati."

Retired SC judge appointed mediator in feud between Maharashtra minister Mangal Prabhat Lodha's sons





GNS News Agency, Feb 4

The Bombay High Court on Friday appointed former Supreme Court judge Justice R V Raveendran as the mediator to resolve the trademark dispute between Macrotech Developer (formerly Lodha Group) of Abhishek Lodha and his younger brother's House of Abhinandan Lodha Estate Holdings Private Limited (HoABL). Abhishek and Abhinandan are sons of Maharashtra minister Mangal Prabhat Lodha, the founder of the Lodha Group that is into real estate business. The court on Monday, January 27, noting that the genesis of the matter appeared to be a dispute between two brothers and it can be put to an end if settlement is reached, had proposed the appointment of a former judge of the Supreme Court as mediator to resolve the dispute. A single-judge bench of Justice Arif S Doctor has been hearing an interim application by Macrotech Developers of Abhishek Lodha seeking ad interim relief in its trademark infringement suit to restrain HoABL of his younger brother, from using the 'Lodha' trademark pending the hearing of the matter.

The origin of the disputeAbhinandan parted ways with Lodha Group in 2015 and started HoABL and the separation was formalised on the basis of a family settlement agreement in 2017. Macrotech claimed that due to non-compliance with the 2017 agreement, a new agreement was signed between the two parties in December 2023, which,

as per Macrotech expressly prohibited Abhinandan from using a name similar to Lodha.

Macrotech and Digirealty Technologies Pvt Ltd in their suit sought a perpetual injunction against infringing on their registered trademarks and sought through an application an ad-interim injunction pending hearing of the suit. They claimed the infringement by HoABL resulted in the loss or damage provisionally estimated to be more than Rs 5,000 crore due to the use of the 'Lodha' by HoABL.On Friday, senior advocate Janak Dwarkadas representing Abhishek Lodha on instructions from the client submitted that he is willing to make an attempt to resolve the trademark dispute through mediation process. Senior advocate Darius Khambata for Macrotech suggested that all parties be part of the mediation and not merely the two brothers. On consent of the parties, the High Court appointed retired Justice R V Raveendran as sole mediator in an attempt for resolution of the dispute arisen between the parties to the suit"However I clarify that it would be open for parties to place before mediator all such issues that are presently subsisting between them," it added. The bench suggested that the mediator at first stage can make an attempt to resolve the dispute between two brothers. "If the two brothers sit down and resolve and if a dispute between two brothers gets settled, everything gets settled," the judge orally remarked. "However, this would not in any manner mean that any parties to the suit shall be excluded in any manner excluded from mediation proceedings," the judge noted. The bench noted that "it shall be open to mediator after holding first a meeting with Abhinandan Lodha and Abhishek Lodha as to issue appropriate directions for inclusion of all parties in the suit." Needless to state that mediation proceedings are without prejudice to rights and contention to all parties to the dispute," the court said. The bench further requested the mediator to 'expeditiously conclude' the mediation proceedings, preferably within five weeks. Posting the next hearing in the matter to March 21 to decide on granting adinterim relief, the HC said that in the event if the mediation is not successful, the replies to the interim application to be

Grief-stricken daughters live with mother's body for nine days at Secunderabad's Warasiguda

Hyderabad: In a heart wrenching incident in Warasiguda, Secunderabad, grief-stricken by their mother's death, two young women reportedly lived with her lifeless body for nine days in their home. The deceased mother Sri Lalitha (45) was staying in a rented house at Road number 3, Warasiguda, Secunderabad, along with her two daughters Ravalika (25) and Ashwitha (22). About nine days ago, Sri Lalitha died under suspicious circumstances. However, her two daughters, who were upset over their mother's death did not leave the body or the house and instead chose to stay with it for the next eight days, police said. It is learnt that the two young women also tried to end their lives by cutting their wrists, but were unsuccessful.

The incident came to light on Friday when the neighbours sensed foul smell emanating from the house and informed the local police. On the directions of Secunderabad MLAT Padmarao Goud, the police rescued the two women and shifted them to the police station. Based



on their complaint, the Warasiguda police have booked a suspicious death case and took up investigation. The reason for Sri Lalitha's death is yet to be known. The highly decomposed body was shifted to the Gandhi Hospital morque for autopsy.

Bullet train construction over mainline to start in Vadodara city, NHSRCL seeks 'safety blocks' from Western Railways



GNS News Agency, Feb 4

The National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited (NHSRCL), which is building the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train, has requested the Western Railways for a daily three-hour suspension of rail traffic passing Vadodara city for 37 days. This is for the first installment of their construction work, which is beginning in March and is set for a deadline of December this year. "We have approached Western Railways and they have given an in-principle agreement to give blocks during the daytime," an NHSRCL official said.

Chief PRO, Western Railways, Vineet Abhishek said that the discussion with the NHSRCL was in an "early stage" to draw up a plan of action for the "movement of passenger trains and regular railway traffic". This request was made to enable the construction of a viaduct over the main passenger line — which is the only section of the entire 508-km Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR) corridor that has been re-aligned to avoid the displacement of the busy Kadak bazaar, and also to prevent crane boom movement at higher altitudes in the area which could obstruct flight paths, saving, in the process, Rs 2000 crore of the sanctioned project cost of Rs 1,08,000 crore, officials said.

They aim to complete the civil work for the 352-kmlong Gujarat section of the corridor, of which eight km passes Vadodara city, known as the "C5 package" by the end of this year. The elevated corridor will have 32 spans crossing over the railway line, half of which will be over the passenger line and the rest over the freight corridor. According to officials of the NHSRCL, given the challenges of aligning the corridor as close to the existing railway line as possible, the Vadodara crossover is the only section in the bullet train project that has been "redesigned." Work for the corridor had begun in 2021, according to a past construction alignment plan in 2017. Per that alignment, bullet trains would have crossed the six busy railway platforms of Vadodara junction with a High Speed Rail (HSR) station coming up at the Kadak Bazar across the street from the Vadodara station. Story continues below

The old proposal had led to staunch opposition from local people in 2017-18 as it also involved the acquisition of private land and posed a logistical challenge in needing to construct the viaduct over the operational railway platforms. The original design required a 220m girder span to be launched across 13 railway lines, including the six

NHSRCL officials say has not even been built for the Japanese Shinkansen high-speed network — posing a challenge in terms of "technical design, time estimation, and also cost", as the construction was expected to require 25000 MT of steel.Referred to as the "Rajdhani line", given Vadodara's importance as a railway junction for the express trains on the Delhi and Mumbai routes, the main passenger line crossover in Vadodara is among the "trickiest" constructions of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train route, say officials. A senior official connected with the project told The Indian Express, "The original alignment (as per the survey of 2017) would have required us to cross over the entire yard of railway lines, including the main passenger line. This has now been reduced to crossing the span over only two main lines between the Akota and Jetalpur bridges in Vadodara city with a change in alignment of about 4.3 km. In fact, it is the only part of the entire 508-km stretch where the original design has been revised."

The earlier plan would have meant raising the launching arm of the crane to 131 metres from mean sea level, far higher than the permitted height of 95.9 metres as per the Airports Authority of India for the Vadodara railway station area. Vivek Kumar Gupta, Managing Director, NHSRCL, said, "Upon review by our engineers and Japanese counterparts, we re-engineered a section which not only simplified the span launching process, and reduced construction time, but also achieved a cost savings of Rs 2000 crore. Furthermore, we avoided the displacement of commercial and residential units, ensuring minimal disturbance to railway services and residents." Gupta added, "The Vadodara Bullet Train station (HSR) is now integrated with Vadodara Railway station, is strategically positioned for better accessibility, providing multi-modal integration with other transportation options and ample parking facilities, thereby enhancing connectivity for passengers."An official connected with the project said, "To ensure a smooth construction with minimal effect on the railway traffic, we have planned to launch composite girders, which are composed of steel girders and concrete deck slabs. We are in discussion with the railways to plan the blocks that would be needed for completing the launching of the steel girders. From the safety point of view, the composite girders are most convenient

During the time of constructing these girders and slabs, the regular passenger trains plying below will have to follow a speed restriction of 30 kmph.An official told this paper that the NHSRCL has planned to complete the composite girder spans on the Surat end and Ahmedabad end of Vadodara by seeking designated three-hour railway blocks, beginning in March. Eleven spans are planned for the Surat end and five for the Ahmedabad end. "Since we are tackling four spans at one time, the block would be minimised. We have planned to complete the first part of the span launching on the Surat end within 37 days... and thereafter for the Ahmedabad end later this year."The official adds that the NHSRCL and the Western Railways are working closely to identify time between passenger trains to create a space where the railways could hold back passage of goods

Chandigarh mayoral election: AAP cries foul over 'dishonest' Congress, issues word of caution for Delhi voters

GNS News Agency. Feb 4

With the alliance's joint candidate failing to win despite having the numbers - 19 votes against the BJP's 13 - the AAP has hit out at the "dishonest" Congress for cross-voting and violating coalition dharma. AAP leaders are also warning Delhi voters, asking them to be wary of a "secret alliance of BJP and Congress" in the upcoming polls.Internally, there were celebrations in the Punjab Congress camp as the leaders called it "revenge" for AAP's "excesses" to install its mayor in the Amritsar Municipal Corporation. The Chandigarh Municipal Corporation has 35 members and an ex-officio member of the House, the Chandigarh MP. The AAP-Congress alliance had the numbers - with 13 AAP and six Congress councillors, and one vote from MP Manish Tewari - but it was the BJP with 16 councillors that won with 19 votes against 17 votes for the AAP-Congress candidate Prem Lata. Three councillors from the AAP-Congress alliance had crossvoted.Interestingly, Congress's Jasbir Singh Bunty and Taruna Mehta were elected senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor, respectively. "The Congress was dishonest. Why was our mayor candidate not elected after a secret ballot while we supported the Congress senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor candidates? We could have also abstained from voting for these two. Unfortunately, the alliance was not among the INDIA bloc partners. It was between the Congress and BJP. They are also contesting the Delhi elections under a secret pact," Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema said, cautioning Delhi voters against voting for the Congress.

While no Punjab Congress leader has publicly reacted to AAP's allegations, many said that the Chandigarh results were "revenge" for the Amritsar Municipal Corporation elections where AAP secured the mayor, senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor posts despite having fewer councillors than the Congress. "AAP got its mayor elected in Amritsar municipal elections despite Congress being in majority. They subverted the Constitution of India and democracy,"



a Congress leader said, speaking on the condition of anonymity. On Tuesday, Congress had submitted a memorandum to Punjab Governor Gulab Chand Kataria seeking a re-election saying that AAP's Jatinder Singh Bhatia's election as Amritsar mayor was a "murder of democracy" as Congress had won 41 seats in the 85-member House and had the support of four other councillors. Speaking outside the Punjab Raj Bhawan, Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa had said that he would oppose the AAP-Congress alliance for the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation elections for what the AAP had done to Congress in Amritsar. Later, Congress had moved the Punjab and Haryana High Court seeking a re-election.AAP senior spokesperson Neel Garg, however, dismissed the allegations and blamed the Congress for violating coalition dharma. "What have we done in Amritsar? What is the revenge that they had to take? We do not have an alliance with Congress in Punjab. We were able to prove a majority in the Amritsar MC elections. The Congress was divided. It was not able to give its mayoral candidate. Our candidate was elected. That is why the high court also did not give them any relief. In Chandigarh, they had an alliance with us. But they cross-voted. They did not stand by us. On the other hand, we stood by their senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor candidates. They won,"

Unemployed youth protest against Congress government at Osmania University campus

Hyderabad: With a slogan 'Congress party Hatao, Job Calendar Bachao', unemployed youth vowed to campaign against the grand-old party in the ensuing MLC and local body elections in the State. "The unemployed youth will ensure that Congress does not get a single vote in the local body elections as it failed to release the job notifications as assured," said Mothilal Naik, leader of OU JAC. The unemployed youth, along with Osmania University (OU) students, staged a protest demanding the State government release the job calendar and recruitment notifications at OU Main Library here on Friday. The protesters wanted notifications for 12,000 VRO, 1,000 deputy surveyor, 10,000 power sector, DSC and Group — I, II and III vacancies. Stating that they were silent due to SC sub-classification and BC reser-

vation implementation issue, the Naik said the unemployed youth would now be staging indefinite rallies, demanding the release of job notifications.

The Congress government cannot be trusted as it went back on its assurance on job notifications to unemployed youth, he said, adding that "Why should the unemployed vote for Congress when it did not issue the job notifications? Rallies will be conducted in Ashok Nagar, Dilsukhnagar and all libraries in the State. This is a peaceful protest, which will be held until the government issues notifications," he said. Criticising the State government's decision to enhance universities teaching staff superannuation age to 65 years, Naik demanded immediate revocation of the decision.

Serbian anti-graft protesters march to northern city, plan to block bridges



GNS News Agency, Feb 4

Hundreds of students protesting graft they blame for 15 deaths in a building collapse marched (January 31, 2025) through Serbia to the northern city of Novi Sad where they plan to block three Danube River bridges this weekend. They received a hero's welcome from fellow students and thousands of local residents in Novi Said after arriving on foot in their two-day, 80 km (50-mile) journey from the Serbian capital of Belgrade. A small red carpet had been placed on one of the bridges across the Danube that the students crossed as they entered the city.

The bridge blockade planned for Saturday (February 1, 2025) will mark three months since a huge concrete construction at the railway station collapsed in Novi Sad on Nov. 1, leaving 15 people dead. Carrying wreaths with the names of the 15 victims, the students from Novi Sad and Belgrade on Friday (January 31, 2025) evening together headed toward the station building to honour the people who died in the accident. Many people cried when the students from Belgrade arrived, reflecting high emotions over the accident and the continuing struggle for justice. What started as a protest against suspected corruption in construction contracts has developed into the most serious challenge in years to the country's powerful populist leader, President Aleksandar Vucic

Meanwhile in Belgrade, a driver rammed a car into a silent protest Friday (January 31, 2025), injuring two women who work as doctors at a nearby psychiatric institution. Media reports say both hit their heads on the pavement and are being examined. The incident, the third of its kind in weeks, happened in downtown Belgrade during 15 minutes of silence observed daily throughout Serbia, at the same time as the canopy collapsed in Novi Sad. A witness, Dr. Elena Matkovic, told N1 television that the driver first reversed his car for a short distance, and the protesters thought he would turn around, away from the blockade, but instead, he accelerated forward, slamming into people. "We

really did not expect that he would drive through a crowd of people," she told N1. "If you are asking me whether we will stop (the blockades,) we most certainly will not. This is not the moment to stop." Protesters have repeatedly faced attacks, including on students, with drivers ramming cars into demonstrations on two previous occasions. Two people were seriously injured.

Along the way to Novi Sad on Friday, (January 31, 2025) the students were greeted by cheering citizens who honked their car horns or came out of their homes to offer food and drinks. Hundreds more people on bicycles headed separately toward Novi Sad on Friday (January 31, 2025) while Belgrade's taxi drivers said they would come too and give the marchers a lift home When the students reached the town of Indjija on Thursday (January 30, 2025), roughly halfway along their 80 km (50-mile) route, they were welcomed with fireworks and cheers from residents.

Although most of them spent the night out in the open in a soccer field, the freezing temperatures did not dampen their desire for major change in the corruption-ridden Balkan state. Nevena Vecerinac, a student, said she hoped the protesters' demands that include the punishment of all those responsible for the rail station tragedy will be fulfilled. "We need support from all people. With this energy and mood I hope we can do it, otherwise there will be no brighter future." said Luka Arsenovic, another student marcher. Many in Serbia believe that the collapse of the overhang at the train station was essentially caused by government corruption in a large infrastructure project with Chinese state companies. Critics believe graft led to a sloppy job during the reconstruction of the Novi Sad train station, poor overdisrespect of existing regulations. Monthslong demonstrations have already forced the resignation of Serbia's prime minister Milos Vucevic this week, along with various concessions from authorities which were ignored by the protesters who say that is not enough. Mr. Vucic and other officials have shifted from accusing the students of working with foreign powers to oust him from power to offering concessions to the students while issuing veiled threats against them saving that his supporters' "patience is running out." He said on Friday (January 31, 2025) that "it is clear that the country is under attack both from the outside and from the inside." "We will know how to fight, we will be flexible, we will seek conversation and dialogue (with the protesters), but we will know how to save the country," he added. The strength and determination of the protesters have caught many by surprise in a country where hundreds of thousands of young people have emigrated, looking for opportunities elsewhere.

Donald Trump says birthright citizenship was for children of slaves, not for world to 'pile' into US

GNS News Agency, Feb 4

President Donald Trump has said that birthright citizenship was primarily intended for the children of slaves and not for the whole world to "come in and pile" into the U.S..On the very first day of his inauguration, Trump issued an executive order against birthright citizenship, which was struck down by a federal court in Seattle the next day. Trump has said that he would appeal against it. On Thursday, he exuded confidence that the Supreme Court would rule in his favour.

"Birthright citizenship was, if you look back when this was passed and made, that was meant for the children of slaves. This was not meant for the whole world to come in and pile into the United States of America." Trump told reporters in the Oval Office of the White House. "Everybody coming in, and totally unqualified people with perhaps unqualified children. This wasn't meant for that." he said. Asserting that it was meant for the children of slaves," he said it was a "very good and noble" thing to do. "I'm in favour of that 100 per cent. But it wasn't meant for the entire world to occupy the United States," Trump said. "I just think that we'll end up winning that in the Supreme Court. I think we're going to win that case. I look forward to winning it." "At that level, we're the only country in the world that does this," he said. Early this week, a group of Republican Senators introduced a bill in the US Senate to restrict birthright citizenship to the children of illegal immigrants and non-im-



migrants on temporary visas. According to Senators Lindsey Graham, Ted Cruz and Katie Britt, who introduced the bill, the exploitation of birthright citizenship is a major pull factor for illegal immigration and a weakness for national security. The U.S. is one of only 33 countries in the world with no restrictions on birthright citizenship, they said. The Center for Immigration Studies estimates that in 2023, there were 2,25,000 to 2,50,000 births to illegal immigrants, amounting to close to seven per cent of births in the US. The Birthright Citizenship Act of 2025 specifies who can receive citizenship by virtue of their birth in the United States, including children born to at least one parent who is either a citizen or national of the U.S., a lawful permanent resident of the U.S., or an alien performing active service in the armed forces.

Exorbitant fees in private medical colleges denies access to medical education for less privileged: Economic Survey

GNS News Agency, Feb 4

Skyrocketing fees for undergraduate medical education remains a considerable challenge that denies the opportunity to make the MBBS degree accessible and affordable for students from less privileged backgrounds, states the Economic Survey 2024-25. Since financial year 2018-19, the number of medical colleges grew from 499 to 648 in FY 2023 to 780 in FY 2025, during which time the MBBS seats increased from 70,012 to 96,077 in FY 2023 to 1,18,137 in FY 2025 and post-graduate seats increased from 39,583 to 64,059 in FY 2023 to 73,157 in FY 2025.

Despite the National Medical Commission (NMC) issuing guidelines for determination of fees and all other charges in respect of 50% of seats in private medical institutions and deemed to be universities, fees remain high ranging from ?60 lakh to ?1 crore or even more in the private sector, which holds 48% of MBBS seats, the survey notes. The number of candidates aspiring to study MBBS has increased consistently over the years, from around 16 lakh in 2019 to around 24 lakh in 2024. "The consequence is that every year thousands of students go abroad especially those with lower fees such as China, Russia, Ukraine, Philippines, Bangladesh," the survey further states. These aspirants invest multiple years in repeated attempts at exams — the NEET-UG before taking admission, the Foreign Medical Graduates (FMG) Exam on completing the course and then complete compulsory internships of 12 months in India. "FMGs in China (during COVID lockdowns) and Ukraine (as the conflict escalated), had to return to India dropping their education and faced uncertain prospects," the survey states. The very low pass percentage of FMGs in the qualifying exam for practising in India (16.65% of 2,02,385 students) indicates sub-par quality of medical education abroad including lack of clinical training. "As policy intervention to dissuade medical education abroad is crafted, keeping costs is India within reasonable limits is

essential," the survey points out. The availability of opportu-

nities for medical education is geographically skewed, apparent from the fact that 51% of undergraduate seats and 49% of postgraduate seats are in the southern states, the survey says.

There is also a skewed distribution of seats in favour of specialisations like radiology, dermatology, gynaecology, cardiology while specialities like psychiatry, geriatrics, etc., are neglected. Also, the survey points out that market estimates indicate that remuneration of fresh graduates is around ?5 lakh per year and senior doctors earn between ?12.5 and ?18.4 lakh per annum in cities.

"This is almost similar or lower to the packages that are available to other graduates at the entry level. The attraction towards the medical profession, as seen from the consistently increasing number of aspirants, seems to arise more from the social status attached to it rather than its earning potential," the survey says. The survey points out that doctors from India are already migrating to greener pastures. "The OECD countries reported in 2021 that there were close to 19,000 physicians from India in their workforce and migration in 2021 alone was over 2,800 physicians," the survey says. The Economic Survey has stated that while the National Medical Commission (NMC) has put in place measures such as CCTV cameras and an Aadhaar-based attendance system in medical colleges, issues like shortage of faculty, ghost faculty, low patient load in hospitals, etc., continue to affect the quality of training. The survey has stated that there may be a need to revisit the incentivedisincentive and design of regulatory measures to improve compliance, reduce costs and prevent associated rentseeking, with regards to NMC and revamping the medical education system in India. "The success of any policy, including regulatory ones, lies in its execution. If outcomes do not align with our goals or if there are unexpected effects, it is essential to take a step back and refine these policies to make them more meaningful and impactful," the

When Indian economy opened to the world



GNS News Agency, Feb 4

Quoting French novelist Victor Hugo, the Finance Minister Manmohan Singh presenting his maiden budget in July 1991 held, "No power on earth can stop an idea whose time has come". Explaining the reference to India becoming a major economic power in the world thereon, he stated, "Let the whole world hear it loud and clear. India is now awake. We shall prevail. We shall overcome." Though having helped prepare several budgets in the past, this was Mr. Singh's maiden budget presentation. The landmark budget, which later came to be acronymic for its broad features: liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation; was presented following a period of political instability furthered by an economic turmoil. Former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated in May 1991. Other than the ensuing political instability, India's economy was reeling under severe stress owing to accentuation of fiscal imbalances, inflation and weakening international confidence. It had foreign exchange reserves to meet its two weeks' requirement for imports. Foreign lending institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank had called for drastic measures.

Congress stalwart P.V. Narasimha Rao's accession to the Prime Minister's office in June 1991 had greatly enthused stock markets. According to The Hindu's reportage, the incoming prime minister's accession gave rise to a feeling in industry that he would adopt measures to improve India's balance of payments position as a top priority. Mr. Rao appointed Manmohan Singh, then an academic with no legislative experience, as his finance minister to help address the crisis. About a month into his tenure, Mr. Singh presented the budget that relaxed measures related to licensing, deregulation of domestic industries and paved the way for foreign direct investment (FDI) into the country.

Opening Indian markets to the world Liberalising the policy regime to allow FDI into the country, the finance minister allowed permissible foreign equity in high priority industries up to 51%. . The provision for increased foreign equity holding was also extended to trading companies engaged in export activities. Further on the liberalisation front, the finance minister proposed constituting a special board to negotiate with international firms and approve FDI in "selected areas". He explained, "This would be a special regime to attract substantial investment that would provide access to high technology and to world markets". Many of Mr. Singh's colleagues - both political and executive, were unsure about the advent of FDI into the ecosystem. However, the finance minister went ahead and sought that 'rather than fear, one should welcome foreign investment'. Placing his confidence in Indian entrepreneurs, he held that direct FDI would provide access to capital, technology and mar-

Exercise in vain: Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao with Manmohan Singh at a function in New Delhi. While getting elected to the Rajya Sabha, Singh had declared that he was a tenant in a house in Guwahati. Before his election, he was not an ordinary resident of Assam. This point was the crux of the litigation at the Madras High Court. The Hindu Archives The Hindu Archives Exercise in vain: Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao with Manmohan Singh at a function in New Delhi. While getting elected to the Rajya Sabha, Singh had declared that he was a tenant in a house in Guwahati. Before his election, he was not an ordinary resident of Assam. This point was the crux of the litigation at the Madras High Court. At the centre of it all however was his assertion that, "Cost, efficiency and quality would

begin to receive the attention they deserve."

The Budget offered up to 20% of the existing govern-

ment equity in select public sector undertakings (PSUs) to mutual funds and investment institutionsand the employees in these firms. The proposed measures endeavoured to raise resources, encourage wider public participation and promote greater accountability (of PSUs). The finance minister had observed that the public sector has not been able to generate the envisioned internal surpluses on a "large enough scale". Thus, he argued, "It has therefore become necessary to take effective measures to make the public sector an engine of growth rather than an absorber of national savings without adequate return". Mr. Singh further observed in his budget speech that barriers to entry and limits on growth in the size of firms, had often proliferated conditions for licensing and an increase in the extent of monopoly. "This has put shackles on segments of Indian industry and made them serve the interests of producers but not pay adequate attention to the interests of consumers," he told the house, stressing about the need for reduction of costs, upgradation of technology and improvement of quality standards.Mr. Singh, in his budget address, recalled late former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's prior assurance to the house about setting up a dedicated body for a "healthy growth" of capital markets, for protecting the rights of investors, prevent trading malpractices and orderly functioning of the stock exchanges and the larger securities industry. To this effect, he proposed setting up of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI). It was designated to administer the relevant provisions of the Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act, and the Companies Act. The finance minister argued that transferring the powers, presently with the Controller of Capital Issues and the government, to an independent body would provide for effective regulation, promotion and monitoring of stock exchanges in the country. . Mr. Singh also proposed opening the mutual fund market to entry of private sector. SEBI was also to regulate this market.

Modest reactions post-budget Post-budget, markets however, were not as enthused, as may have been expected. The BSE index fluctuated in wide limits in the post-budget session – rising to 1,481.95 points from 1,459.66 at the close of the pre-budget session.

This was before it declined to 1,465.94. It eventually closed at its highest that year at 1,485.76, about 4.65% or 66.45 points higher. The reforms were largely viewed favourably, however, apprehensions existed about the government being able to supply the required foreign exchange resources for importing plant and machinery. Concerns also existed about the government's willingness to explore easing of curbs about the use of bank funds for reviving economic activity. The Union Finance Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, giving final touches to the budget at his North Block office. Image for representational purposes only.

The Union Finance Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, giving final touches to the budget at his North Block office. Image for representational purposes only. Global financial institution World Bank, later in a report, observed that the "main strengths" of the eight-month budget were its overall deficit reduction target, the concentration on cutting expenditure rather than putting in place ad-hoc tax measures, and the relative protection accorded to investment and social development outlays. For perspective on fiscal deficit, the target introduced in the July 1991 budget pegged it at 6.5% of the GDP – a reduction of more than two percentage points from the 1990-91 actuals.

Much of the deficit reduction was to come from cutting out on non-plan expenditures, notably fertilizer and export subsidies, transfer to states and public enterprises and defence spending. Planners were not on the same wavelength Congress MP and present communications in-charge Jairam Ramesh in his 2016 book 'To the Brink and Back: India's 1991 Story' noted that it was difficult for the then-finance minister to implement his vision on the budget because his finance secretary and the chief economic adviser "were not on the same wavelength as Mr Singh". That is when Mr Singh emphasised the need to avoid "international embarrassment", the Congress MP wrote.

Fake Aadhaar cards used for property registration: Madras High Court directs Sub-Registrar to file police complaint

GNS News Agency, Feb 4

After coming across a shocking incident of four fake Aadhaar cards having been used to register documents related to an immovable property, the Madras High Court has directed the Thiruporur Sub-Registrar in Chengalpattu district to file a police complaint. Justice P.T. Asha also decided to monitor the police investigation since it was a serious case and ordered that the Sub-Registrar also make an entry in the official records regarding the fraudulent registration that had taken place in 2021.

The judge made it clear that the Sub-Registrar must not register any further documents in the future if they traced the title on the basis of the two documents that had been registered fraudulently. The orders were passed on a writ petition filed by C. Subbulakshmi of Kotturpuram in Chennai.C. Suraj, counsel for the petitioner, told the court that the property actually belonged to her husband C. Vivekananda who had purchased it in 1973 and died in 1985. Thereafter, the property devolved on the petitioner and her three children. However, two of her children relinquished their rights. In 2000, a partition deed was executed between the petitioner and her son C. Santhosh Kumar who got 20 cents each. In 2021, the petitioner and her son came to know about a settlement deed and a general power of attorney having been registered with respect to their property.

On inquiry, they found that the documents had been



registered by some impersonators using fake Aadhaar cards. Therefore, Mr. Suraj sought an interim direction to the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) to disclose whether those Aadhaar cards were genuine or not. Accordingly, when the judge called for UIDAI's response, Central government senior standing counsel K. Srinivasa Murthy reported that all the four Aadhaar card numbers that had been used for the property registration were fake and no such numbers were available in the UIDAI's database. "Therefore, it is a clear case of forgery," the judge said, ordering an entry regarding the fraudulent registration in the encumbrance certificate related to the property. She also decided to keep the writ petition pending in order to monitor the investigation and then issue further directions.

Israel expects three hostages to be released at two Gaza locations on Feb 1: Media

Jerusalem: The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) expects that the release of three Israeli hostages planned for Saturday morning will take place at two locations in the Gaza Strip, Israel's state-owned Kan TV News reported. The list of the three people intended for release, sent to Israel on Friday, includes 54-year-old Israeli-French citizen Ofer Calderon, 65-year-old Israeli-American citizen Keith Siegel, and 35-year-old Israeli civilian Yarden Bibas. According to the channel, Siegel is expected to be handed over by Hamas to the Red Cross in Gaza City, while the other two

hostages will be released in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, Xinhua news agency reported.

After being transferred to the Israeli military, the three hostages are scheduled to go to the IDF's Reim base near the Gaza border, where they will meet with family members before being flown by helicopters to hospitals in central Israel. Earlier Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has issued a statement welcoming home the three Israelis who were released from captivity in Gaza — Agam Berger, Arbel Yehud and Gadi Moses.

How to calculate income tax online for FY 2025-26



income tax slabs, union budget 2025Once the new tax slabs are in, you can use Indian Express's income tax calculator to calculate your tax for financial year 2025-26.Income Tax Calculator: As Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman gears up to present her eighth budget under Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led NDA government today, there are rising expectations regarding some form of relief for the taxpayers, especially the vocal "middle class". People are looking forward to the budget anticipating significant changes in the tax slabs under the new tax regime as well as a hike in standard deductions and Section 87A rebates

In the Union Budget 2024-25, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman soon after the NDA was back in the government for the third consecutive term under Modi, the new tax regime got better for the middle class with the increase in standard deduction to Rs 75,000 from Rs 50,000. The tax slabs were also tweaked with those falling in Rs 3-7 lakh income bracket requiring to pay 5 per cent as tax

while those falling in Rs 7-10 lakh and Rs 10-12 lakh to pay 10 and 15 per cent of their income as tax respectively.

But, how to calculate your income tax online?

Once the new tax slabs are in, you can use Indian Express's income tax calculator to calculate your tax for financial year 2025-26. Income Tax Calculator for FY 2025-26: Steps to checkSelect Financial Year: Choose the financial year for which you want your taxes to be calculated. Select Age Group: Select your age group. This is because tax liability as per the government rules is based on the age of the income taxpayer. Proceed to Next Step: Click on 'Go to Next Step'. Enter Taxable Salary (Old Tax Slabs): Enter your taxable salary after deducting exemptions such as HRA, LTA, etc.

Story continues below this Enter Gross Salary (New Tax Slabs): Enter your salary without deducting exemptions such as HRA, LTA, professional tax, etc.Provide Additional Income Details: Enter details such as interest income, rental income, interest paid on a home loan for rented property, and interest paid on a loan for self-occupied property.Income from Digital Assets: For income from digital assets, enter the net income (sale consideration minus the cost of acquisition). This income is taxed at 30% plus applicable surcharge and cess.

Tax Saving Investments (Old Tax Slabs): If you want to calculate your taxes under the old tax slabs, enter your tax-saving investments under sections 80C, 80D, 80G, 80E, and 80TTA.Calculate Tax Liability: Click on 'Calculate' to get your tax liability. You will also see a comparison of your pre-budget and post-budget tax liability under both the old and new tax slabs.

Production of extra long staple fibre cotton to get boost: Nirmala Sitharaman

Nirmala sitharamanUnion Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman upon her arrival at the Parliament House complex to present the ?Union Budget 2025-26?, in New Delhi, Saturday, Feb. 1, 2025. Sitharaman on Saturday will present her eighth consecutive Budget, which she will deliver from a digital tablet enclosed in a traditional 'bahi-khata' style pouch.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday during the Union Budget announced a 5 year mission focused on improving the production of cotton, particularly extra long staple (ELS) cotton. India is highly import dependent on ELS cotton fibres that are longer than 35 mm and are known for its use in making high-quality fabrics. "The best of science and technology support will be provided to the farmers. This will help in increasing farmers income and ensure steady supply of quality cotton for rejuvenating India's traditional textile sector," Sitharaman said. The World Bank in September last year had said that India's share in global exports of labour-intensive sectors such as apparel, leather, textiles, and footwear has declined. Meanwhile, countries like Bangladesh, Vietnam, Poland, Germany, and France



have managed to increase their global export share in major job-creating sectors by up to 2 per cent between 2015 to 2022. India's textile and garment exports have remained stagnant at around \$35 billion, while Vietnam and Bangladesh have gained market share, bolstered by free trade agreements (FTAs) and Least Developed Country (LDC) status, which provide a 10-15 per cent duty concession in the Western countries.

Fiscal prudence, monetary policy easing & deregulation as mantras for Viksit Bharat

Fiscal prudence, monetary policy, Viksit Bharat mantras, Budget, Union Budget, Union Budget 2025, Domestic stock markets, global stock markets, foreign portfolio investment, BSE benchmark Sensex, Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), Economic Survey 2024-25, Economic Survey, Economic Survey 2024, annual Economic Survey, Indian economy, Indian economic growth, Viksit Bharat, Indian express business, business news, current affairsOn the growth front, the Survey states that to achieve our ambition of Viksit Bharat by 2047, the GDP needs to grow annually at 8% in real terms over the next decade. Economic Survey 2024-2025, presented about six months after the previous Survey, provides updates on the economic front, reflecting the pace of change in the world economy over such a short period.

On the external front, the Survey indicates the resilience of the Indian economy due to healthy forex reserves as well FPI inflows remaining net positive even though there have been large outflows recently. The Survey underlines the trade challenges faced by the global economy, and consequently, the Indian economy, owing to conflicts impacting movement in the Red Sea, besides other geo-political confrontations. It also outlines the challenges posed to our export growth ambitions by non-tariff measures and the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) as well as other measures imposed by our major trading partners. While India's exports have demonstrated robust growth despite these measures, the Survey highlights the need for diversification of exports as well as efficiencies to bring down the cost of exports and remain competitive. While the net FDI into India has been much smaller compared to the previous year, the strong performance in services exports and robust remittances have supported our balance of payments

The Survey also points out the risk of increasing our current account deficit and exhorts us to make FDI more attractive, with an emphasis on tax certainty for investors through advance pricing agreements. It makes a case for more ease of doing business to get higher efficiency out of investments in the face of slowing FDI.On the inflation front, the Survey presents a detailed analysis of price fluctuations of a few food products such as onions, tomatoes and pulses. It argues that the volatility in prices is owing to extreme weather events. The Survey points out that core inflation (inflation of non-food items in the inflation basket) has cooled down. The price of commodities in India's import basket is also expected to come down. This, combined with a likely favourable monsoon leading to cooling of food prices, should aid in inflation moving to the RBI's targeted levels. The Survey hints that the monetary policy would have very little effect on taming inflation that is linked to food price volatility and suggests measures like high-yield and droughtresistant farming as well as price monitoring and supplyside interventions to address food prices – a gentle nudge to the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).

On the growth front, the Survey states that to achieve our ambition of Viksit Bharat by 2047, the GDP needs to grow annually at 8% in real terms over the next decade. It compares the nominal growth rate projections by the IMF in its World Economic Outlook and argues that the IMF is expecting only 0.5% annual depreciation in the rupee against the US dollar till FY30 compared to over 3% annual depreciation that it has experienced over the last three decades. Hence, it expects faster growth in USD terms than achieved in the past. The Survey acknowledges that to be



able to do so the investment rate has to increase by 4 percentage points from 31% to 35%, manufacturing has to be boosted and investments have to be undertaken in AI, robotics and biotechnology. It also mentions the need to create over 7 million non-farm jobs, to develop world-class infrastructure at scale and with speed, and of course to skill and enable the workforce to take up these jobs by improving the quality of our education. It acknowledges the role of MSMEs in the growth journey and calls for the regulatory burden to be brought down so that MSMEs have incentives to grow and not stay dwarfs.

The Survey exhorts states to look at not necessarily the best practices but to go for the 'minimum necessary. maximum feasible' option for regulation. The Economic Survey clearly outlines the imperatives for India for it to achieve its aspirations to be a Viksit Bharat. It outlines the need for efficiencies in manufacturing and trade, deregulation by governments at the Centre and more so at the state level, investments in health and education to harness the power of demography, diversification and efficiency in the agricultural sector, as well as the need for adaptation measures in the face of climate change. The message for fiscal policy is to continue on the path of prudence and provide higher allocations to productive expenditure in infrastructure, health, education, technology and agriculture. The nudge to monetary policymakers is to look at inflation with a different lens and not be captive to the vagaries of food inflation

Face 100 per cent tariff if you attempt to replace US dollar: Donald Trump warns BRICS

Washington: President Donald Trump has once again warned that he will impose 100 per cent tariffs against BRICS nations if they attempt to replace the US dollar in international trade, telling them to go and find "another sucker nation."BRICS is an intergovernmental organisation of ten countries — Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates. "The idea that the BRICS countries are trying to move away from the dollar, while we stand by and watch, is OVER," Trump said on Thursday in a post on Truth Social, a social media platform owned by him. Trump said he wanted a commitment from these "seemingly hostile" countries that they would neither create a new BRICS currency nor back any other currency to replace the "mighty" US dollar. "Or they will face 100 per cent tariffs, and should expect to say goodbye to selling into the wonderful US economy," Trump said.

Why you should eat your meals in the sun



Ever noticed how food seems to taste better during a picnic under the sun? Or how dining by a sunny window instantly lifts your mood? It's not just in your head—eating with natural light streaming in may be one of the most underrated health hacks.

Holistic health and wellness coach Isha Lall points to

growing research linking sunlight exposure during meals to better digestion, hormonal balance, and overall well-being. Here are some key benefits of eating in natural light:

- 1. Improved Circadian Rhythm: Sunlight exposure strengthens your circadian rhythm, the body's internal clock, which regulates digestion, metabolism and sleep. A study in Nature Reviews Endocrinology (2019) highlights that eating in sync with natural light improves nutrient absorption and reduces the risk of metabolic diseases like Type 2 diabetes.
- 2. Hormonal Balance: Natural sunlight boosts serotonin (feel-good hormone) production, which not only uplifts your mood but also helps regulate hunger hormone ghrelin that appetite, and leptin that signals fullness. A study published in the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism (2014) found that serotonin increases with bright light exposure, potentially curbing overeating and indulgence.
- 3. Vitamin D and Metabolism: While sunlight isn't directly consumed, exposure during meals can increase your body's Vitamin D synthesis. Vitamin D plays a crucial role in calcium absorption, immune health, and even gut microbiota balance.

Pratiksha Kadam, chief dietitian, Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, Mumbai, said that when sunlight hits your body, it enhances the production of vitamin D, and this, in turn, increases calcium absorption and improves bone density. "You biologically perform better during the day, so when you eat in the sun, it aids your body in optimal digestive enzyme output. Studies have found that eating in the daytime helps with blood sugar control, resulting in weight management and better metabolic health," she said.

'I peed and did not even realise it': Chhavi Hussein reveals the surprising consequence of postpartum overexertion

Despite her body's exhaustion and the need for recovery, Chhavi Hussein, eager to get back to her fitness routine, decided to hit the gym soon after delivering her baby. Despite her body's exhaustion and the need for recovery, Chhavi Hussein, eager to get back to her fitness routine, decided to hit the gym soon after delivering her baby. (Source: Instagram/Chhavi Hussein) Postpartum recovery is a critical phase where the body undergoes significant healing and adjustments.

Actor Chhavi Hussein recently opened up about her challenging experience with normal delivery and the physical toll it took on her body. She said on her podcast, "I keep telling a lot of mothers ki jab aapki normal delivery hoti hai. because you are pushing out a baby, you're putting everything in your power to push the baby out and I had a very tough normal delivery." She shared how she had to summon every ounce of strength to push through the difficult 45-minute labour, describing the moment as physically taxing, with her insides feeling "very low" afterward. Despite her body's exhaustion and the need for recovery, Hussein, eager to get back to her fitness routine, decided to hit the gym soon after delivering her baby. "Aur main chali gayi gym aur maine skipping karna shuru kar dia. Toh meri mummy horrified... baaki sab thik hai, skipping mat karna (she said)." Her mother had warned her that her body was still in a fragile state, but Hussein was resolute. She decided to go skipping at the gym again and her decision led to an unexpected and challenging experience. "As embarrassing as it is, I had an incontinence episode where I peed and I did not even realise it."

Many women, eager to return to pre-pregnancy routines, may unknowingly strain their bodies and encounter complications. This raises essential questions about safe postpartum practices and how women can balance fitness with recovery. Common physical changes in the body after a normal delivery

Dr Nancy Nagpal, consultant gynaecologist at Salubritas Medcentre, tells indianexpress.com, "After a normal delivery, common physical changes include vaginal discharge (lochia), which can be dark red, pink, or brown, and may have a foul smell if concerning; breast changes, such as soreness, engorgement, and size/colour alterations; perineal pain due to stretching; temporary hair loss;



stretch marks on the hips, thighs, and abdomen; weight loss; uterine involution, where the uterus returns to its normal size; and irregular bleeding."These changes typically take three to four months to recover, though some may persist for up to eight months. If symptoms are prolonged or accompanied by heavy bleeding or other issues, it's important to consult a gynaecologist.

Why is overexertion potentially harmful during postpartum recovery?

Overexertion, Dr Nagpal notes, especially intense physical activity soon after delivery, can be harmful because the body is still in a healing phase. After childbirth, there is hormonal imbalance, and bleeding may vary depending on physical activity. Engaging in aggressive physical activities can increase bleeding and strain the body. "The body undergoes both internal and external changes, and pushing it too hard too soon can hinder the healing process. Only after the body has healed fully should one consider resuming physical activity," the doctor stresses. Story continues below this adTypes of exercises or activities are recommended for women in the early postpartum periodSome recommended exercises by Dr Nagpal include: Yoga and stretching exercises: These should be done under supervision, and they can help promote flexibility and gentle strengthening of the body. Walking: A daily walk for about 20 minutes is a great way to stay active and improve circulation without overstraining the body. Mild stretching: Light stretching exercises for about 20 minutes each day are beneficial for regaining flexibility and strength.

'Avoid eating out, especially paneer, cheese and rice': Doctor warns as Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS) cases continue to spike

A doctor has issued a warning about the dangers of consuming contaminated food and water, particularly paneer, cheese, and rice, amid a rise in Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) cases. The rare but serious neurological disorder, which can lead to muscle weakness and even paralysis, has been linked to bacterial infections. Dr Priyanka Sehrawat, MD Medicine and DM Neurology at AIIMS Delhi, has highlighted gastroenteritis as a major trigger for GBS, cautioning against the dangers of consuming contaminated food and water. In the caption of the video posted on Instagram, she wrote, "One major cause is gastroenteritis due to a bacteria Campylobacter jejuni. Although there are many other causes, this is the one that you all should be aware of because this is one cause that we can avoid."Dr Sehrawat also stressed, "Avoid eating out, especially paneer, cheese and rice as they are more prone to having bacterial growth if not taken care of properly.'

So, how can contaminated food and water contribute to the development of Guillain-Barré Syndrome?

Dr Pranav Honnavara Srinivasan, consultant surgical gastroenterologist at Fortis Hospitals, tells indianexpress.com, "Contaminated food and water can be a major trigger for Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) because they can harbour harmful bacteria, particularly Campylobacter jejuni, which is strongly linked to the condition. When a person consumes contaminated food or drinks unclean water, they may develop a gastrointestinal infection, leading to symptoms such as diarrhea, nausea, and abdominal cramps. While most people recover from such infections without complications, in some cases, the immune system reacts abnormally." He adds, "The bacteria contain molecules that mimic certain components of nerve cells, which can confuse the body's defense mechanisms. As the immune system fights off the infection, it may mistakenly attack the nervous system, leading to inflammation and damage to the peripheral nerves. This can result in muscle weakness, numbness, and in severe cases, paralysis - hallmarks of GBS."Most effective ways to prevent bacterial contamination in foods like paneer, cheese,



and ricePreventing bacterial contamination in foods like paneer, cheese, and rice requires strict hygiene measures, stresses Dr Srinivasan. "Dairy-based products such as paneer and cheese are particularly prone to contamination if made from unpasteurised milk or stored improperly. It is important to ensure that these products come from reliable sources that follow proper hygiene protocols. Refrigeration is crucial, as bacteria multiply rapidly at room temperature. Consuming fresh paneer and cheese and avoiding those sold in open markets where hygiene cannot be guaranteed can help reduce the risk of infection," he states. Rice is another high-risk food if not stored properly. Dr Srinivasan explains that when cooked rice is left at room temperature for too long, it becomes a breeding ground for Bacillus cereus, a bacterium that can cause food poisoning. "It is advisable to refrigerate leftover rice promptly and reheat it thoroughly before consumption. Eating rice from unregulated street vendors, where food may have been left exposed for long hours, should be avoided.

Dr Srinivasan informs, "Other foods that pose a high risk of bacterial contamination when eaten outside include raw salads, cut fruits, and undercooked meat and seafood. These foods may be washed with unclean water or stored in unhygienic conditions, increasing the likelihood of foodborne infections.

Ranga Reddy **WEDNESDAY 5 FEBRUARY 2025 INDIAN CHRONICLE**

Sooraj Barjatya got calls for finding the right 'muhurat' for weddings after Hum Aapke Hain Koun's success: 'How would I know?'



Sooraj Barjatya first shot to fame after his debut directorial Maine Pyar Kia but it was after Hum Aapke Hain Koun's release that he became a force to be reckoned with. While his first film was a love story, his second film looked more like a wedding video full of traditions, rituals and songs. In a recent interview, Sooraj recalled that when the film released, it initially received a lukewarm response from the audience. He also shared that during the shoot, Renuka Shahane would accompany him to learn the ropes of filmmaking and her curious nature sometimes bothered those who were working at the studio.

Renuka had a significant role in the film playing Pooja, whose death triggers the climax of the film. Sooraj said, "I up Renuka from her home because she wanted to learn the process of filmmaking." He added, "In the morning, she would stand in the middle of the set without any make-up. So the cleaners there would get annoyed and chase her away. 'Hato yaha se humein safai karna hai'. But, as soon as she would get dressed in the bhabhi attire with all the makeup, the same cleaners would treat her with so much respect. Such was the power of the bhabhi character," he shared Digital Commentary

Sooraj shared that such was the success of the film that people would sometimes call him to ask for muhurats for their family functions. The filmmaker shared, "I started to receive calls where people would ask me for muhurat. Even today, when I attend any wedding... they look at me like, 'Who will put the varmala first? The girl or the guy?' And I am like, 'How would I know?' I find these things very hilarious and sometimes quite embarrassing as well. Even lyric writers used to call me and say, 'Iss function ka koi gaana dedo'."Sooraj also recalled how the film picked up after a few days of its release. "The first five days of the film, I didn't get any reaction from people. The response was quite lukewarm. One of the reasons behind it was it had about fourteen songs, later we reduced about 2.5 songs. It was a musical and people weren't prepared for it. The film didn't have a structure but moved in a flow."Hum Apke Hain Koun starred actors Salman Khan, Madhuri Dixit, Renuka Shahane, Mohnish Bahl, Anupam Kher, and Alok Nath in

Tanuja was scared that Kajol would end up killing sister during their fights, recalls Tanishaa: 'She had a very bad temper'

Like many other siblings, Tanishaa Mukerji too shares a special bond with her sister Kajol. And while the sisters cherish each other today, things weren't always so smooth between them. In a recent interview, Tanishaa shared that her mother Tanuja banned the two sisters from fighting physically as she was scared that Kajol would kill Tanishaa.

In an interaction with Hauterrfly, Tanishaa was asked about her childhood memories and shared how she was raised by a bunch of strong women. "My great-grandmother raised me. My mom would go for work. Her brother and his 2 daughters were also used to stay with us. So, I grew up with three sisters," shared Tanishaa. When asked about her fights with sister Kajol during their childhood, Tanishaa recalled that mom Tanuja was "scared" for her younger daughter's life. "Kajol and I used to fight a lot. She is older than me in age as well as in size. She is physically bigger than me," she said and added, "My mother used to get scared that Kajol would kill me one day. She had a very bad temper when she was a kid. My mom used to be very scared."Tanishaa went on to add, "My mom made a rule that we can fight without touching each other. I think it was a very good thing that Mummy did for us. Because of that, Kajol and I developed a strong bond of sisterhood for each other."Tanishaa made her debut in the movies in the early 2000s but got people's attention when she appeared with Uday Chopra in the 2005 YRF's film Neal n Nikki. Tanishaa also participated in Bigg Boss 7 as a contestant and



emerged as the first runner-up. She also participated on

Shahid Kapoor film might not beat opening day numbers of Tere Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya



With Deva, Shahid Kapoor is back to the big screen with an action-packed film for the first time in a few years. The movie, directed by Rosshan Andrrews, is inspired by his own 2010 Malayalam film, Mumbai Police, headlined by Prithviraj Sukumaran. According to trade website Sacnilk, the movie was expected to make around Rs 4-5 crore on the opening day. However, the early estimates for the morning, afternoon, and evening shows suggest that the film might actually struggle to hit the mark. As of 9 pm, the film

is expected to make around Rs 2.82 crore with the film's prospects hinging on word-of-mouth, and the night show reservations. Deva only managed to have a 5.87% occupancy in the morning show, with the afternoon and evening shows faring slightly better at 9.18% and 9.77%, respectively. However, it is to be noted that these are just estimates, and the numbers might get quite a boost when the

Deva could make considerable inroads in the reservations for the night shows, and the weekend shows to end up with a much better figure at the box-office. Interestingly, Shahid Kapoor's previous theatrical release, Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya, ended up with a decent opening day number of Rs 6.7 crore in the domestic market. However, considering the trend, Deva might not match the opening numbers of the recent Akshay Kumar-Veer Pahariya film, Sky Force, which became the highest-opening Hindi film of 2025. Other movies that make the top 3 list, include Emergency and Fateh, which made Rs 2.5 crore, and Rs 2.4 crore, respectively. It does seem like Deva would zoom into second position in this list. But it is interesting how, despite the seemingly whirlwind promotions, and the success of the music of Deva, the film could only manage a 8.27% occupancy in the country.

Apart from Shahid Kapoor, Deva also stars Pooja Hegde, Kubbra Sait, and Pavail Gulati in pivotal roles. With background score by Jakes Bejoy and songs by the Malayalam composer and Vishal Mishra, Deva is shot by Amit Roy, and edited by Sreekar Prasad.

Naga Chaitanya on Aamir Khan being a lucky charm for his films with Sai Pallavi: 'He exudes so much positivity'

Naga Chaitanya, who has had a mixed run at the boxoffice with his recent set of films, is hoping his upcoming film Thandel gives his career a much-needed shot in the arm. The movie, directed by Chandoo Mondeti, also stars Sai Pallavi, and it marks the reunion of the actors after the 2021 film, Love Story. In a press event in Mumbai, Naga revealed that Thandel is not just a reunion of himself with Sai, but an interesting third person... Aamir Khan. Aamir, who was present at the launch of the Hindi trailer of Thandel, backed by Allu Aravind and Bunny Vas, has worked with Naga in the 2022 movie, Laal Singh Chaddha. Talking about the Aamir connect with his films with Sai, Naga said, "I am not a huge believer of sentiments, but to draw an interesting parallel... after watching the trailer of Love Story, Aamir sir called me to ask if he could come for the launch event. When I said that Chiranjeevi garu has already been announced as the chief guest, etc... Aamir sir said that he just wanted to come and enjoy the event. That gave us so much positivity, and the film was a huge

success." Connecting the dots, the actor added, "And now, Aamir sir is here again for the trailer launch of Thandel, which stars Pallavi and me. It is a truly magical moment." Underlining his confidence in the film, and how Aamir might just be a lucky charm for them, the Premam actor said, "We do have the confidence that the film would be a success, but I do think, going forward, whenever I work with Pallavi, I will have to call Aamir sir for the trailer release event." Naga Chaitanya also reminisced about the time he spent with Aamir Khan on the sets of Laal Singh Chaddha, and said, "Those six months of shoot had a huge positive impact on my life. I learnt a lot as an actor, and as a human being."Thandel, which also features Naren and Karunakaran in pivotal roles, has cinematography by Shamdat and music by Devi Sri Prasad. The film is set to hit the screens on February 7, a week before the release of Junaid Khan-Khushi Kapoor's Loveyapa. Interestingly, Aamir is also backing Sai Pallavi's much-awaited Hindi debut, which stars

Companion movie review: Sophie Thatcher, Jack Quaid film goes around in circles



done this film a world of good, rather than how it tends to go around in circles once the big reveal is out. The Sophie Thatcher and Jack Quaid-starrer operates at multiple levels – as a science fiction, a horror, even a sly commentary on gender equations.

Must give this to writer-director Drew Hancock: You won't see the twist that forms the premise of this film coming, unless you have been watching the trailer too closely. Aptly acted and pacily filmed by Hancock, Companion operates at multiple levels - as a science fiction, a horror, even a sly commentary on gender equations and expectations. It also keeps throwing surprises your way. However, there is a reason that too much of a good thing is bad. So caught up is Companion in the cleverness of its idea that it never allows its characters (Sophie Thatcher as Iris, and Jack Quaid as Josh being the primary ones) to settle down.Don't Miss | Deva movie review: Shahid Kapoor film is dragged down by loose threads, long slack stretchesShifts in mood would have done this film a world of good, rather than how it tends to go around in circles once the big reveal

In the midst of Iris's Barbie Doll-like pink perfection and Josh's golden-boy looks, you may find yourself rooting for Megan Suri. She may not have a big role as Kate, a woman who is at the heart of what sets off the chain of events in Companion, but in her calmness and control, Suri (Never Have I Ever; Fresh Off the Boat) is the only one not leaning on a companion - real or otherwise.

Sudesh Lehri says he's illiterate, made shoes and sold vegetables for a living: 'When Archana Puran Singh laughed at me, I made many houses'

Sudesh Lehri is among the famous Indian comedians. While he has been in the industry for over two decades, he gained widespread recognition after his participation in the The Great Indian Laughter Challenge Season 8. Over the years, he appeared on various comedy shows including Kapil Sharma's television shows. He recently appeared on Archana Puran Singh's YouTube channel, where he shared his journey to success and all the struggles he went through as a child. "A drunkard slapped me mid performance",

Speaking with Archana Puran Singh and her family, Sudesh shared, "I have said this several times that I have worked really hard to be where I am today. When I started my career, I struggled so much that I became bankrupt, my house was sold. Everybody laughed at me. But, when Archana Puran Singh laughed at me, I made many houses."He also spoke about Archana's bungalow in Madh Island. He said, "I always doubted whether or not you are rich, but today, it has been confirmed that you are indeed rich. I have seen such homes only in films."Listening to Sudesh praise her house, Archana interrupted and said, "I have seen your house on your YouTube channel, you have made such a beautiful house. You even have a home theatre." Sudesh replies, "I have made home theatre only for Krushna (Abhishek)." When a curious Archana asked, "Why?' He said, "Because his films don't release in theatres. He always claims they are in theatres, but I can never

During their conversation. Sudesh shared. "I have done a lot of hard work when I was young. I have seen poverty. have worked in small shops, used to make tea, I have worked in several factories, I used to make footwear. I sold vegetables. The rich don't have to lie, but being poor we often have to lie when money lenders would ask for money. All this worked like an acting course for me." Sudesh used to do private shows before attaining fame. He shared the one incident that changed his life. He said, "Once I was doing a show. There was a drunkard there, he randomly came on stage, held me by my collar and slapped me. My by 12 pm I was married. We tied the knot at a temple."



mic fell. All my teammates were ready to beat him up, but I stopped them. Later, I was very disappointed. I was like 'What am I even doing, who are these people, they don't value talent and art.' I returned home and told my wife, 'I am never going to perform at weddings.

Sudesh then decided to sell his house and return people's money. "I wanted to do something of my own. I wanted to create a brand of my own and gain fame. I knew I will only be respected if my build my name. Then I got a show. It became a massive hit. I toured so many places."He then lightened the mood by showing off his singing skills. Seeing his talent, Archana shared with her family, "I never believed he was illiterate. I thought he was just joking."Later, Sudesh shared, "I have never even been inside a school. Recently, I had to shoot an ad, we had to play school kids. It was the first time that I entered a school."Sudesh even shared his wedding story. He said, "My marriage was fixed and people were behind my life to get married. I got frustrated and said 'Get me married right now, or I won't do it.'

'Disciplined' Anushka Sharma has no tantrums, Deepika Padukone's fee 'too much': Prega News founder calls Janhvi, Ranbir best for condom



Rajeev Juneja, managing director and co-founder of Mankind Pharma, opened up about actors such as Anushka Sharma and Kartik Aaryan endorsing their brands Prega News and Manforce condoms. He expressed his desire to sign new celebrity faces for the ads, namely Deepika Padukone, Janhvi Kapoor, and Ranbir Kapoor. Rajeev appeared on Raj Shamani podcast, where he also spoke about ad revenue and budget allocation.

Talking about Anushka, who is currently endorsing Prega News, he said, "She is very good. Very straight, very disciplined. Matlab kam aisa hota hai. Koi tantrums nahi hai. Koi filmy wali baatein nahi hain. Army background se hain so maybe her ethics are different. Very professional. (This happens very less that an actor doesn't have any tantrums or filmy conversations. Maybe, she is from an army background and her ethics are different from the others). Anushka Sharma was announced as the brand ambassador in 2020 when she was expecting her first child Vamika Kohli, with Virat Kohli. They were also blessed with their second child, son Akaay, last year. Rajeev expressed that he also had a good experience working with Kareena Kapoor Khan, who was the previous ambassador of the brand before Anushka. He has his eyes set on Deepika Padukone, who was recently blessed with a baby girl with Ranveer Singh, as the next face of Prega News. But, the actor hasn't been signed yet. He added, "Nahi, sign nahi kiya. Maybe her asking is too much for us.'

He further revealed he is also in conversation with Alia Bhatt for the same. The entrepreneur shared that only 2025 per cent of the total budget is allocated for the making of an ad, which includes the star's fees. The rest of the money is spent on running the ad and ensuring its wider reach to the audience. In the same interview, Rajeev was asked about having an appropriate brand ambassador to represent his condom brand and who he would sign, he replied, "Condom ke liye? Kisi ke liye bhi? Janhvi Kapoor. She's apt. She's the best choice." For the male celebrity, he chose Ranbir Kapoor. He also revealed that both of them have refused the offer to become brand ambassadors for the condom company in the past. Currently, Kartik Aaryan has been endorsing the brand, who took over after Sunny Leone. "Kartik Aaryan lene ka reason kya hai ki thoda sa male side ke andar we are supposed to go," he said.

Udit Narayan kisses female fans on lips during concert, video goes viral

Mumbai: Veteran singer Udit Narayan stirred controversy after an undated video of him kissing a female fan on the lips while taking a selfie during his performance started doing the rounds on social media.

In the undated video, Udit Narayan was seen performing the iconic track "Tip Tip Barsa Paani" picturised on Akshay Kumar and Raveena Tandon, when a female fan turned around and kissed him on the cheek. The singer then kissed her on her lips. The singer kissed the female fan on the lips, as per viral videos from the show, which are now doing the rounds. Udit Narayan, who is the father of singer Aditya Narayan, has not made any comments, however, social media users have expressed anger.

"Agar AI generated nahi he then dude just destroyed his whole legacy...although iska purana case bhi he," said another."A singer of his stature should be super conscious of his deeds in public," said a netizen. The 69-year-old singer has sung in various other languages including Hindi, Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, Bengali, Sindhi, Odia, Bhojpuri, Nepali, Malayalam, Assamese, Bagheli and Maithili.

He has won four National Film Awards. The Government of India feted him with the Padma Shri in 2009 and the Padma Bhushan in 2016.

Before Sangwan scalped Virat Kohli, there was that Jos Buttler slams India's concussion sub swap in hunter on the perennial prowl, Iqbal Siddiqui



GNS News Agency, Feb 4

He played his last first class game some 20 years ago but Maharashtra pacer and the one-time dada of domestic cricket, Iqbal Siddiqui, remembers every sight and sound of that one over when he got Ravi Shastri out in a Ranji Trophy game. Down to the whisper from his buddy from junior days Avinash Jadhav, when Mumbai needed just 17 runs in the fourth innings to win the game. It's a story from the times when, unlike now, Ranji Trophy wasn't an ordeal to suffer or an obligation to be fulfilled for the international stars. It was a norm, not a diktat. To be fair, cricket scheduling was also not this hectic and T20 wasn't a disruptor or a distractor.

Though, not all has changed on the good old dusty maidans, the land of the mostly uncapped. Even today when Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli turn up for their states, they face domestic bowlers who save their best when taking on the best. It's their chance to carve notches on their belt to keep a count of their celebrity conquests and collect yarns for a lifetime.lqbal, at 50, a respected match referee, understands what made Himanshu Sangwan, a 29-year-old military medium pacer, working as a Railways ticket-collector, send Virat Kohli's off-stump cartwheeling. Also why a 31year-old pacer from Pulwama in J&K Umar Nazir forced Rohit Sharma to mistime his favourite pull. Iqbal knows this "outfit of the underdogs" all too well. He had been a proud card-carrying member all through his playing years. The pacer had a simple motto when taking on those "big batsmen.""Jitna teekha batsman, utni teekhi apni bowling," says the player known as much for his wit, quips and chutzpah as he was for his sly wicket-taking skills and that perfect "tappa". Like most things the man from Aurangabad says, even this can't be truly translated. "The spice in my bowling depends on how hot the batsmen were." That comes close. That mindset didn't change even if it was a losing cause and the game was at Thane's unremarkable Dadoji Kondadev Stadium. Back to that Shastri scalp and the friendly nudge from his friend.

"Iqbal kuch kar yaar (Do something)," Avinash would plead to lobal. "Mumbai should remember ki tune kuch kiya (you did something)". With such a small target, what was that "something" a new-ball bowler was supposed to do? Go through the motions, shake hands and licks wounds in the dressing room. Not Igbal, certainly not when a 'star' batsman stood in front of him. Iqbal, at 50, is a respected match referee. Iqbal, at 50, is a respected match referee. He bowled a wicked short ball to Shastri, who would let it go. "I gave him a stare. Fast bowler hain, bouncer daala hai, hamara hag bunta hai (Fast bowlers have the right to glare after a bouncer)," says the engaging story-teller with humour that can crack up many cricket addas. Shastri stared back from between the grill of his blue helmet – Iqbal's memory is technicolour, not sepia tinted. But the stare lasted just for a bit. Next ball— it's a bouncer again. No stare this time. "Third ball, I bowled up and he tried to play and was out," Iqbal almost underplays the climax, the excitement of nar-shadow

rating the set-up missing. He has many such stories, there's one involving another Mumbai batting great – Vinod Kambli. It was from a game in Mumbai but not at the Wankhede. The venue was the low-key MIG stadium.

Not just the wicket-taking delivery, Iqbal also remembers the field setting. Short leg and deep square leg, rest on the off side. "No one else on leg-side, udhar ball dalna hi nahi toh phir fielder kyon (if you don't bowl there, why do you need a fielder there)," he recalls. Short of length ball, near to his chest, straight to gully. "Halne ka mauka hi nahi diya (Didn't allow him to move).'

This was days before he was to play for India A against the touring England team that had Michael Vaughan, Marcus Trescothick, Mark Ramprakash. Another pack side—as star-studded sides are called in maidans. Over to Iqbal for a delightful narration of the events a day before the game. It's about the unique art of putting pressure on the stars by those who don't have much to lose."I met Treschothick at the Hotel Taj lobby on match eve. I said "Hi Tres, I am Iqbal Siddiqui, we played junior cricket against each other in 1994. Bhai, yaad toh dilana padega na, agle din bowling dalna hai (I have to remind him, I have to bowl at him). Tres asked: You still moving the ball?" I replied: "Of course, of course, if I take your wicket, I have a chance to play Tests". Seedha bola. "You reckon?" he asked me. Mauka mila tha chauka maaro. "I will be after your wicket tomorrow." "Next I went to the gym where Vaughan was there with Mark Ramprakash, who was getting up after doing bench press. I had played Vaughan too in under-19. He introduced me to Mark, who shook my hand. I reminded him of the game we played against each other - one India A match. Thought, yaad dila du usko bhi (Though, remind him also). Also told Vaughan 'You were serving drinks that day'. I told Mark you were playing with a Slazenger V500 at Wankhede. It was yellow and I got you out lbw."

Next day, Iqbal got Mark again, Ibw it was. He got three other England wickets, one of them was Andrew Flintoff. Again the mode of dismissal is stored in mind for eternity. "Short of length ball, achhi gayi pad ke and took the shoulder of the bat." Like Kambli at MIG, Flintoff wasn't given "haalne ka mauka."Iqbal was about pitching the ball perfectly. The match referee was seen having soming fun during a recent Ranji game in Jaipur. (Express Photo) A pacer with a short and smooth run, Iqbal was about pitching the ball perfectly. The match referee was seen having soming fun during a recent Ranji game in Jaipur. A pacer with a short and smooth run, Iqbal was about pitching the ball perfectly. These days, he often gets asked about his speed. "Arre speed chhod, yeh koi nahi puchta aapka tappa kaisa tha. Speed ko kya karna tel dalna kya," he says. In his charming self-deprecating wit, he explains his bowling: "Kumble saab ke aas paas jitna run up hoga, aur speed bhi unke aas paas (Run and speed, both like Anil Kumble)". His charming chuckle has the strength to lift any pall of gloom. The stories of those special scraps in his overall haul of 315 wickets from 90 first-class games keep flowing. Once at Rajkot, he psyched a Saurashtra batsman and got him bowled. He shouted to the non-striker, informing that his partner was getting bowled next ball. Told the umpire, to keep an eye on the popping crease and not declare no-ball as he was getting a wicket. At the top of his bowling mark, he also had a message for Saurashtra's BCCI bigwig Niranjan Shah standing in the dressing room balcony. "Getting your batsman bowled," he yelled. Next ball, it did happen. "Cricket is less physical, more mental," he gives his wisdom. About his four England wickets that earned him his Test call, Iqbal says: "Badaa player honga aapne ghar pe .. hum bhi toh mehnat hi kar rahe hain. (He might be a great player, we also have worked hard)."Story continues below this adlt is the less-known characters of the game - the Igbals, Sangwans and Nazirs - who make the domestic cricket narrative richer and storied. They are ones who operate in the vast stretches of India's cricketing landscape. Domestic cricket is the wild west where bounty hunters lie in wait, guarding the fence of the turf, under the stadium's

Women's Ashes: Beth Mooney becomes first Australian woman to record centuries in all formats

. GNS News Agency, Feb 4

Beth Mooney on Friday became the first Australian woman to record hundreds in all formats during the Women's Ashes Test against England at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Resuming from her overnight score of 98, wicket-keeper Mooney brought up her century in 155 balls as Australia piled on a mammoth 440 in reply to England's 170. Mooney is only the fourth woman to score a hundred in all formats after England's Heather Knight and Tammy Beaumont, and South Africa captain Laura Wolvaardt. The 31-year-old Mooney has piled on 2553 runs in 82 ODIs. averaging over 47 besides 3215 runs in T20Is at 41.21 with a high score of 117 not out. Mooney is also the fourth Australian to achieve the landmark after Shane Watson, Glenn Maxwell and David Warner.

Mooney also joined her teammate Annabel Sutherland as the only women Test century honour board at the MCG. The 23-year-old Sutherland had earlier hit 163 on Friday. Mooney also vaulted to the fourth spot for most international runs by Australian women, surpassing Karen Rolton (6,221). Only contemporaries Meg Lanning (8,352), Ellyse



Perry (7,224) and Alyssa Healy (6,741) have scored more runs for Australia than Mooney. The first of Mooney's six international hundreds came against New Zealand in Auckland in 2017. Her maiden T20I century also occurred the same year at Manuka Oval during the Ashes. Mooney's second T20I hundred was against Sri Lanka in 2019, while her second and third one-day hundreds were struck against India and Pakistan in 2023.

Hardik, Bishnoi star as India beat England, clinch series 3-1

GNS News Agency, Feb 4

Pune: India beat England by 15 runs to clinch the series here on Friday. Earlier, Hardik Pandya's breathtaking blows and comeback man Shivam Dube's belligerence took India to a par-score of 181 for 9 after the toporder failed to negotiate the short-of-length deliveries bowled by England pacers in the fourth T20 International here on Friday. Coming in at No 7, Pandya was stylish and destructive in equal measure hitting four boundaries and an equal number of maximums in his 30-ball-53. Dube (53 off 34 balls) also didn't do too badly in a stand of 87 off 48 balls for the sixth wicket after pacer Saqib Mahmood (3/35 in 4 overs) reduced India to 12 for 3 by the end of the second over.

Dube was coming back into national colours after bagging a pair in a Ranji Trophy match against Jammu and Kashmir last week. But Pandya, who many feel can

take MS Dhoni's role as a finisher, began with an aggressive approach, then rotated the strike for a few overs before launching a brutal final assault on the English bowlers. However, his innings was cut short by one shot too many. He got an able ally in Dube, who hit seven fours and two sixes as India got as many as 109 runs in the back-10. Mahmood, playing his first game of the series, struck thrice in his first over and all three were wellplanned dismissals. By now, the world knows about Sanju Samson's (1) susceptibility against quick bowling, especially those pitched on either hard length or back of the length.Mahmood bowled one slightly back of length and the short arm pull went straight into the palms of Brydon Carse at deep fine leg boundary. In-form Tilak Varma (0) was out first ball as he tried to use the pace and slash it over third man. The most well-thought-out dismissal was certainly skipper Suryakumar Yadav's (0), who is undergoing the worst slump in his international career.

Pune T20I: 'Either Shivam Dube has put on 25mph with the ball or Harshit Rana's..'



GNS News Agency, Feb 4

IND vs ENG: Jos Buttler slammed the inclusion of Harshit Rana as a concussion sub for Shivam Dube in the fourth T20I in Pune.IND vs ENG: Jos Buttler slammed the inclusion of Harshit Rana as a concussion sub for Shivam Dube in the fourth T20I in Pune. (BCCI)Following England's defeat in the fourth T20I in Pune that handed India a series win with an unassailable 3-1 lead, skipper Jos Buttler slammed the match referee's decision to allow on seamer Harshit Rana to make his debut in place of concussed batting all-rounder Shivam Dube. Both Dube and Rana ended up making significant contributions at crucial junctures in either innings, leaving England 15 runs short in a 182-run case on Friday. After another top-order collapse, Dube playing his first match of the series, put on a sizable partnership with Hardik Pandya, smashing 53 off 34 deliveries. The southpaw suffered a concussion following a Jamie Overton short ball off the penultimate ball of India's innings. Interestingly, it was Rana, known more for his seam-



bowling skills than his batting that later replaced him as a concussion substitute, prompting questions over the decision. Rana's inclusion proved fatal for the visitors as he removed Liam Livingstone in his first over before dismissing Jacob Bethell and Jamie Overton to finish with figures of 3/33 in four overs. "Either Shivam Dube has put on about 25mph with the ball or Harshit's really improved his batting. It's part of the game and we really should have gone on to win the match, but we disagree with the decision," Buttler added. "There was no consultation [with us]. That's something I was thinking as I came out to bat - who is Harshit on for? They said he is a concussion replacement, which I obviously disagreed with. It is not a like-for-like replacement. They said that the match referee had made the decision. We had no say in it or any part of it. But we'll ask Javagal [Srinath] some questions just to get some clarity around it. "Like I said, it was not the whole reason why we did not win the match. We had our chances to win the game which we could have still taken. But I'd like to have a bit more clarity on that."

Gukesh is new world no 3 after Praggnanandhaa beats Fabiano Caruana

GNS News Agency, Feb 4

Gukesh taking on Wei Yi in Round 11 of the Tata Steel chess tournament at Wijk aan Zee. (PHOTO: Jurriaan Hoefsmit via Tata Steel chess)Gukesh taking on Wei Yi in Round 11 of the Tata Steel chess tournament at

Gukesh is now the world no 3 in the FIDE ratings charts after his draw against China's Wei Yi in the 11th round of the Tata Steel chess tournament coupled with Praggnanandhaa's defeat of Fabiano Caruana. Over the course of the past 11 games in the Tata Steel chess tournament, world champion Gukesh's rating has gone up by 16 rating points. He is currently rated at 2793, just one point off his career best rating of 2794 which he achieved in October 2024. With just two rounds remaining in the Tata Steel Chess tournament in Wijk aan Zee, Gukesh is currently leading the masters standings with Praggnanandhaa and Nodirbek Abdusattarov half a point behind in joint second spot. Gukesh is playing in his first event after becoming the youngest world champion in history last month where he defeated Ding Liren in Singapore. With India's top-ranked player Arjun Erigaisi woefully out of sorts at the Tata Steel event and dropping 33 points to slide down to sixth spot, Gukesh also became the India no 1 at the Wijk aan Zee

For Gukesh, the only real challenge in his path to winning the event was Chinese GM Wei Yi, who he faced in



Round 11 on Friday. The 18-year-old from Chennai opted for a sturdy Italian Opening against Wei Yi, which saw both players stay level most of the evening. Eventually, the game ended as a draw after an equal rook and pawn endgame.

Gukesh taking on Wei Yi in Round 11 of the Tata Steel Hoefsmit via Tata Steel chess) Gukesh taking on Wei Yi in Round 11 of the Tata Steel chess tournament at Wijk aan Zee. Jurriaan Hoefsmit via Tata Steel chess)1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Nf6 4. d3 4... Be7 5. O-O O-O 6. Nbd2 d5 7. exd5 Nxd5 8. Re1 f6 9. d4 Bg4 10. Nb3 Kh8 11. h3 Bh5 12. c3 exd4 13. Nbxd4 Nxd4 14. Qxd4 Bxf3 15. gxf3 Nb6 16. Qxd8 Rfxd8 17. Rxe7 Nxc4 18. Bf4 Nxb2 19. Rb1 Rd1+ 20. Rxd1 Nxd1 21. Rxc7 b6 22. Kf1 Re8 23. Bd2 h5 24. Rxa7 Rd8 25. Be1 Nb2 26. Rb7 Nc4 27. Rc7 Ne5 28. Ke2 Re8 29, Bd2 Nc4+ 30, Be3 Nxe3

Hardik Pandya makes extraordinary look like an everyday chore, taking India to 15-run thrilling win

GNS News Agency, Feb 4

In a game of multiple narratives, sterling cameos and comebacks within comebacks, the chief protagonist remained Hardik Pandya. The soul of India's 15-run, series-sealing victory over England was the wisdom, the chutzpah and belief of Hardik Pandya. When the match wound up, maroon and red plumes from the firecrackers worming into the skies, the cameras converged on Pandya, who strolled with an air of indifference, as though his match-turning 53 was nothing special, but just an ordinary show. Perhaps, he has reached a stage of his career where routine match-defining acts don't excite him. He has shaped the destiny of countless matches, won every accolade the shortest format could bestow over a cricketer and there is no dream that remains unfulfilled. He makes no fuss, inspires no needless headlines, and walks almost invisibly on the field. At 31, and nearly a decade into his international career, he remains an antithesis to the revolting youth he once was. In this series, he has scored 109 runs, the third best tally by Indian batsmen, and snaffled five wickets, most by an Indian seamer, with little qualms. But it remains a reality that he remains India's most valuable player in white-ball forms. The outcome of big tournaments remains inseparably hinged on his form and mood. It should delight Rohit Sharma and Co that Pandya is in the mood to win matches, both with the bat and the ball, ahead of the Champions Trophy.India's Hardik Pandya plays a shot during the fourth T20 cricket match between England and India in Pune, India, Friday, Jan. 31, 2025. (AP Photo) India's Hardik Pandya plays a shot during the fourth T20 cricket match between England and India in Pune, India, Friday, Jan. 31, 2025. (AP Photo)All contributions are equal, but his is more equal than rest. Dube registered the exact amount of runs as Pandya; Ravi Bishnoi pressed the handbrakes on England's power-play rampage with the wickets of Ben Duckett and Phil Salt. En-

gland slipped from 62 for 0 to 65 for 2 in the space of five

balls. His spin ally Varun Chakaravarthy removed the dangerous and artful Harry Brook to thwart England's second coming. From 129 for 4, England slumped to 133 for six in three balls. Harshit Rana, debuting as Shivam Dube's concussion substitute, nipped a late England re-

naissance. As invaluable as their interventions were, Pandya's 30-ball 53 towered above them all. It's often the case when superstars steal all the limelight from side actors in a heist, even if there have been equally noteworthy contributions. It is also about Pandya's persona, the aesthetics, the shuddering effect it has on opponents, and the belief he instills in the audience in the worst of times for his team, fills the arena with his sheer presence. India's Hardik Pandya plays a shot during the fourth T20 cricket match between England and India in Pune, India, Friday, Jan. 31, 2025. (AP Photo) India's Hardik Pandya plays a shot during the fourth T20 cricket match between England and India in Pune, India, Friday, Jan. 31, 2025. His batting alone would have made the long trek from the city centre and beyond to Gahunje in the outskirts worth the traffic, dust and time. It's the frame that strikes first, the lithe shoulders, the snake hips and the lean long legs. Then hits his supersonic bat-speed. Hardik sets his base on the back-foot, almost coiling his lower body to stabilise his base, clears front leg and flings the ball through the line with all the classical tenets of high front-elbow and keeping shape in place. His bat melts orthodox into the unorthodox. Typically, the early half of his knock, with India in strife at 57 for 4 and 79 for 5 after Rinku Singh's departure, was sedate. He eschewed risks, lashed fours only off fuller balls. He even defended Rashid on the front-foot and left a ripping leg-break too. He was unworried about his strikerate. At one stage, he was on 14 from 17 balls. But few middle-order batsmen in the harum-scarum world of T20 remain unflustered at his crawling pace. For, his heart beats with the certainty that he could make up if he stays deeper into the match. So did he. But in the next 10 balls, he scythed

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