



Disrobing of women a blot on constitutional spirit: Supreme Court

Sanjay Kumar

New Delhi, Dec 19: The Supreme Court on Thursday decreed the disrobing and public humiliation of two women in Bihar on accusations of



witchcraft, describing the incident as a "blot on the constitutional spirit" and a grave affront to human dignity. The Supreme Court underscored that violation of dignity strikes at the heart of Article 21 of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to live with dignity. The Supreme Court underscored that violation of dignity strikes at the heart of Article 21 of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to live with dignity. A bench of justices CT Ravikumar and Sanjay Karol castigated the Patna high

court and the Bihar government for allowing the trial in the case to remain stayed, emphasising the critical role of the judiciary and state in safeguarding basic human rights. Ravichandran Ashwin announces retirement! For more details & latest news, read on here "Dignity goes to the very core of the existence of an individual in society. Any action which undermines dignity either by an act of another person or that of the State is potentially going against the spirit of the Constitution of India, which guarantees the security of all persons by ensuring that justice, liberty and equality are avouched for each and every person. In a strongly worded judgment, the bench underscored that violation of dignity strikes at the heart of Article 21 of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to live with dignity. The court referenced landmark rulings, including Kesavananda Bharati Vs State of Kerala (1973) and Francis Coralie Mullin Vs Union Territory of Delhi (1981), affirming that the right to dignity forms part of the Constitution's basic structure and is integral to the right to life.

No problem if Ajit Pawar visits Hedgewar's memorial: BJP leader Chitra Wagh

ST Correspondent

Mumbai, Dec. 19: BJP leader Chitra Wagh on Thursday said there should not be any objection if Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar visits the RSS founder's memorial as the Sangh had contributed to the victory of all Mahayuti allies. The Mahayuti, comprising the BJP, Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena and Ajit Pawar's NCP, secured a landslide victory in the Maharashtra assembly elections last month by securing 230 of the 288 seats. On Thursday, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Deputy CM Shinde, several other BJP and Shiv Sena leaders as well as some NCP legislators visited the memorial of RSS founder Dr K B Hedgewar at Reshimbagh in Nagpur during the legislature session underway in the city. After visit-



ing the memorial, Shinde said no one can ignore the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's (RSS) contribution to nation-building and that the ideologies of the Sangh Parivar and Shiv Sena are same. Ajit Pawar did not visit the memorial, though two legislators of his party went there. Speaking to reporters during her visit to Hedgewar's memorial, BJP MLC Chitra Wagh said there should not be any problem with NCP leaders, including Ajit Pawar, visiting Reshimbagh. "They (RSS) indeed have played a crucial role. Nobody can deny the contribution of the RSS in winning so many seats. The RSS not only helped the BJP candidates to win but even worked in support of its allies during the assembly polls," she said. Wagh also said it was important to embrace positive ideologies. "It is a good thing to embrace a good school of thought. Hence, I feel they (NCP leaders) will visit the RSS headquarters. The RSS worked for the Mahayuti and made a significant contribution. Neither the NCP nor Shiv Sena can ever deny the contribution of the RSS," she added. When Shiv Sena leader Dada Bhuse was asked about Pawar skipping the visit, he said, "I am a junior party worker; I cannot comment on his decision." Everybody has the right to decide whether to visit such places or not, he said.

Govt committed to welfare of Beedi workers: Mandaviya

Naresh Malhotra

New Delhi, Dec. 19: Union Labour & Employment Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya said the Modi government is committed to the welfare of beedi workers and their families with the help of several welfare schemes. Addressing at the launch of the book titled "The Need to Preserve, Protect, and Promote Beedi Workers' Livelihood" on Wednesday, the minister stressed that the mantra of the Modi government is "sabka saath sabka vikas". He said welfare of poor people, farmers, and labourers is the top priority of the Modi government. The book was released by the All India Bidi Industry Federation (AIBIF), in partnership with the Triniketan Foundation for Development, New Delhi. The book is authored by Dr Anila Nair and Dr M M Rehman. Other dignitaries included Praful Bhai Patel, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha, Dr Ashwan Mahajan, National Convenor, Swadeshi Jagran Manch, and B Surendran, All India Organising Secretary, Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh. The guests launched major studies on

the Triniketan Foundation's website (triniketanfoundation.org.in) along with two micro studies conducted in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, and Bagdah, West Bengal. The study



revealed that for many women workers, beedi rolling is more than just a job; it is a means of dignity and self-reliance. It provides them with an opportunity to earn a livelihood from the

comfort of their homes, sparing them the burden of transport costs. Several women shared how this opportunity had empowered them with agency and independence. This impact is especially visible in Solapur, Bengaluru, Mysore, and Mandya. The event called for reconsideration of GST on beedis, stressing that for millions, beedi rolling is more than an industry and it's a lifeline. The event aimed to highlight the plight of beedi workers brought together over 25 Members of Parliament and assemblies cutting across political parties, alongside major trade union representatives, officials from the Department of Labour, and beedi workers from Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal. Praful Patel said, "It is important that people have access to employment, and the beedi industry's key characteristic is that it provides employment in small villages where jobs are scarce." Dr Ashwan Mahajan, National Co-Convenor, Swadeshi Jagran Manch, said since the increase in taxation (GST) on beedis to 28 per cent from very low excise duty in the past; there has been large-scale dumping by cheap cigarettes from China causing a huge loss to the exchequer, apart from major loss of employment from this major labour-intensive industry.

Conspiracy to save Amit Shah's skin: Priyanka on BJP's allegations against Rahul

Simmi Kaur Babbar

New Delhi, Dec. 19: Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday termed the BJP's allegations that her brother and party leader Rahul Gandhi pushed a BJP MP a "conspiracy to save Home Minister Amit Shah's skin". She also accused the ruling party MPs of indulging in "goondagardi" to stop peacefully protesting opposition members from entering Parliament. A face-off between the opposition and NDA MPs in Parliament premises over the alleged insult to B R Ambedkar left BJP MPs Pratap Chandra Sarangi and Mukesh Rajput injured. The BJP accused Rahul Gandhi of pushing 69-year-old Sarangi, a charge rejected by the Congress leader. Priyanka Gandhi said Rahul Gandhi, carrying B R Ambedkar's photograph and raising slogan of Jai Bhim, was peacefully going inside Parliament but was stopped from doing so. "We have been protesting for so many days and there is always space for people to enter freely. Peaceful protests are taking place daily from 10.30 am to 11 am. Today, for the first time, they (BJP MPs) protested and stopped everyone and then

indulged in pushing and 'goodagardi' (hooliganism)," she told reporters in Parliament premises. "And now to save Amit Shah's skin they have started

say. She said a chair was brought for Kharge, 82, from somewhere and pointed out that peaceful protests had been going on from their side. "This is a conspiracy. We challenged those who were stopping us to say 'Jai Bhim'. Why can't they raise the slogan of 'Jai Bhim'?" Priyanka Gandhi asked. She also dismissed the BJP's claim that a passage was given to INDIA bloc MPs to enter Parliament and claimed that they were blocked from entering Parliament. "We did not say anything, we kept raising our slogans and kept fighting for our Constitution. If people have any confusion that the BJP will protect the Constitution then that confusion should be over," she said. Priyanka Gandhi claimed that the BJP's real feelings have come out in the open in Amit Shah's remarks. "Their (BJP's) real feelings was in display here. They have violent intentions, they cannot say Jai Bhim. I challenge BJP MPs to stand here and say Jai Bhim," she said. Earlier, in a post in Hindi on X, Priyanka Gandhi said, "BJP is repeatedly insulting Babasaheb, who gave the Constitution to the country, who gave rights to every citizen, who changed the lives of crores of Dalits and deprived people with his thoughts and actions.

ed this conspiracy that 'bhaya' has pushed someone. Right before my eyes, Kharge ji was pushed and he fell on the ground. Then they pushed a CPI(M) MP who fell on Kharge ji. I thought it would have broken his leg as it was visible from his face that he was hurt," the Congress general secre-

Mayawati says Ambedkar's dignity hurt, Amit Shah must take back 'these words'

Navdeep Singh Sahni

Lucknow, Dec. 19: Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati on Thursday said union home minister Amit Shah hurt the dignity of the architect of the Constitution, BR Ambedkar, with his remark in the Rajya Sabha earlier this week. She asked the BJP leader to take back his words. Lucknow: Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati addresses a press conference at her residence. At a press conference in Lucknow, Mayawati further said Shah should repent because there is anger and resentment against him across the country. "The words used by Amit Shah in the Parliament about the architect of the Indian Constitution and messiah of Dalits and other neglected classes, Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar, have greatly hurt Baba Saheb's dignity and existence, and in a

way, he has been insulted. Now there is tremendous anger and resentment among his followers in the entire country



and he should take back these words and he should also repent for this. Otherwise, his (BR Ambedkar) followers will never be able to forget this, just like the way they haven't been able to forget the misdeeds of Congress towards Dr BR Ambedkar," Mayawati said in a press conference in Lucknow. During a debate on

the Constitution in Rajya Sabha on Tuesday, Shah said the Congress had made it a fashion to chant BR Ambedkar's name. "Abhi ek fashion ho gaya hai - Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Itna naam agar bhagwan ka lete to saat janmon tak swarg mil jata (It has become a fashion to say Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar). If they had taken God's name so many times, they would have got a place in heaven," he said. On Wednesday, Amit Shah said the Congress had distorted his remark. He also said that successive Congress governments insulted BR Ambedkar by not conferring on him the Bharat Ratna. He said a government backed by the Bharatiya Janata Party finally gave him the award in 1990. Earlier today, INDIA bloc MPs led by Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi held a protest in the Parliament premises.

India moving forward at 'unprecedented' speed under Modi Govt: Rajnath

Tejinder Kaur Babbar

New Delhi, Dec. 19: India was left behind in terms of modern weapons and technology but it moved towards self-reliance in the defence sector at an "unprecedented" pace after the Modi government came to power, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday. In an address at an event, Singh said modern warfare is changing rapidly and there is a need to adopt high-end technology to deal with future and national security challenges. The defence minister exhorted scientists and engineers to gain command over critical technologies, such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing in tune with the changing times, and urged them to never forget India's heritage. Singh was speaking at the Indian National Academy of Engineering's Annual Convention at IIT Delhi. The defence minister emphasised that the niche technologies are going to impact almost every sector in a

big way in the coming times. "Right now, we are in the initial phase. Our aim should be to first gain command over these technologies, so that in the future, they can be used for the welfare of the people to fulfil their immediate basic needs," he said.



Singh pointed out that the world is continuously evolving, and the defence sector cannot remain untouched by this change. He stated that earlier, due to some reasons, India was left behind in terms of modern

weapons and technology, but ever since the Modi government came to power, the country has moved towards self-reliance in defence at an unprecedented pace, according to the defence ministry. "Modern warfare is changing rapidly, therefore there is a

need to adopt high-end technology. Towards this, we have brought out schemes like Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) and Technology Development Fund (TDF) to bring out the talent of the youth, through which their as well as the nation's dreams can come true," he said. The iDEX was launched in 2018 to create an eco-system to foster innovations and encourage technological development in the defence and aerospace sector. Singh asserted that India is passing through a "defining moment" as it is exporting even those weapons which it once imported. The defence minister credited this "revolutionary transformation" to the collective efforts

of the public and private sectors, academia, and engineers and innovators. He exuded confidence that the country will soon achieve a formidable technical edge in the global arena. Singh lauded the role of IITs in the scientific development of the country in collaboration with the Defence Research and Development Organisation and called for establishing an even better organic relationship among the industry, research and development organisations and academia. "In developed countries, academic campuses play an important role in progressing frontier technologies. There is a need to explore ways on how to co-opt IIT Delhi and similar institutions of higher scientific learning and excellence with the government's development campaign," he added. "India is the youngest country at present. Our youth have the passion and the ability to innovate. Our government stands with them at every step." Singh noted that the government has been supporting the youths in their quest for innovation and providing funds as per needs.

Akhilesh Yadav accuses BJP of insulting Ambedkar, Constitution

Lucknow, Dec. 19: Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav launched a scathing attack on the BJP on Thursday, alleging the party and its leaders harbour animosity toward B R Ambedkar and the

Constitution he helped frame. The Kannauj MP's remarks came amid a massive political row as the Congress and other opposition parties launched an all-out attack on Amit Shah for his remarks on Ambedkar and demanded his sacking, while Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other top BJP leaders rallied to his defence and said he has exposed Congress' "anti-Ambedkar"

stand. Replying to the debate in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday on the Constitution, Shah had criticised the Congress for repeatedly taking the name of B R Ambedkar, adding that if they took God's name so many times they could have earned a place in heaven. In a post on X, Yadav said, "Those whose hearts are filled with hatred cannot lead the country. What happened is not just an insult to Babasaheb, but also to the Constitution he gave us. This is yet another extreme example of the BJP's negative mindset. The country now knows how much bitterness the BJP harbours toward Babasaheb Ambedkar." "The BJP considers the Constitution to be its biggest opponent because they believe it obstructs their agenda to exploit and dominate the poor, marginalised, and the oppressed. This is highly condemnable, deeply concerning and entirely objectionable." Yadav, a former UP chief minister, also emphasized the importance of the Constitution as a shield against any form of exploitation and dominance. He concluded his X post with the call,

NEWS BOX

Cochin Shipyard lays keel for Navy's sixth anti-submarine watercraft

KOCHI. Demonstrating its capability to manufacture technology intensive warships with high indigenous content, the Cochin Shipyard Ltd (CSL) conducted the keel laying ceremony of the sixth Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Watercraft in Kochi on Tuesday. Southern Naval Command Chief Staff Officer (Training) Rear Admiral Satish Shenai and CSL director (Operations) K N Sreejith were present on the occasion. Navy Warship Production Superintendent Commodore S Parthiban, Ship Production director at Integrated Headquarters of Navy Commodore G S Sidhu, Shipyard executive directors Rajesh Gopalakrishnan and S Harikrishnan, and senior officers attended the ceremony. The contract for building eight anti-submarine warfare shallow watercraft was signed between the Ministry of Defence and CSL on April 30, 2019. The Mahe class ships will replace the in-service Abbay class Corvettes of Indian Navy and are designed to undertake anti-submarine operations in coastal waters, low intensity maritime operations and mine laying operations including subsurface surveillance. The vessels are capable of achieving a speed of 25 knots and are fitted with indigenously designed and developed state-of-the-art SONARS for underwater surveillance. The construction of five of the eight vessels have been launched and are in various stages.

Two weeks after Fengal, Villupuram suburbs still marooned

VILLUPURAM. Even though over two weeks have passed since Cyclone Fengal wreaked havoc in Puducherry and Villupuram, more than 500 homes in Villupuram suburbs still remain inundated with mix of rainwater and sewage, leaving residents in dire conditions. The cyclone, which made landfall on November 30, brought unprecedented rainfall to Villupuram district, resulting in extensive damage to thousands of homes and agricultural lands. Severe damage was noticed particularly in Villupuram town, where numerous residential areas were submerged.

While water receded in some places, vast stretches in suburban regions like Lingam Nagar, Asiriyar Nagar, Netaji Nagar, Ganapathi Nagar, Keezhpurampakkam, Bajana Koil street, and Perumal Koil street remain waterlogged.

The stagnant water, mixed with sewage, has risen up to four feet due to intermittent downpour, rendering many homes uninhabitable and exposing residents to severe health risks and disease outbreaks.

Many families have been forced to evacuate and seek refuge at relative's places. Repeated appeals and protests by affected residents to the Villupuram municipal and district administrations have been ignored, alleged residents. The prolonged inaction, despite the visible health hazards and hardships.

ED raids residence, office of BJD leader Pramila Mallik's brother Khirod Mallik over Rs 231 crore loan scam

BHUBANESWAR. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday conducted searches across four locations in Odisha and outside linked to opposition chief whip Pramila Mallik's late brother Khirod Mallik over the alleged Rs 231 crore bank fraud case. Sources said the central agency conducted simultaneous searches at three locations in Sambalpur and one in New Delhi during the day. Khirod was accused of swindling a whopping Rs 231 crore from various banks across Odisha and other states through his NGO, Bharat Integrated Social Welfare Agency (BISWA). In Sambalpur, ED officers reportedly conducted searches at BISWA's office in Danipali and a building in Modipara. Khirod, who passed away earlier this year, was accused of availing loans through fraudulent means on the pretext of lending money to self-help groups (SHGs) and misutilising the same. In 2021, the Central Bureau of Investigation had registered a case against Khirod and chartered accountant KC Samal for failing to repay a loan amount of Rs 10 crore which was sanctioned by Central Bank of India in favour of BISWA in 2010. CBI investigation had revealed that Khirod had cheated several other financial institutions too. The ED then registered a case against BISWA under the prevention of money laundering act (PMLA) for swindling the money of various banks and failing to pay back the loans. The NGO was also accused of misusing foreign funds.

The Economic Offences Wing of Mumbai Crime Branch had arrested Khirod and his son Debabrata from their residence in Sambalpur's Thakurpada area in 2019 over alleged financial irregularities. Earlier in 2014, Khirod was arrested by EOW of Odisha Crime Branch for allegedly cheating investors to the tune of Rs 10 crore. Investigation had revealed NGO BISWA was not registered as a non-banking financial institution.

Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese removes priests over Holy Mass

KOCHI. Heads are rolling in the Ernakulam-Angamaly archeparchy of the Syro-Malabar Church as apostolic administrator Bosco Puthur flexes his muscle to stem disobedience over implementation of orders on the celebration of the unified mode of Holy Mass in parishes. On Wednesday, the bishop ordered three priests to step down from their duties as administrators and vicars. On Tuesday, Mar Puthur had removed Fr Thomas Valookaran, vicar of Palarivattom St Martin De Porres church, from his official post citing non-compliance with the synod's orders, which have been confirmed by the Apostolic See and exhorted by Pope Francis several times. According to church sources, as of Wednesday, action has been initiated against four priests. "More heads might roll in the coming days," they said. In the order issued on Wednesday, Mar Puthur said, "The administrator of Ernakulam St Mary's cathedral basilica Fr Varghese Manavalan, Tripunithura St Mary's Forane church vicar Fr Joshy Vezhapparambil, Palarivattom St Martin De Porres church vicar Thomas Valookaran and Mathanagar Velankanni Matha church vicar Fr Benny Palatti have been removed from administration positions of the said churches." "The priests have been banned from officiating any sacraments or ecclesiastical functions, exercising the powers and duties of the administrator of the church, pastoral care of the faithful and celebrating



Holy Mass. They have been asked to vacate the rooms designated for parish vicar at these churches," the order added. The priests have been directed to shift to Thrikakkara Vijo Bhavan, Pothi Santhom Bhavan or Kaloor Renewal Centre. As per the order, if priests fail to comply with the directives and engage in any anti-church activities, sterner action will be initiated against them as per the canonical laws. According to Mar Puthur, only newly appointed administrators and vicars will have complete authority in these churches. The action taken by the apostolic administrator received a mixed response with the section of

priests opposing Unified Holy Mass accusing him of flouting canonical and civil laws.

According to Fr Jose Vailikodath, PRO of the Athirooptha Samrakshana Samithi, Mar Puthur has been a great failure. "If he has even the slightest shame, he should resign from that position. The threatening letters that were issued to the vicars of St Martin de Porres church, St Mary's Forane church, Mathanagar Velankanni Matha church, and the administrator of St Mary's cathedral basilica violate canonical laws and are in disregard of civil laws. These are evidence of arrogance and insolence," he said.

Karnataka health dept flags 26 medicines as misbranded

BENGALURU. The health department has flagged 26 medicines -- eight as spurious or fake and 18 as misbranded -- which are consumed for acidity, pain relief, cholesterol, iron deficiency, and nasal congestion. It has stated that these medicines have been produced in violation of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act. Over a year, five pharmaceuticals have been convicted for violating safety standards. Twelve cases are in various stages of trial. Investigations are on to ascertain whether pharma companies used substandard chemicals in 26 medicines flagged by the department. Of the 26 medicines, 10 used for nasal congestion relief were found to have violated the Act. Four medicines used for reducing eye inflammation and treating dry eyes, two to treat pain, inflammation and conditions such as arthritis and allergies have been labelled as spurious or misbranded. The department found three samples of folic acid (iron supplements) and

multivitamin medicines not meeting the set standards alongside other drugs used for treating glaucoma and high eye pressure as well as preventing nausea and vomiting caused by chemotherapy or surgery. 'If labelling is misleading, medicines are marked as misbranded' The department files cases against companies for misbranding drugs and if they are harmful. It may penalise them, but not file a case for mistakes such as labelling errors in cases where the medicine is safe. Also in cases where a company withdraws the product, the department issues a warning. The alarming extent of counterfeit medicines in Karnataka came to light after Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao's reply during the winter session in Belagavi. Responding to a question by MLC CN Manjegowda, Gundu Rao outlined steps to curb such medicines, including regular sample testing from the supply chain by drug inspectors, investigations into complaints, and

coordination with licensing authorities to take action against the violators. Inspections conducted by drug inspectors often reveal whether a medicine is spurious or misbranded through rigorous sampling and laboratory testing. An officer from the Drugs Control Department told TNIE that during routine checks at manufacturing units, pharmacies or distribution channels, inspectors collect samples of medicines, which are sent to government-approved laboratories for analysis. "If a medicine fails to meet the prescribed quality standards set by regulatory authorities such as the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), contains incorrect or harmful ingredients, or is falsely labelled, it is classified as spurious. Similarly, if the labelling is inaccurate, misleading or fails to adhere to regulatory guidelines, the medicine is marked as misbranded. Once identified, the drugs are labelled accordingly, and immediate action is taken to prevent their distribution.

Snehamayi Krishna alleges inducements to withdraw MUDA case

mysuru. RTI activist Snehamayi Krishna on Wednesday filed a complaint with the Lokayukta police here alleging pressure and attempts to bribe him to withdraw a case pertaining to alleged irregularities in allotment of sites by Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA). Krishna told TNIE that Harsha, who allegedly identified himself as a close aide of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's wife Parvathi, and another person named Srinidhi attempted to coerce him into withdrawing the case. The duo offered inducements to



him and his family members, claiming that they had struck a Rs 3-crore deal with RTI activist Gangaraju to withdraw a case. They claimed that Rs 1.5 crore had been paid to Gangaraju as advance, Krishna said. He said on December 13, he was approached by Srinidhi near the MUDA office, who introduced Harsha to him as a representative of Parvathi. Harsha reportedly asked him not to go ahead with the plea to transfer the case to CBI stating that Parvathi is distressed by the probe. Krishna said that he did not give in to their repeated requests and appeals to withdraw his case. He alleged that on December 15, Harsha and Srinidhi visited his house at Bhairaveshwaranagar and attempted to persuade his son Vivek to convince him to withdraw the case. Along with

Indian Navy commissions INS Nirdeshak

VISAKHAPATNAM. INS Nirdeshak, the second ship under the Survey Vessel (Large) project, was formally commissioned into the Indian Navy at the Naval Dockyard in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday. Union Minister of State for Defence Sanjay Seth presided over the commissioning ceremony, which was hosted by Vice Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command.

The ship is part of a series of four survey vessels under construction by Garden Reach Shipbuilding & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata. Designed to conduct hydrographic surveys, assist in navigation, and support maritime operations, the vessel marks a major step in strengthening India's maritime capabilities. The secondary roles of the vessel is to serve as a hospital ship and to take part in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) missions. The vessel is the successor of the former ship 'Nirdeshak,' that served the Indian Navy with distinction for over three decades. It was decommissioned on December 19, 2014. Union Minister Sanjay Seth emphasised the vital role of survey ships in ensuring maritime safety. "Highly specialised ships, the Survey Vessels, play a vital role in charting the ocean. These are sophisticated niche platforms that allow for a more accurate collation of oceanic data, its precise processing, and, as a result, highly reliable charts that enhance maritime operations and safety," he said. Highlighting the

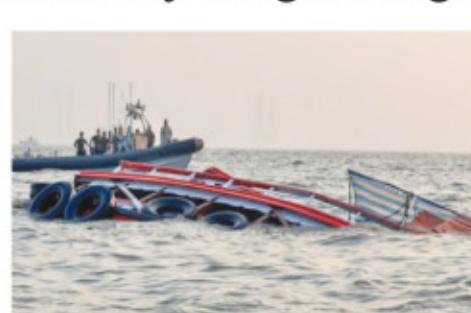


diplomatic role of survey ships, he added, "When our Survey Ships undertake missions in support of a friendly country, they epitomise what India believes in helping a friend in need without asking for something in return. This would help in strengthening our bilateral ties and in opening up and promoting trade opportunities in the long term." The new Survey Ships will make us more potent also, as foreign fleets are looking towards Bharatiya Nausena for hydrographic cooperation. "It is built with over 80% indigenous content under the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. The ship is equipped with advanced hydrographic systems, including Multi Beam Echo Sounders, Side Scan Sonars, Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUV), and Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROV). These technologies enable precise

mapping for safe navigation, expand survey capabilities in challenging zones, and support environmental studies and wreck identification.

The vessel is expected to contribute significantly to the security and environmental health of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), while reinforcing India's leadership in regional collaboration, scientific exploration, and peacekeeping missions. It will also support India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) initiative by promoting shared maritime data with friendly nations. The ship's construction involved collaborative efforts by the Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau, GRSE, Larsen & Toubro (L&T), Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), Indian Register of Shipping (IRS), and several MSMEs, showcasing India's focus on self-reliance in defence manufacturing.

Mumbai boat accident: Hit by snag during engine trial, speedboat failed to alter course



15-20 minutes to reach the spot. However, there was no clarity on whether the ferry vessel, Neelkamal, made a distress call or if the rescue was initiated on basis of information from other vessels in the vicinity. "I was recording the video of a speedboat presuming it was doing stunts

when it suddenly hit our ferry. To my utter disbelief and shock, on impact, one of the speedboat's passengers was flung into the air and crashed on the deck of our ferry just beside me. His motionless body was badly mutilated," said Gautam Gupta (25), who recorded the viral video of the speedboat moments right before the collision, and survived the capsizing incident.

Also read: The moment Navy speedboat rammed into Mumbai ferry. Gupta is currently receiving treatment at St George's Hospital alongside his cousin Rinta Gupta (30) while his aunt is still missing. He was on his way to Elephanta Caves with his aunt and her daughter who were visiting from their native place in north India. Wednesday when tragedy struck.

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CBI arrests 2 IRS officers for taking bribes from Seepz exporters

MUMBAI. The CBI arrested two Indian Revenue Service officers—a joint commissioner and deputy commissioner at Santacruz Electronics Export Processing Zone (SEEPZ)—and five others in a case where touts were collecting money on behalf of the officers and other public servants. In all, more than Rs 1 crore in cash was seized during the operation. A special CBI court rejected the plea for their police custody and released all of them on bail after accepting the defence contention about an illegal arrest.

During a surprise check by the CBI on Tuesday, a collection agent, Manoj Joglekar, was found with Rs 60 lakh kept in envelopes bearing code names, purportedly of the officials receiving the bribes and the companies making the payments.

One of the arrested IRS officers, Chanderpal Singh Chauhan, was joint commissioner in SEEPZ and owned properties worth Rs 40 crore and several high-end cars and expensive watches, the remand application said.

The other IRS officer was identified as deputy development commissioner, Prasad Varawantkar. The remand application said Chauhan was getting an extension at the job by paying hefty bribes to higher-ups. SEEPZ is an electronics exports processing zone which provides incentives for exports through various facilitation measures. Lawyer Rahul Agarwal, who represented Chauhan, said CBI officers detained him at 10 am on Dec 17 and produced him before the court at around 4 pm December 18, which implied that he was illegally detained beyond a period of 24 hours. It was argued that CBI arrested the accused prior to the registration of the FIR and that the time of arrest was misrepresented and shown as 00:35am on Dec 18. The accused had to be produced before the court within 24 hours of his arrest for remand hearing. The defence lawyers argued that the accused were also not provided with the grounds of arrest when detained. The CBI had received multiple complaints against Chauhan, regarding demands for bribes to process properties-business related NOCs at SEEPZ in Andheri, but individuals were reluctant to lodge formal complaints.

News box

Woman (20) murdered at home, husband on the run; cops suspect marital discord

Gurgaon. A 20-year-old woman was killed allegedly by her husband at their house in Ballabgarh's Sahupura on Tuesday night. Anchal, a housewife, was married to Rajender alias Monu, a native of Shahdara and a labourer, for a year, said Ballabgarh Sadar inspector Umesh Kumar. In her complaint to the police, the victim's mother, Poonam, alleged that at around 8pm on Tuesday, she received a call from her daughter's neighbours saying that she was killed. "I rushed to Anchal's house with my husband and her stepfather, Dharmender Kumar. She was strangled by her husband and was lying dead on the floor," Poonam alleged. Alerted by locals, police reached the spot and sent the body for post-mortem examination. "When we reached the victim's house, her body was lying on the floor. It was covered up to the neck with a blanket and froth was coming out of her nose. There were injury marks on the neck as well. We sent the body for autopsy after collecting necessary evidence," SI Harkesh stated in the FIR. A murder case was registered against Rajender under BNS Section 103 (1) on Wednesday on the complaint of the woman's family. Rajender is on the run, and police said marital discord could be the reason for the murder.

Leopard strays into Gurgaon's Rewari village, rescued by foresters

Gurgaon. A leopard entered a tin shed at Kanuka in Rewari on Wednesday evening and was safely rescued by Haryana forest and wildlife officials. The incident caused panic among the villagers. The situation remained under control as residents spotted the leopard entering the tin shed and promptly shut the gate from outside before alerting police and wildlife department. Wildlife officials arrived at the scene and commenced rescue operations at 8.30pm. Divisional forest officer Deepak Patil said the proximity of Kanuka village to the Aravalis likely explains the leopard's presence. "We carried out the rescue operation and it was rescued," he said.

"The rescue team from Gurgaon reached the spot by 9 pm and tranquilled and rescued the leopard," added Patil.

HC dismisses plea by Mamman Khan in Nuh violence case

Chandigarh. The Punjab and Haryana high court dismissed plea filed by senior Congress functionary and MLA Mamman Khan against segregation of his trial by the trial court in Nuh from other accused in connection with the July 2023 Nuh violence case.

Charanjeet Malhotra paid tribute to revered mother Late Bimla Rani Malhotra on her first death anniversary Charanjeet Malhotra pledged to plant 100 saplings in memory of mother

New Delhi. Prominent social worker and Gau Mata Raksha and Corona warrior Charanjeet Malhotra paid tribute to revered mother on her first death anniversary and said that 'Maa' is not just a word but the entire universe, the whole world is at the feet of mother. My mother not only supported me at every step but also protected me by becoming my shield whenever needed. During her lifetime, she always supported and guided us in all our work with determination. Mother has left us physically but even today she guides and protects me at every step in her mind. I will continue to get her blessings throughout my life. The program

of the death anniversary of our most respected mother Late Bimla Rani Malhotra was organized at Main Phase Road, Block-A, Street No-17, Karol Bagh. In this program, divine kirtan and bhajans started from 10.30 am and refreshments and lunch started from around 1:30 pm. People from various political and religious organizations participated in this program. And the local people of Karol Bagh also served refreshments and food (langar) to the guests who came to the program from around 1:30 pm to 9:30 pm, the permanent people were seen helping. People kept coming in a long queue and everyone had refreshments and lunch peacefully. The entire family of Malhotra ji was taking care in every way that the people who came to the program did not miss anything. An amazing happiness was visible on the face of prominent social worker and Gau Mata Raksha and Corona warrior Charanjeet Malhotra ji. On talking to Malhotra ji, he said that all the pilgrimages are useless for the one who has not served his parents, there is nothing greater than mother in this world. Even today I feel that the most revered mother is with me. In the death anniversary program of the most revered mother late Bimla Rani Malhotra, bags of flour were distributed to the poor and homeless people in the evening and blankets were also distributed during winter. Guests who came to the death anniversary program of Charanjeet Malhotra ji's mother late Bimla Rani Malhotra - regional MLA Vishesh Ravi and regional corporation councilor Urmila Mahendra Kumar Gautam also distributed bags of flour and blankets to the poor and homeless people with their own hands. At the same time Charanjeet Malhotra said that he took a pledge to plant 100 saplings in mother's memory and he said that by planting trees in the memory of ancestors, one should take a pledge to immortalize them. He further said that it has been said in our religious scriptures that there is no greater virtuous act than planting trees because by nurturing a tree one gets the same virtue as having hundred sons. Famous social worker Malhotra ji urged everyone to take a pledge to plant trees in the memory of ancestors on their death anniversary and on their child's birthday.

Congress and Nehru were responsible for Baba Saheb's death: Ramdas Malik

New Delhi. Senior leader of Bharatiya Janata Party Delhi Pradesh and Business Cell Co-ordinator Delhi State Co-Chief and social worker Ramdas Malik said that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was a true well-wisher of not only Dalits but the entire Hindu society. He repeatedly warned Pandit Nehru that why do you talk only about the Muslim community, why don't you talk about the Hindu society and why are you hell-bent on dividing the country further. I want to say this very responsibly that at that time many Hindu organizations also did not support Ambedkar ji as much as they should have and today when I see how for the last two days the Congress and the opposition parties are trying to take advantage by politicizing Ambedkar ji's name, in fact these are the same people who never gave as much importance to Ambedkar ji as they should have. Amit Shah ji said that if these people had given importance, then after independence, Baba Saheb Ambedkar would have been made the Law and Justice Minister in the first interim government formed in the country under the leadership of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The Constitution had been implemented under his leadership but the Scheduled Castes were not given impor-

tance. This government did not give the justice that should have been given to the Dalits. The condition of Dalits across the country did not improve even after independence. Due to differences with Nehru on many issues, on 27 September 1951, he wrote a letter to Nehru and resigned from the cabinet. He formed his own Scheduled Castes Federation and started strengthening it. When the first Lok Sabha election was held in 1951-1952, the Congress fielded his PA Narayan S. Kajrolkar, who was a Dalit, against him. Nehru conspired to defeat Ambedkar. After the defeat of Ambedkar, the stalwart leader of Dalits of the entire country, Nehru disrespected him at many places and did not give him respect. The first task of the Congress was to not let Ambedkar's policies succeed properly. It also did not allow Ambedkar's organization, which he himself had formed, to become strong. He further told that when Nehru was told that Ambedkar ji is leaving the cabinet, Nehru wrote in his letter that the cabinet will not be affected much by

Ambedkar's departure. I can understand Raja ji's situation but Ambedkar should



not be worried about. Many people proposed to build some kind of memorial of Ambedkar ji in Mau but Congress never allowed this to happen. The work of build-

ing memorials at 5 places was done by Bharatiya Janata Party. Going further, Bharatiya Janata Party built Ambedkar Bhawans at various places so that today's youth can remember Ambedkar ji and remember Ambedkar in true sense. This work was done by Bharatiya Janata Party. Congress has always used Ambedkar's name only to get votes and apart from this it has nothing to do with Ambedkar. Congress should give account of so many insults of so many years and Congress should apologize for so many insults of Ambedkar. Amit Shah ji's statement has brought about a new revolution in the country. The viewpoint of Ambedkar's followers has changed. The double character of Congress has been exposed. Social worker Ramdas Malik further said that anybody can imagine how much he was tortured, how much he was persecuted, how much burden of the country was on him that he died at a young age, even Congress and Pandit Nehru were responsible for his death because at that time he was given so much mental stress, he was hurt so much, his words were ignored so much that he could not bear it all and he died and these Congress people want to use him only for their political benefit.

Speed breaker with no markings leave this stretch more dangerous

Gurgaon. A raised pedestrian crossing was constructed on the Golf Course Road to slow down traffic, but work on it was suspended, leaving this concrete obstruction without any markings and commuters at the risk of an accident. The issue came to the fore after a video circulating on social media showed a BMW driver hitting the breaker at a high speed, causing the car to mid-air for milliseconds before it lands on the road with a thud. There are sparks from the car as metal scrapes the road. The video shows another truck losing balance as its driver fails to hit the brakes in time. GMDA officials on Monday confirmed that the incidents in the clip were from Golf Course Road. They said the authority was constructing a tabletop crossing near La Lagune in Sector 54 as the area is prone to speeding and accidents. "After the construction of the tabletop crossing on one side of the road, DLF representatives and its security staff with 50-odd bouncers stopped the contractor from carrying out work further on the night of Oct 26. They told the official at the site that they will remove the crossing. We have apprised the matter to the GMDA CEO and a meeting has been called on Tuesday to decide on how to proceed further," a GMDA official said. DLF officials refused to comment on queries about halting the construction work. But sources said the realtor, which maintains areas near Golf Course, plans to install temporary barricades to mitigate the risk of accidents and slow down traffic on the stretch. "The company will take up the matter with GMDA to determine the best course of action regarding the unmarked speed breaker, whether it should be removed or maintained with appropriate markings to enhance visibility till a permanent solution is worked out," the source added. The GMDA official said that the authority was tasked to build the tabletop crossing by the District Road Safety Committee, which had approved its construction in April after a pedestrian was killed by a speeding vehicle on the stretch. This raised pedestrian crossing, called a tabletop crossing, is designed to slow down vehicles and make it more visible to commuters. But the one on Golf Course Road does not have the markings of a zebra crossing along with other safety features such as road studs, cat eyes, and cautionary signage. Golf Course Road has long been plagued by speeding, with vehicles often seen cruising beyond 100kmph, well above the limits of 60kmph on surface roads and 50kmph on underpasses.

NAME CHANGE

I, Ashish Kumar, S/o Shashi Kashyap, R/o. JE/1, First Floor Paradise Building Khridi Extension, Tiktik Park Malvya Nagar Malvya Nagar South Delhi Delhi 110017, Have Change my name to Ashish Kumar Kashyap for All Future Purpose

NAME CHANGE

I, Salman Khan S/o Ishid Khan R/o 653/B, Seink Colony, Sector-49, Faridabad, Haryana-121001 Have Changed My Name To Divyanshi Pandey For All Future Purpose

NAME CHANGE

I, Divyanshi Shukla Pandey W/o Pranav Pandey R/o 584C, 2nd Floor, Palam Vihar, Choma(62), Gurgaon, Haryana-122017, Have Changed My Name To Divyanshi Pandey For All Future Purpose

NAME CHANGE

I, Sneha Yadav W/o Samrat Bhambhu R/o No-214, Ground Floor, Sector-17A, Gurgaon, Haryana-122001 Have Changed My Name To Sneha Yadav Bhambhu For All Future Purpose

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as SAPNA SINGH, S/o R. KRISHNA MOORTHY, Permanent Address G-207, First Floor, AVHO Colony, Vihar, Secunderabad, Telangana - 500015, have changed my name and my minor daughter namely Khushi Verma aged 16 years in her School Record. The actual name of mine and my minor daughter are Arvind Kumar Verma and Khushi in my minor daughter namely Khushi Verma aged 16 years in her School Record. The actual name of mine and my minor daughter are Arvind Kumar Verma and Khushi Verma, which may be amended accordingly.

NAME CHANGE

I, KRISHNAMOORTHY RAMAKRISHNAN S/o R. KRISHNA MOORTHY, Permanent Address G-207, First Floor, AVHO Colony, Vihar, Secunderabad, Telangana - 500015, have changed my name and my minor daughter namely RISHA RAMAKRISHNAN alias RISHA RAMAKRISHNAN aged 16 years and she shall hereafter be known as RISHA RAMAKRISHNAN.

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as AJAY KUMAR S/o MAHENDER KUMAR residing at AC-16, Tel Mill Marg, Amar Puri, Pahar Ganj, Central Delhi, Swami Ram Tirth Nagar, Delhi - 110055 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as AJAY KUMAR.

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as VIKAS S/o SATYR H/o HNo. - 4412/4, STREET No.-7, AJIT NAGAR, DHARMPURA, GANDHI NAGAR, EAST DELHI, DELHI-110031 declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as RAVI in my Driving License No. DL-0520160298735 and Pan card No. CBSPR6651R. The actual name of mine is VIKAS which may be amended accordingly.

NAME CHANGE

I, RITA YADAV W/o RAVI YADAV R/o RZ-40 GALI NO-1 V-1 NAGAR WEST SAGARPUR DELHI 110046 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO RITA YADAV

DATE OF BIRTH CHANGE

I, SOUMYA S NAIR Wife of No. 15669181, Rank-HAV, R/o RUPA KURUP Presently residing at MURALEE MANDIR, TEH-ADDOOR, VIA KAIPATTOR, ANGADIKAL, NORTH, PATHANAMTHitta, KERALA-686948, in my husband's service records my date of birth wrongly mentioned as 1/10/1987 instead of my correct date of birth as 17/07/1987 vide Affidavit dated 19/12/2024 before Notary Public, Delhi.

NAME CHANGE

I, ASHIMA SACHDEVA W/O LOKESH KALRA & HO-92 SECTOR 47 NOIDA GAUTAM BUDH NAGAR PIN 201303 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME AS ASHIMA

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that I Arvind Kumar, S/o Shashi Kumar Varna, R/o 184/242, BLOCK - B, Name-BINU R, KURUP Presently residing at MURALEE MANDIR, TEH-ADDOOR, VIA KAIPATTOR, ANGADIKAL, NORTH, PATHANAMTHitta, KERALA-686948, in my husband's service records my date of birth wrongly mentioned as 1/10/1987 instead of my correct date of birth as 17/07/1987 vide Affidavit dated 19/12/2024 before Notary Public, Delhi.

NAME CHANGE

I, NIKHL KUMAR S/O NATHU RAM residing at H-28, SECOND FLOOR, PRIVATE COLONY, SHRINIWAS PURI, DELHI-110065, have changed my name to NIKHL for all future purposes.

NAME CHANGE

I, ASHIMA SACHDEVA W/O LOKESH KALRA & HO-92 SECTOR 47 NOIDA GAUTAM BUDH NAGAR PIN 201303 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME AS ASHIMA

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that I KUSUM Paswan R/o Dara Paswan R/o RZ-633/13-GALI NO-6C, 6D, 6F, GEETJALI PARK, WEST SAGAR PUR, NEW DELHI, DELHI - 110046, declare that name of mine and my husband has been wrongly written as KUSUM and my son records my date of birth wrongly mentioned as 01/07/1989 instead of my correct date of birth as 05/02/1989 vide Affidavit dated 19/12/2024 before Notary Public, Delhi.

NAME CHANGE

I, KRISHNAMOORTHY RAMAKRISHNAN S/o R. KRISHNA MOORTHY, Permanent Address G-207, First Floor, AVHO Colony, Vihar, Secunderabad, Telangana - 500015, have changed my name and my minor daughter namely RISHA RAMAKRISHNAN alias RISHA RAMAKRISHNAN aged 16 years and she shall hereafter be known as RISHA RAMAKRISHNAN.

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as AJAY KUMAR S/o MAHENDER KUMAR residing at AC-16, Tel Mill Marg, Amar Puri, Pahar Ganj, Central Delhi, Swami Ram Tirth Nagar, Delhi - 110055 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as AJAY KUMAR.

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as VIKAS S/o SATYR H/o HNo. - 4412/4, STREET No.-7, AJIT NAGAR, DHARMPURA, GANDHI NAGAR, EAST DELHI, DELHI-110031 declare that name of mine has been wrongly written as RAVI in my Driving License No. DL-0520160298735 and Pan card No. CBSPR6651R. The actual name of mine is VIKAS which may be amended accordingly.

NAME CHANGE

I, RITA YADAV W/o RAVI YADAV R/o RZ-40 GALI NO-1 V-1 NAGAR WEST SAGARPUR DELHI 110046 HAVE CHANGED MY NAME TO RITA YADAV

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NAME CHANGE

I, RITA YADAV W/o RAVI YADAV R/o RZ-40 GALI NO-1 V-1 NAGAR

NEWS BOX

How Social Media Restricted Palestinian News And Boosted Israel's

Facebook has been accused of severely restricting Palestinian news outlets' ability to reach their audience during the Israel-Gaza war. A BBC analysis of Facebook data revealed a steep drop in audience engagement for newsrooms in the Palestinian territories, including Gaza and the West Bank, since October 2023. This decline in engagement is surprising, given that social media has become a vital source of updates for those wanting to hear more voices from inside Gaza. Facebook pages for news outlets like Palestine TV, Wafa news agency, and Palestinian Al-Watan News have been crucial in providing updates to millions of followers worldwide. Since the war began, outside reporters have been allowed to enter Gaza if escorted by the Israeli army. Although during wars, audience engagement is expected to rise, the data analysis showed a 77% decline in engagement for Palestinian-based news organisations, while Israeli news organisations saw a 37% increase in engagement during the same period. Meta, Facebook's owner, denies deliberately suppressing particular voices, stating that any such implication is "unequivocally false". Palestine TV has 5.8 million followers on Facebook and journalists working there showed a 60% drop in the number of people seeing their posts. "Interaction was completely restricted, and our posts stopped reaching people," says Tariq Ziad, a journalist at the channel. Shadow-ban is when a social media platform bans a user's content without notifying the user, and Palestinian journalists fear the same has happened with their online content. BBC ran a data analysis on 20 Israeli news channels such as Yedioth Ahronot, Israel Hayom and Channel 13, which also posted war-related content but their audience engagement increased by 37%. However, leaked documents and internal messages suggest that Instagram, another Meta-owned platform, increased its moderation of Palestinian user comments after October 2023. This change was made to respond to a "spike in hateful content" coming out of the Palestinian territories, according to Meta.

New Russian Law Will Remove Taliban's "Terrorist" Label, HTS Could Be Next

Moscow. The Russian parliament has passed a law that would allow courts to suspend bans on groups designated as terrorist organisations by Moscow. The new law, passed by parliament's lower house, the State Duma, paved the way for Moscow to normalise ties with the Afghan Taliban and potentially with the new leadership of Syria. It outlines a legal mechanism for groups to be removed from the country's official banned list of outlawed "terrorist" organisations by order of a court if they cease terrorist-related activity. Under the law, Russia's Prosecutor General could file a request with a court outlining that a banned group has "ceased" its activities "in support of terrorism." A judge could then rule to remove the designation.

The Taliban was in the first batch of groups to be added to the banned list, in February 2003, and Syria's HTS was added in 2020. The Kremlin has been courting relations with the Taliban after the Islamist group seized power in August 2021 as US-led forces staged a chaotic withdrawal after 20 years of war. President Vladimir Putin said in July that the Taliban was now an ally in fighting terrorism.

However, the Taliban's expected removal from Russia's terrorist registry would not amount to a formal recognition of its government, or what it calls the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" - a move no country in the world has yet made.

There are also calls in Moscow for the removal of Syrian group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) - that spearheaded the toppling of President Bashar al-Assad this month - from Moscow's list of banned terror groups. The leader of Russia's Muslim region of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, on Monday said Russia needed ties to the new Syrian authorities to ensure stability and prevent a humanitarian catastrophe. Kadyrov is seen as a close Putin ally.

UK Pledges New \$286 Million Defence Package For Ukraine

London. Britain on Thursday unveiled a package of £163.225 million (\$286 million) in new military aid to Ukraine for next year, including drones, boats and air defence systems. The move came after the UK's Defence Secretary John Healey visited Kyiv on Wednesday, holding talks with his Ukrainian counterpart Rustom Umerov and vowing to step up British support to Ukraine in 2025. Three years since Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine "the depths of his miscalculation are clearer than ever, as the brave people of Ukraine continue to defy all expectations with their unbreakable spirit," Healey said.

"But they cannot go it alone," Healey added, vowing the UK's support for Kyiv was "ironclad" and Britain would always stand "shoulder to shoulder to ensure Putin cannot win".

In July, the new Labour government vowed to commit £163.3 billion a year in military aid to Ukraine until 2030-2031. The new package will include £163.92 million for equipment to bolster Ukraine's navy, including small boats, reconnaissance drones and uncrewed surface vessels, the defence ministry said in a statement.

A further £163.68 million will be used for air defence equipment including radars, and 1,000 counter-drone electronic warfare systems at a cost of £163.39 million would be supplied to the Ukrainian army. Healey said the UK would also boost a training programme for Ukrainian soldiers run with key allies on British soil known as Operation Interflex, under which 51,000 recruits have been trained since mid-2022. "With Putin resorting to sending as many as 2,000 Russian soldiers to their deaths on the battlefield each day, it is critical that Ukraine is supported with a supply of properly trained and equipped soldiers," the ministry statement said.

Airstrikes hit Yemen's capital, port city after Houthi attack targets Israel

DUBAI. A series of intense airstrikes shook Yemen's rebel-held capital and a port city early Thursday, shortly after a Houthi missile targeted central Israel. It wasn't immediately clear who launched the strikes on Sanaa, which the Iranian-backed Houthis have held for over a decade. The Houthis also reported strikes in Hodeida as well. But initial information on the targets of the attack and the timing suggested Israel may have conducted the assault. Houthi-controlled media reported the strikes, but offered no immediate information on casualties nor damage. The Houthi-controlled satellite channel al-Masirah said that some of the strikes targeted power stations in the capital, as well as the Ras Isa oil terminal on the Red Sea. Rebel-held Hodeida, some 145 kilometers (90 miles) southwest of Sanaa, has been key for food shipments into Yemen as its decadelong war has gone on. There's also longstanding suspicion that weapons from Iran have been transferred through the port. The strikes happened just after the Israeli military said its air force



intercepted a missile launched from Yemen before it entered the country's territory. "Rocket and missile sirens were sounded following the possibility of falling debris from the interception," the Israeli military

said. Sirens sounded near Tel Aviv and the surrounding areas, and a large explosion was heard overhead at the time. The Houthis did not immediately claim the missile attack, but said an important

military statement would be issued in the coming hours, following a pattern of how they claim their assaults.

The Israeli military did not respond to a request for comment. Israel has struck the Houthis in the past over attacks targeting Israel and in recent weeks have threatened to again attack the rebels. Israel previously struck Hodeida and its oil infrastructure in July after a Houthi drone attack killed one person and wounded 10 in Tel Aviv.

American forces have also launched a series of strikes on the Houthis over nearly a year due to Houthi attacks on shipping in the Red Sea corridor. On Monday, the U.S. military's Central Command said it hit "a key command-and-control facility" operated by the Houthis in Sanaa, later identified as the al-Ardi complex once home to the government's Defense Ministry. But on Thursday, a U.S. military official said the attacks weren't carried out by the Americans, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the ongoing strikes.

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It was not immediately clear who launched the strikes on Sanaa, which the Houthis have held for over a decade. American forces have launched a series of strikes on the Houthis over nearly a year due to Houthi attacks on shipping in the Red Sea corridor. US military officials did not acknowledge a request for comment. Houthi-controlled media reported the strikes, but offered no immediate information on casualties nor damage. The strikes happened just after the Israeli military said its air force intercepted a missile launched from Yemen before it entered the country's territory. Rocket and missile sirens were sounded following the possibility of falling debris from the interception," the Israeli military said. Sirens sounded near Tel Aviv and the surrounding areas, and a large explosion was heard



The detective revealed that when Singh was approached by officers, he provided false details and initially claimed to have no knowledge of the incident. But during the police investigation, it was established that Singh acted following several arguments over the ownership of the family home, which he believed had been left to him by his late father. "This has been an extremely distressing and challenging time for Mrs Kaur's family, they have been left devastated at the loss of their dear mother. They have shown immense courage and dignity throughout the investigation

and subsequent legal proceedings," he said. "It is unfortunate that this case ended with a trial and the family had to sit through the proceedings and listen to the details of Mrs Kaur's final moments. This is in no way easy for them - they've lost a loved one and will now have to live with the fact that Mrs Kaur's life was taken by one of their own," he added. The court heard how previously Kaur had reported Singh for his behaviour and he was even arrested on suspicion of controlling and coercive behaviour and released on bail while those enquiries were ongoing. The investigation revealed that Singh had been living in his car on the driveway of the home, and on the day of the murder, Kaur had let him into the house. CCTV evidence showed Singh leaving the property later on the same day and going to purchase a sack and spade from a nearby shop. He then returned to the house on Bolsover Street and when relatives were unable to get hold of Kaur, they went to her home where they discovered her body. When police officers arrived at the scene, they also found that ground in the rear garden had been dug up creating a large hole.

World Leaders On Speed-Dial: How Elon Musk Is Causing Geopolitical Tremors

Washington DC. It isn't unthinkable that the world's richest person can pull more than just a few strings with top politicians, but Elon Musk seems to be investing himself in the political world with such intensity that analysts now wonder if there is a larger plan. Last week Elon Musk created history by breaking his own previous record and becoming the first person to have a net worth of more than 400 billion dollars. In just six days, he has added nearly another 100 billion (\$86 billion) and is knocking on the 500-billion-dollar mark. In the last one year, Musk has added \$257 billion to his net worth - \$7 billion more than the entire net worth of Jeff Bezos - the second-most richest person globally. But Musk is not just riding the high wave when it comes to business, he is now doing the same in geopolitics. Having been included in the Trump Administration 2.0, Elon Musk finds himself immersed in the world of politics. Though he was deeply involved with Donald Trump's

campaign and is partially credited for the latter's win in the US elections, he now seems to be backing - or rather, influencing - leaders from beyond the United States. US DONE, MUSK SETS EYES ON UK From supporting one firebrand leader to now backing another one - this time in the UK - Elon Musk has held extensive talks with anti-immigration hardliner Nigel Farage. The discussions between the two were largely focused on Musk funding Farage's hard-right party Reform UK. Elon Musk, who now freely uses Donald Trump's Florida resort estate-cum-residence, Mar-a-Lago, as his political office, invited Nigel Farage for a meeting earlier this week. Writing about it in British daily The Telegraph, Mr Farage confirmed that "the issue of money was discussed", though the two could not agree on the amount in question by the end of that meeting. "There will be ongoing negotiations on that score," Mr Farage added. Sharing details about the

meeting, that will most certainly raise eyebrows in the UK's two main political party offices - The Labour Party, now in government and the Conservative Party, currently the opposition - Mr Farage mentioned about Elon Musk's disdain for both parties. He stated that Musk "described the Labour and Conservative parties as the uniparty, and left us (Reform Party) in no doubt that he is right behind us." In his article Mr Farage also mentioned that he aims to learn from Elon Musk's cash incentives for people to be encouraged to vote - a strategy that worked for Donald Trump's Republican party during the US elections. Mr Farage stated that "I have come home with copious notes on how they increased turnout, voter registration, and so much more, and all of this I intend to implement as part of the professionalisation of our party."

Elon Musk is reportedly considering an initial donation of \$100 million to Nigel Farage's Reform Party.

overhead at the time. The Israeli military did not respond to a request for comment. Israel has struck the Houthis in the past over attacks targeting Israel and in recent weeks have threatened to again attack the rebels. The Houthis have targeted some 100 merchant vessels with missiles and drones since the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip started in October 2023 after Hamas' surprise attack on Israel. The Houthis have seized one vessel and sunk two in a campaign that has also killed four sailors. Other missiles and drones have either been intercepted by separate US- and European-led coalitions in the Red Sea or failed to reach their targets, which have also included Western military vessels. The rebels maintain that they target ships linked to Israel, the US or the United Kingdom to force an end to Israel's campaign against Hamas in Gaza. However, many of the ships attacked have little or no connection to the conflict, including some bound for Iran.

Government funding plan collapses as Trump makes new demands days before shutdown

WASHINGTON. President-elect Donald Trump abruptly rejected a bipartisan plan Wednesday to prevent a Christmastime government shutdown, instead telling House Speaker Mike Johnson and Republicans to essentially renegotiate — days before a deadline when federal funding runs out. Trump's sudden entrance into the debate and new demands sent Congress spiraling as lawmakers are trying to wrap up work and head home for the holidays. It leaves Johnson scrambling to engineer a new plan before Friday's deadline to keep government open. "Republicans must GET SMART and TOUGH," Trump and Vice President-elect JD Vance said in a statement. The president-elect made an almost unrealistic proposal that combined some continuation of government funds along with a much more controversial provision to raise the nation's debt limit — something his own party routinely rejects. "Anything else is a betrayal of our country," they wrote. Democrats decried the GOP revolt



over the stopgap measure, which would have also provided some \$100.4 billion in disaster aid, some \$100.4 billion in the aftermath of hurricanes and other natural calamities that ravaged states this year, plus \$10 billion in economic assistance for farmers failed to win over the budget-slashing GOP. A number of Republicans had been waiting for Trump to signal whether they should vote yes or no. "This should not pass," Musk posted on his social media site X in the wee hours of Wednesday morning. One lawmaker said office phone lines were flooded with calls from constituents. "My phone was ringing off the

hook," said Rep. Andy Barr, R-Ky. "The people who elected us are listening to Elon Musk." The outcome comes as no surprise for Johnson, who like other Republican House speakers before him, has been unable to convince his majority to go along with the routine needs of federal government operations, which they would prefer to slash. It all shows just how hard it will be for Republicans next year, as they seize control of the House, Senate and White House, to unify and lead the nation. And it underscores how much Johnson and the GOP leaders must depend on Trump's blessing to see any legislative package over the finish line. Musk, who is heading Trump's new Department of Government Efficiency, warned that "Any member of the House or Senate who votes for this outrageous spending bill deserves to be voted out in 2 years!" It's not an idle threat coming from Musk, the world's richest man, who helped bankroll Trump's victory and can easily use his America PAC to make or break political careers.

NEWS BOX

MVD, Kerala Road Safety Authority launch project for safe Sabarimala pilgrimage

KOCHI. Days after four members of a family were killed after their car collided with a bus carrying Sabarimala pilgrims, the Motor Vehicle Department and the Kerala Road Safety Authority have launched a joint initiative to enhance road safety during this pilgrimage season. In the newly launched initiative, as part of the Safe Zone Sabarimala Project, the authorities have published a virtual brochure with QR codes through which road safety information and instructions specifically for Sabarimala pilgrims can be accessed. Road accidents during the Sabarimala season have been increasing over the years, with vehicles carrying pilgrims from other states often meeting with accidents in the difficult and unfamiliar route to the shrine. "The brochure and the instructions have been released in six languages - Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Hindi and English. The brochure includes two QR codes. Scanning them or just clicking on them will fetch accident black spot videos and pilgrimage details," an official with the motor vehicle department said. This year alone, 68 accidents occurred involving vehicles carrying Sabarimala pilgrims, which left at least 56 pilgrims injured. The first QR code takes you to the official YouTube channel of MVD Kerala, where instructions for safe road transport en route to the pilgrimage are given.

DYFI leader M Lenin leaves CPM, joins BJP

PALAKKAD. While CPM district conferences are under way, DYFI-SFI leader M Lenin resigned from the CPM and joined BJP on Wednesday. Lenin, who held several positions, including CPM Kuzhalmannam office secretary and branch member, SFI Kuzhalmannam area secretary, SFI Palakkad district committee member, DYFI Manjalar area and block secretary, and reporter at Deshabhimani, left the CPM citing what he termed 'sidelining' in the party. He joined the BJP at its district office by receiving membership from BJP state general secretary C Krishnakumar. The welcoming ceremony was attended by BJP district president K M Haridas, district general secretaries P Venugopal and A K Omanaikuttan, and Alathur Mandalam general secretary Kanakadas. "The decision to break ties with the CPM is personal and stems from a sense of being sidelined within the party.

In the coming days, more party workers will leave the CPM and join the BJP," said Lenin. He clarified that he is not blaming the party as a whole, but criticising the factionalism among senior CPM leaders.

"I am coming from a CPM stronghold like Thenkurissi. And I joined the party following in the footsteps of my father, who worked tirelessly to strengthen the party in our region. Yet, sadly, when he passed away, the CPM didn't even drape a red flag over his body," said Lenin. He emphasised his commitment to the BJP.

HYDRAA to demolish illegal commercial buildings within Full Tank Level zones

HYDERABAD. Hyderabad Disaster Response and Asset Protection Agency (HYDRAA) Commissioner AV Ranganath clarified that the agency would not demolish structures whose permissions were granted before July this year. Houses constructed without permission but completed and occupied by July will also remain unaffected, subject to verification via Google Earth and on-site inspections, he added. However, HYDRAA will demolish commercial and business buildings, such as N Convention, constructed without permits if they fall within the Full Tank Level (FTL) of water bodies, regardless of their construction date, Ranganath said. Structures with revoked permits are deemed illegal, and if construction continues after July 2024 — even for residential properties — they will face demolition. Examples include Kathwaa Cheruvu, Mallampet and Ameenpur.

The HYDRAA chief condemned the actions of land grabbers who misuse public sentiment to advance personal agendas. He cited demolitions in Chintal Cheruvu, Gajalaramaram and Sunnam Cheruvu in Madhapur as examples of illegal constructions targeted for removal. Any structure, irrespective of type, will be demolished if mandated by court orders, as in the case of under-construction apartments in Errakunta, Nizampet, he added.

Ranganath said that HYDRAA would demolish all structures falling within the FTL of lakes established after July 19, 2024, whether permitted or not. Officials responsible for issuing such permits will also be held accountable, he said, adding that the agency has already begun transparently marking the FTL boundaries of lakes in Hyderabad and will soon complete this process. Commercial structures without permits, such as farmhouses, resorts, and buildings like N Convention, within the FTL will also face demolition. Following demolitions, HYDRAA prioritises the utilisation of reclaimed land for public welfare, he emphasised.

Pilot project to clean air polluted by industries rolled out in Manali zone

CHENNAI. As a first step in its efforts to tackle the severe air pollution in industrial areas in the city, the Greater Chennai Corporation has placed monitoring devices to assess air quality parameters at two locations with high footfall in Manali and initial readings are being recorded. The pilot project will study and identify air pollutants in the industrial zone using monitoring devices, following which air purification systems will be installed to improve the ambient air quality, by the end of January.

If the project turns successful, it will be replicated in other zones. Manali, a prominent industrial zone in north Chennai, accommodates heavy industries including oil refineries, chemical manufacturing units, fertilizer plants, and power generation facilities. Its proximity to Chennai and Ennore ports boosts the region's industrial importance, facilitating the transportation of raw materials and finished goods. However, the industries that fuel economic activity in the area contribute to severe air pollution, posing health risk to local population and contributing to environmental degradation.

In response to the growing concerns about air quality, GCC launched the pilot project in collaboration with multiple stakeholders and a project management consultant. Speaking to TNIE, a senior corporation official said, "For now, two locations in Manali zone, the urban primary health centre and the zonal office,



have been identified. Monitoring devices have already been placed in these spots to assess air quality parameters, and initial readings are being recorded. By the end of January or early February, the purifying machines will be installed. These machines are designed to intake polluted air, filter out contaminants such as nitrogen oxides, sulfur oxides and fine particulate matter (PM2.5), and release purified air back into the environment. The collected pollutants will be safely removed from the system." To oversee the monitoring

process, evaluate its effectiveness, and provide actionable recommendations, a consultant has been appointed. "If the pilot project proves successful, similar systems can be implemented in other industrial zones in Chennai," he said. "During last year's monsoon, several pollution-related issues were reported in the region. Recently, residents raised several complaints about increasing pollution, prompting us to select this area for the pilot project," the official added.

Muslim man's 3rd marriage registration denied again, Bombay HC raps registrar

MUMBAI. The Bombay high court rapped the registrar of marriages at Thane Municipal Corporation for once again rejecting a Muslim man's application to register his third marriage. It set aside the order and directed the marriage to be registered within a week. "We make it clear that if our directions are not complied with, we will not hesitate to haul up this registrar for contempt of court," said Justices Burgess Colabawalla and Somasekhar Sundaresan on Tuesday. The man and his third wife, an Algerian, moved the HC after their Feb 2023 application for a marriage certificate was rejected in March 2023 for not furnishing relevant documents and particularly because the Maharashtra Regulation of Marriage Bureaus and Registration of Marriages Act, 1998, contemplates only a single marriage.

On Oct 15, the HC noted that there is nothing in



the Act that precludes a Muslim man from registering a third marriage, when a section specifically contemplates that the registrar has to ensure that the marriage between the parties is performed in accordance with their personal

laws. The HC then had noted that ironically, these very authorities registered the man's marriage with his second wife, a Moroccan citizen. It set aside the impugned order and directed the deputy registrar to grant them a personal hearing and pass a reasoned order.

On Tuesday, the couple's advocates, Mutahhar Khan and Hafeezur Rehman, informed that on

Nov 29, the registrar once again rejected their application, contending that only one marriage

can be registered under the Act and registering this marriage would amount to polygamy.

The judges noted that the registrar "embarked on a journey of reinterpreting the word 'marriage' and completely ignored the HC's Oct 15 order that there is nothing in the Act that precludes a Muslim from having four wives at any given point in time. "Once this was the finding given by this court, it was not open to the registrar to embark upon the journey of reinterpreting the provisions of the Act and that too contrary to what is stated in our order," they added.

The judges said it appears the registrar felt that she could do it despite HC's order, adding: "This practice is highly deprecated." Considering these facts, the judges said they had no option but to set aside the registrar's Nov 29 order "here and now, as it is directly contrary to the law laid down" by the Oct 15 order. They posted the matter on Jan 2 for reporting compliance and extended protection to the Algerian woman from deportation.

Central Sahitya Akademi Award for Baishnab Charan Samal

BHUBANESWAR. Writer Baishnab Charan Samal will receive this year's Central Sahitya Akademi award for his book of essays 'Bhuti Bhakti Bibhuti'. The Akademi announced the award in 21 languages on Wednesday which includes eight books of poetry, one each in play and research genres, three literary criticisms, three novels and as many essays. 'Bhuti Bhakti Bibhuti' published in 2020 is Samal's interpretation of spiritual conceit concerned with universal acceptance of Lord Jagannath and the Jagannath consciousness. "I have written essays about human ideology, 'Bhoomi' and Odia Sanskriti in the book," said the Cuttack-based educationist and writer.

Samal, who is in his mid-80s, will receive a cash reward of Rs 1 lakh, a plaque and a shawl at the award event in New Delhi on March 8. The book was selected based on



recommendations made by a jury of three members in Odia language. The three jury members were authors Devdas Chhotray, Santanu Kumar Acharya and Paramita Satpathy.

A retired professor of Utkal University and Viswa Bharati, Samal has already authored 160 books in different genres, primarily focussing on spirituality, philosophy and Odia identity. Apart from writing essays, he is also a critic and has written his autobiography 'Jane Banabato Ra Kahani'. Samal began writing poetry as a child and has to his credit 10 books of poetry. While 12 more books authored by him are pending publication, Samal said that he is currently writing a book of essays on Odia 'asmita' which is titled 'Odisha Ra Asmita'. "There is a lot of talk today on Odia Asmita by people who are not aware of what it actually is.

Karnataka HC clarifies period of police custody in BNSS Act

BENGALURU. Clarifying that completion of investigation for offences in which punishment is up to 10 years, is undoubtedly 60 days, and the rest of the offences — be it death, life imprisonment of 10 years and more — would be 90 days, the Karnataka High Court said if investigation is to be completed within 60 days, the period of police custody will run from day 1 to day 40 of registration of the crime. If it is 90 days, it would run from day 1 to day 60, the maximum period in both cases is 15 days of police custody, the court said. "A slight tweak in



the new regime qua 187(3) of BNSS in juxtaposition to Section 167(2) of the earlier regime — the CrPC has not changed the purpose of the provision," the court said, interpreting the period of police custody. Justice M Nagaprassana passed the order while dismissing appeals filed by the state government against orders dated December 4, 2024, passed by the trial court, rejecting the prosecution's request for grant of police custody of the accused sought by Kavoor police in Mangaluru. Referring to the offence in the case, the high court said it does not bear a minimum threshold sentence of ten years, but is extendable to ten years, which would mean, discretion is available to the court to impose punishment up to ten years.

BENGALURU. The finalisation of the contract to build the first elevated rotary flyover for the city near Sir M Visvesvaraya Terminal at Baiyappanahalli is a big question mark now. With complications arising due to exorbitant quotes made by bidders in the second round of tendering, the State government might be forced to accept the minimum bid or go in for a re-tendering. A decision on this could be taken by the Cabinet in a week's time.

The flyover, to come up at the IOC junction, was sanctioned in the Feb 2024 budget at a cost of Rs 380 crore (inclusive of GST). "Easy access to SMVT station for passengers was a key objective. Additionally, residents of Banaswadi, Maruthi Seva Nagar, Kamanahalli, Ramamurthy Nagar and Baiyappanahalli stand to benefit from relief in traffic congestion," said a prominent localite, preferring to remain anonymous.

The flyover will run to a length of 4.5 kms and will connect Maruti Seva Nagar to Banaswadi Main Road with a circular junction. While the first round of bidding had a single bidder and had to be cancelled, the four companies who submitted bids during the second round of tendering have all quoted exorbitant rates, said a senior BBMP official. City-based Star Infrastructure, Dineshchandra R Agrawal Infracon, RNS Infrastructure and NCC threw their hat in the ring. "Star Infrastructure has emerged as the lowest bidder. However,

even they have quoted around Rs 424 crore (inclusive of GST) which is 24.1% above the Standard Rate fixed by BBMP, which was Rs 380 crore," the official explained. The project deadline is 24 months after the work order is issued. "We have managed to convince the contractor to reduce that to 11% and they have agreed.

The government wants it to be brought down to below 10%. Hence, the awarding of the contract has got delayed due to these negotiations," explained

another official. Within a week to ten days, the Cabinet will take a call on whether to accept this bid or to go in for another round of re-tendering, he said. The three-month period to award the tender has anyway expired.

"Retendering would entail further delay of the project," he explained. The project work is not going to be an easy one, another official said stating that the Doddabawali flyover near Mukunda Theatre had to be demolished first and all the debris shifted.

consideration, and that guidelines permit promotional activities. Mulu Bera, the minister for forests and environment, was unavailable for comment. Dr Jalpan Rupapura, who conducts research in the Greater Gir area, said, "In the past, we have written to forest minister Mulu Bera, urging him to stop setting up the plant.

Large-scale solar power plants occupy

vast tracts of land, destroying vegetation and adversely affecting herbivores,

while also preventing animal movements through fenced-off areas.

During our research field visits, we

observed a significant decline in the lion

population in areas where large-scale solar

plants were installed, including Rajula and Savarkundla.

Red flags, but solar plant in Gir area may get green light

Ahmedabad. State forest department officials in Gandhinagar have initiated the process to approve a solar farm in the Greater Gir region despite their colleagues in Saurashtra raising concerns over its impact on lions and other wildlife. Sources said the project, to come up in over 4 lakh sq m in Visavadar taluka's Ghodasan village, was given a negative opinion by the assistant conservator of forest and deputy conservator of forest. There are concerns that the project will hinder lion mobility, which in turn, could lead to increased human-animal conflicts and inbreeding among the big cats. The project is a central public sector undertaking (CPSU) and permitted by the Union govt. The proposal is under consideration by the office of the principal chief conservator of forests

in Gandhinagar. It is being considered as a one-off case and is likely to get approved. The senior forest official maintained that extensive projects would impede lion mobility, and that the department, in Aug this year, had resolved not to authorise large-scale projects in the area. A senior officer in Gandhinagar admitted, "Such large-scale projects can hinder lion movement, and this was the basis for denial of permission by the officials in Junagadh." Jaipal Singh, in-charge principal chief conservator of forest (wildlife), confirmed that the proposal has been received and is under consideration by the department. "We are just going ahead for the approval as per the guidelines on eco-sensitive zones (ESZ) laid down by the Govt of India. The



ESZ notification is still a draft notification," he said. Sanjeev Kumar, principal secretary, forests and environment, too confirmed that the proposal was under

Why taxing super-rich is an outmoded plan

INEQUALITY in this country is a highly visible phenomenon. In urban areas, luxury cars drive past the homeless, who live in shanties right next to shiny malls and high-rise condominiums. Even rural areas are divided into areas of privilege and scarcity. And the contrast between urbanised areas and rural hamlets is startling. There is equally a sharp divide between states in the north and those in the south. The western region, with the highly industrialised states of Maharashtra and Gujarat, is in a different league from West Bengal in the east, highlighting the regional imbalances in development. This does not take into account the rise of the youthful information technology industry in Bengaluru and Hyderabad, that has sparked the creation of what is now known as India's Silicon Valley. Even these cities have seen clashes stemming from inequality, as affluent IT professionals from around the globe are resented by local residents, who seek refuge in promoting regional identities through language and culture. Having said this, the reality is that the country is changing rapidly in multiple ways owing to the economic growth having trickled down to the masses, albeit in an uneven manner. So, when eminent French economist Thomas Piketty speaks of growing inequality in India, he is merely describing what we all know about this emerging economy. As co-director of the Paris-based World Inequality Lab, he has earlier also presented data showing that India is one of the most unequal countries in the world. His solution is that higher taxes must be levied on the super-rich. This is meant to garner resources needed to provide adequate public services for the entire population. The focus on taxing billionaires comes at a time when there has been a rapid proliferation of the super-wealthy. The latest UBS Billionaires Ambitions Report puts India third in the global list of billionaires, though it is far behind the US and China in terms of numbers. Family-owned businesses are said to comprise many on the list, but the emergence of the new-tech czars is another factor for the spurt in those at the top of the heap.

Piketty's argument is that the imposition of a wealth tax on assets over Rs 10 crore and an inheritance tax of 33 per cent on property over this threshold will enable the exchequer to raise enough resources to improve public services like education and healthcare. He also points to the fact that China similarly imposed such a tax and it created greater equality in terms of the distribution of public goods. A significant flaw in this thesis is that it puts the spotlight on raising resources as a magic bullet to resolve the issue of poverty and inequality. The reality is that even with sufficient resources, it is not always possible to achieve the goals of sustainable development.

It has been apathy rather than shortage of funds that has led to the neglect of public educational institutions ever since Independence. The state-run school system has been avoided by both the bureaucracy and political leadership for the education of their own children. In fact, the civil services even established a separate private school for their own offspring, highlighting the indifference towards building infrastructure and improving the teaching content of the state-run institutions. This is not the only infirmity in the proposal. Those who have become billionaires over the past decade are also wealth creators in terms of having made substantial investments in a growing economy. These entrepreneurs have made the best use of the deepening reforms, which have created an enabling environment in both the manufacturing and services sectors.

In a globalised world, corporate leaders can easily shift capital to numerous international tax havens. Capital outflows could be an unwelcome result of raising taxes, which are already at the level of 43 per cent for the topmost income strata. The previous wealth tax was done away with in 2015 on the grounds that there were more administrative costs in implementing the levy than the actual revenue inflow.

The concept of taxing the rich and paying the poor was appealing at the time of Independence, when the majority of the populace was under the poverty line. A wealth tax was, thus, introduced in 1957. It did little to ameliorate the lot of the weakest sections of society.

THESE are very strange times. According to a sudden spate of polling activity, we are now told that we suffer from severe unhappiness, a disinformation deluge and the worst airlines in the world. Certainly, some of this is true. We do have some of the top-10 ranks in the world in terms of air pollution, but the deluge of negative polling is suspicious, especially when no one bothered to point out any of these in the pathetic 1970s when our cities were even dirtier and we had few airlines to speak of. It's curious that when we start reaching somewhere near the top of the financial mountain, there are many hands pushing us back. Some of those sources are interesting, and their methodologies even more so. The first is the puzzling polling. The World Happiness Report puts India below war-torn Mali and Liberia. This report uses data from a variety of sources, including Gallup, with a sample size of 2,000-3,000 for each country. India has a population of some 1.4 billion. Then there was an index that put an Indian airline — the third largest in the world — at almost the bottom, while an airline that is struggling to have even 50 more aircraft in a decade was the top gun. According to the World Air Quality Index, India accounts for some of the most polluted cities across the globe. That's fair enough, given that most of us are gasping for breath. But here's an interesting snippet. Air quality in Beijing was red-flagged by the US embassy in 2008, leading to a strong demand for action. China literally threw out polluting industries from the capital and imposed strong environmental restrictions in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region. That led directly to losses totalling 408.7 billion yuan (about 6.5 per cent of the regional GDP), with manufacturing dropping significantly. US action did allow the Chinese to breathe, but that's another story. The point is, public information matters. The trick is how to put it there. The Global Risks Report, made by the World Economic Forum, ranked India the highest in terms of misinformation and disinformation. Strangely, respondents put disinformation as the highest risk, at a time of the (then) upcoming elections, well above disasters, crime and climate change. But go carefully, into some details. Those polled are 'global leaders'

across academia, etc. The data reflects what they think, and the most polled are from Europe (38 per cent), while 7 per cent are from South Asia. Interestingly, the report doesn't say that disinformation originates from India, but that it is rife in the country. The report nonetheless takes exception to new government rules, obliging all concerned to make 'reasonable efforts' to disable misinformation. That's a bit puzzling. Apparently, one is expected to just grin and bear it. Meanwhile, that disinformation is affecting our internal stability is a given, with fake videos most recently linked to the Sambhal mosque incident.

government and private players did the Panama Papers leaks, targeting adversaries like Russian President Vladimir Putin and members of the Chinese elite, leading eventually to a massive purge in Beijing. Another was the Pandora Papers, which released 11.9 million documents that exposed offshore accounts of the rich and powerful, including India's Ambanis and a shifty Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Yet the biggest billionaires in the US remained untouched. In this period, US President Joe Biden's son Hunter Biden, for instance, was spending some \$683,000 on women and \$189,000 on adult entertainment.

Far more secretive and pervasive is a huge Chinese disinformation campaign. New research points to the creation of shell companies, including in the UK, that then run blogs and websites using plagiarised news articles, fake pages and accounts. More seriously, news reports cite 'spamouflage', the world's largest known online disinformation operation run by China to harass US politicians and others — at times threatening its targets with violence — as part of a well-organised intimidation campaign targeting people in the US. Another report cited China's information operations to affect regional stability in South-East Asia and India, also using 'content farms' (content that is designed as clickbait) in Malaysia to spread disinformation.

The upshot of all this is that a barrage of polling, data and misinformation is being used in what seems to be a new regime change methodology, which is faster and easier to run than easily exposed ground intelligence operations. This is only a part of new 'cognitive' warfare being fought that aims to erode a country from within, eroding its faith in itself and its leadership. As India rises, expect more of the same. The only way to counter it is to win the trust of your people, at all levels. It's actually easy. To be seen as clearly backing transparency and thereby rooting out corruption is something even the twittering public will appreciate and defend against all comers. In that case, all that polling data and leaks may actually end up doing some good.

Addicts not demons

Prioritise rehabilitation in battle against drugs



INDIA aspires to be drug-free ('Nasha Mukt') by 2047. A lot of things must fall into place for the nation to come anywhere near achieving that lofty target. An attitudinal change, in particular, can make a big difference on the ground. The Supreme Court has rightly observed that demonising victims of drug abuse is a wrong approach — the focus should be on rehabilitating them. Various stakeholders — Central and state governments, civil society, families, educational institutions — should pay heed to the suggestion of holding frank discussions to tackle this scourge. The drug users have to be brought out of the shadows. Otherwise, stigma and ostracisation will make them sink deeper into the mire.

At stake is the nation's future as the youth are most vulnerable to the lure of substance abuse. Handling young addicts with sensitivity and compassion can make them see reason. In any

case, they are only the small fry. The big fish are the drug traders and traffickers who are part of a thriving international network. They have to be targeted incessantly by the law enforcement agencies. This is especially true for Punjab, which is bearing the brunt of cross-border narcotic smuggling. The state, which was rocked by a spate of drug overdose deaths earlier this year, is struggling to combat the menace.

The initiative to involve mothers and sisters of youngsters in the battle against drugs is praiseworthy. The emotional support of family members can prevent many juveniles from going astray. The recent murder of a Barnala sarpanch, who reportedly took a firm stand against drug dealers, shows that the noble path is fraught with dangerous consequences. However, such an incident should not deter people from holding firm. Nothing less than a mass movement can stem the rot.

The right medicine for Pakistan's ailing economy

The Pakistan government must raise tax revenue by 1 per cent of GDP annually over five years by implementing aggressive structural reforms to broaden the tax net.

PAKISTAN'S long history of fiscal mismanagement has saddled the country with a crushing debt burden. Interest payments on the public debt consume a staggering 60 per cent of government revenue. And external-debt repayments coming due over the next five years amount to nearly \$70 billion, dwarfing the \$11 billion in foreign-exchange reserves held by the central bank. No wonder that some experts have started calling for a default and restructuring. Many others are still urging strict adherence to the three-year austerity programme approved by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in September to balance the books. Neither default nor austerity is likely to work, however, and both would inflict unnecessary pain. External debt restructuring is the wrong medicine for Pakistan, because the problem is not the external interest burden but rather the volume of repayments falling due. Only 10 per cent of interest payments go to private creditors, given that almost all — more than 85 per cent — of Pakistan's external debt is owed to official creditors at concessional rates. So, even if the Pakistan government stopped paying interest to external private creditors altogether, this would barely make a dent in its overall bill. Around half of Pakistan's public-debt stock is owed to multilateral creditors such as the IMF and the World Bank, and thus cannot be restructured unless these institutions launch a new debt-relief scheme like the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative of the 1990s.

And with remaining obligations to bilateral creditors (mainly China, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) already being rolled over under the IMF programme, halting repayments would provide little benefit. It could entail high costs in terms of damage to diplomatic and trade relations and access to future financing. Restructuring domestic debt, on the other



hand, could lower Pakistan's interest bill, but would cause severe economic pain. Nearly two-thirds of the government's domestic obligations are held by banks, where these securities comprise around 60 per cent of assets. Even a modest haircut of 10 per cent would wipe out the banking system's capital, though the impact would vary from institution to institution.

Banks would be unable to repay depositors, triggering financial turmoil and a sharp economic contraction. If restructuring won't help, what about the new IMF austerity programme, which seeks to increase the tax-to-GDP ratio by three percentage points over three years? To be sure, addressing the country's chronic revenue shortfalls is of paramount importance. Only around 1 per cent of Pakistanis pay any income tax at all, and the government's revenue collection — at around 12 per cent of GDP — is among the world's lowest. The agriculture, retail and real-estate sectors, which constitute the bulk of the economy, are effectively outside the tax net. No country can function like this. But the IMF programme aims to raise the tax-to-GDP ratio by two percentage points in the first year alone — a breakneck pace that is wildly unrealistic. Pakistan has never achieved an adjustment of this scale in a single year. Even if, by some miracle, the government did manage it, the negative effects on economic activity and poverty rates would be crippling.

Nor is any relief in sight on the spending side. The government's non-interest spending relative to GDP

years by implementing aggressive structural reforms to broaden the tax net. Policymakers should channel half of the gains back into the economy through increased spending on education, healthcare, poverty eradication and climate-resilient infrastructure.

During this reform process, bilateral and multilateral creditors should temporarily extend new loans to Pakistan, instead of just rolling over the debt coming due. Liquidity relief would boost economic growth by increasing public investment and crowding in private investment. To ensure that these funds are well spent, creditors must condition their lending on reform progress and be involved in selecting and implementing public investment projects.

Lastly, to facilitate coordination, the IMF should regularly publish data on actual and projected loan flows and interest paid to each major official creditor.

This information is currently not available. A creditor will be more likely to provide new concessional lending if it knows that other creditors are doing so as well. In its current form, the austerity programme will almost certainly fail, causing Pakistan's economic conditions to deteriorate further and delivering a reputational hit to the IMF. But if policymakers reduce the dose now, and creditors provide more liquidity by enhancing coordination, Pakistan is more likely to grow out of its debt problem.

5 Steps to a Flat tummy in 7 days



You've been missing your routine at the gym very often thanks to your busy schedule (or plain laziness) and suddenly you realize that in one week you have to attend a wedding.

7 home remedies for water retention

If you have a bloated feeling or have swollen face, hands or feet, you are most likely suffering from water retention.

While water retention is normal if you are pregnant or menstruating, it needs cure if you are not. It could indicate imbalanced diet, drug reaction, menopause, thyroid, liver or kidney disorders among others. Here are some ways you can treat it at home:

Have lots of water: More water means less water retention but make sure that your water intake is evenly spread out through the day. Guzzling water down in a short period of time can lead to water intoxication.

Less salt and sugar: Salt clogs water tissues and excessive salt means fluid retention. Even sugar ups the insulin level in the body, decreasing body's function to flush out sodium aka salt.

Opt for natural diuretics: Instead of rushing to the medical shop to purchase diuretics, look in your kitchen. The biggest reliever is cranberry juice. It can be taken in excess too in order to fix water retention. Closely following the lead would be raw cabbage leaves. Foods like apple cider vinegar, green tea, parsley and fennel are also some of the natural diuretics that can come to your rescue.

Herbal tea to the rescue: Herbal teas with tea tree or parsley base help in removing excess water from the body.

Garlic: Having garlic empty stomach in the morning helps in a big manner. It also helps break down the fats.

Ice packs: Stuff ice cubes in a thin cloth and press it against the affected area. It will give you relief. However, it is not a good option for diabetics.

Say no to alcohol: Alcohol leads to water retention and should be taken in moderation. It forces the body to store even more water.



You want to wear your favourite saree or figure-hugging dress but are worried about your flabby stomach bulging out. Well, you still have a last option. While you cannot reduce fat, you can lose belly fat by decreasing your total body fat percentage. And you don't have to completely alter your daily habits to get a flat stomach within 7 days!

Step one:

If you want to build muscle and burn fat at the same time, you have to perform circuit training, three days per week. How can you achieve this? Indulge in full body exercises like lunges, push-ups, and pull-ups, for one set of 15 repetitions. Don't forget to follow every exercise with one minute of jumping rope. You should be able to burn around 500 to 600 calories per workout.

Step two:

You have to work on your abdominal muscles

three times in the week. Crunches and leg raises for three sets of 20 repetitions should be done. Also, do planks by holding your body in a push-up position on your elbows for 30 to 60 seconds for four sets.

Step three:

The kind of food you will eat in this period is vital in bringing about any change. Natural foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grain breads and pastas, chicken, beef, fish and low fat dairy should replace processed foods full of sugar.

Step four:

To minimize water retention, lower your sodium intake. This means you need to avoid salt. You can flavour your food with other herbs and spices instead.

Step five:

Stressing and anxiety can cause the over-production of a certain hormone called cortisol, which encourages weight gain about the belly area. So try to keep your cool!



10 quick and easy home remedies for Headaches



Monday mornings usually spell headaches for most of us. Back from a fun vacation and already feeling the first few waves of a debilitating headache?

proper timings for the said diet. In fact, one should follow a fixed timetable for all the four meals of the day. The brain needs glucose and deprivation of glucose can cause hypoglycemia and thus the headache. So

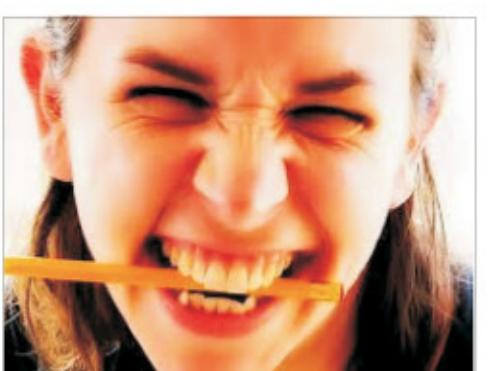
the food should be consumed at timely intervals for the proper functioning of your body's metabolism.

Adequate sleep: Sleeping properly in the right posture for adequate time durations is very necessary. Lack of sleep or interrupted sleep can disturb your sleep cycle and hence cause headaches. An average duration of 6-8 hours of uninterrupted sleep is necessary, and the thickness of the pillow should not be too much.

Rest for a while: Close your eyes and try to release the tension and the pressure in your back, neck and shoulders while sitting in a low-lit room. Avoid bending over or physically exerting yourself.

Hot shower: Stand in the shower and let the hot water hit your head and run down your neck and back. Doing so will loosen the muscles in your head and neck, allowing better blood flow.

Try smiling and laughing: In case of minor headaches, smiling can



fresh fruit juices, and avoid caffeinated drinks like tea and coffee, which dehydrate the body.

Head massages: Apply gentle, steady rotating pressure to the painful area of your head with your index finger and/or thumb. Maintain pressure for 7-15 seconds, then release. Repeat as needed. Massaging helps in relieving the tightened muscles and improves blood circulation.

Follow a balanced diet with proper meal timings: There has to be a balanced diet and

"Bit Absurd On Both Sides": Shashi Tharoor On INDIA Bloc-NDA Faceoff

New Delhi. Amid a stand-off between NDA and INDIA Bloc MPs in the Parliament on Thursday over the Babasaheb Ambedkar controversy, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor said that unfortunately, Ambedkar's legacy and the Constitution have become a battleground itself and this is becoming a bit absurd on both sides. "You can see the video on the Parliament television. Unfortunately, Ambedkar's legacy and the Constitution itself have become a battleground politically. This is becoming a bit absurd on both sides. We need to move on to the problems of today and tomorrow. At the moment, the message is clear and the opposition is united on this: If indeed the video is not correct they (BJP) should produce the correct video (of Union HM Amit Shah's speech in Rajya Sabha)," Mr Tharoor said. Congress' Pramod Tiwari said that until Amit Shah resigns and apologises, they will continue to raise their voice peacefully. "The entire world has seen what Amit Shah has said. It was a live telecast. He is lying after that. This country can't

tolerate the insult to Babasaheb Ambedkar. Until Amit Shah resigns and apologises, will continue to raise our voice peacefully," he said. Samajwadi Party Jaya Bachchan emphasised that India is not going to tolerate Babasaheb's disrespect. "The leaders of our country who gave us freedom and the Constitution, they have been pushed behind... Their plaque calls (Bhim Rao Ambedkar) the protector of backward classes. He was the protector of the entire country, of the Constitution," she said. Samajwadi Party MP Iqra Hasan said that there is a difference between what BJP says and does.

"This display is in protest of Amit Shah's disappointing comments. Babasaheb didn't just talk about the rights of backward classes and Dalit, but everyone's rights in the Constitution," Ms Hasan said.

Congress MP Imran Pratapgarhi said that Amit Shah must apologize over his remarks. "Anyone can go and see that the way the Home Minister spoke was very wrong and objectionable. You cannot save yourself



from the insult that Baba Saheb did yesterday. You must apologize," he said. Samajwadi Party MP Dimple Yadav said, "The insult that Baba Saheb has faced is condemnable. We want the BJP to apologize for this. These people want Baba Saheb's constitution not to be implemented and everything should be run as per the ideology of these people."

Meanwhile, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Pratap Chandra Sarangi on Thursday alleged that he was hurt after getting a push from Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. Singh claimed that he was standing on stairs when another member of Parliament fell on him,

leading to an injury on his head. "Rahul Gandhi pushed a member of Parliament who fell on me after which I fell down... I was standing near the stairs when Rahul Gandhi came and pushed an MP who then fell on me..." Singh told reporters. As this happened, the BJP MP was rushed for treatment in an ambulance.

Reacting to this, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, in his defence, said that he was trying to get inside the Parliament when he was also pushed and threatened by the BJP MPs who were protesting near the entrance. He also alleged that Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge was also pushed. "This might be on your camera. I was trying to go inside through the Parliament entrance, but BJP MPs were trying to stop me, push me and threaten me. This has happened... Yes, this has happened (Mallikarjun Kharge being pushed). But we do not get affected by jostling. But this is the entrance and we have the right to go in. BJP MPs were trying to stop us from going in..." Mr Gandhi told reporters.

EC reviews poll readiness in meeting with parties

NEW DELHI. The Election Commission on Wednesday held a meeting with representatives of political parties in the National Capital as part of its exercise to hold the polls for Delhi assembly, which is due early next year. Sources indicated that since the poll panel is in the last leg of its meetings and review of the preparedness, the dates for assembly elections in Delhi could be announced anytime soon. Officials in the Commission confirmed that BJP Lok Sabha Member from New Delhi Bansuri Swaraj, AAP Rajya Sabha member Raghav Chaddha and party leader Jasmin Shah attended the meeting.

The meeting lasted for around half an hour and covered several topics, where the full Commission listened to their concerns regarding the polls, the officials said. Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar along with two Commissioners – Gyanesh Kumar and SS Sandhu – later in the day also reviewed poll preparedness for the upcoming assembly polls. In post on microblogging site 'X', the Election Commission said, "CEC Rajiv Kumar along with ECs Gyanesh



Kumar and Dr Sandhu reviewed poll preparedness for the upcoming Delhi Legislative Assembly elections. Meeting with enforcement agencies is currently underway. Earlier in the day, commission met representatives of the political parties."

In another post the EC said the Commission also held meeting with District Election officers (DEOs) and Returning Officers (ROs) to review the readiness of the poll machinery in their respective jurisdictions. The term of the 70-member Delhi Legislative Assembly ends on Feb 23, next year and polls are to be held before that. Meanwhile, it is to be noted that the AAP, which is seeking a third consecutive term, has already announced candidates for all 70 assembly seats. Party chief Arvind Kejriwal will contest from his New Delhi seat, while Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will contest from his New Delhi seat, while Chief Minister Atishi is set to fight from Kalkaji. AAP's list includes ten turncoats, seven from the BJP and three from Congress. The party has dropped 16 sitting MLAs, replaced three legislators with family members, and swapped candidates in two constituencies. The Congress has named 21 candidates. Among them is Sandeep Dikshit, son of former Delhi CM Sheila Dikshit.

'Against Society's Rules': Nitin Gadkari On Live-In Relationships, Same Sex Marriages

New Delhi. Union minister Nitin Gadkari said live-in relationships are wrong and against the rules of society, while adding that same-sex marriages would lead to the collapse of social structure. In a podcast on YouTube, Mr Gadkari recalled his visit to the British Parliament, where he was told that the UK's biggest problem was people opting or live-in relationships as opposed to marriage. "If you don't marry, how will you have children? What will be the future of such children? If you go against the societal structure, what impact will it have on people?" he asked. Mr Gadkari said that the society will ultimately



decide its own norms, but emphasised that a balanced sex ratio has to be maintained in the country. "If there are 1,500 women and 1,000 men, we may have to allow men to have two wives," he remarked.

While he denied the need to ban divorces in the "ideal India", the minister reiterated that "live-in relationships are not good".

Mr Gadkari's statement comes a year after a five-judge constitution bench of the Supreme Court refused to grant legal recognition to same-sex marriage but pitched for equal rights to queer people. All judges were unanimous in holding that it was within Parliament's ambit to change the law for validating such union.

"People Screaming, Crying": First Responders After Mumbai Ferry Accident

NEW DELHI. The Supreme Court on Wednesday said it was "pitiable" that some retired high court judges were getting a pension ranging between Rs 10,000 and Rs 15,000. "You cannot have a legal approach in every matter. Sometimes, you need to have a humane approach," observed a bench of Justices B R Gavai and K V Viswanathan. "It is pitiable," the bench said, while noting that some retired high court judges were getting pension ranging between Rs 10,000 and Rs 15,000. The plea raising issue concerning pension of retired high court judges was listed for hearing before the bench on Wednesday.

Attorney General R Venkataramani mentioned the matter before the bench and requested that it be taken up for hearing in January. Venkataramani said the government would try to resolve the issue, as a judicial officer in the district court for 13 years, had claimed that the authorities had refused to consider his judicial service while computing the pension. "If there are retired high court judges before us who are getting Rs 6,000 and Rs 15,000 as pension, it is shocking. How can that be?" the bench had remarked while hearing the plea.

While hearing a separate plea in March, the apex court had said there cannot be any discrimination in computing the pensionary benefits of retired judges of high courts based on whether they were elevated from the bar or the district judiciary.

A control room call instructed nearby boats, prompting Bamane to steer his boat with four people on board towards the accident site. Around 20-25 people, of whom there were three to four foreigners, were rescued and transferred to naval boats. Among the sights he experienced during rescue operations was a small girl lying motionless as water had entered her lungs. She was given chest compressions after which her breathing became normal, Bamane told PTI. Iqbal Gothekar saw people frantically waving their hands for help. His small tourist boat reached the accident site and rescued 16 people, bringing them to Gateway of India. "In my career, I have never witnessed such an incident," Gothekar recounted the event to PTI.

Delhi Cold Wave: Low Visibility And 'Severe' AQI Continues Amid Freezing Temperatures

New Delhi. The prevailing cold wave in the national capital led to low visibility on Thursday. With the minimum temperature dropping to 7.4 degrees Celsius, the visibility in Delhi was recorded as 250 m at 8 a.m.

The Delhi Airport, considering the situation, issued a passenger advisory in a post on X (formerly Twitter) on Thursday, requesting the passengers to contact their concerned airlines for updated flight information before travelling. "Low visibility procedures are still in progress at Delhi Airport. However, there has been no impact on flight operations. Passengers are requested to contact the airline concerned for updated flight information," the post read.

Earlier today, the Air Quality Index (AQI) in the national capital remained in the 'severe' category on Thursday as a thick layer of fog blanketed the city with limited visibility. The AQI



measured in the national capital was 448 at 8 a.m. as per the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). The Air Quality Index in several areas in Delhi was recorded as 'severe'. Anand Vihar recorded an AQI of 478, 474 at Ashok Vihar, 460 at Bawana and 461 at DTU. An AQI between 0-50 is considered good, 51-100 is satisfactory, 101-200 is moderate, 201-300 is poor, 301-400 is very poor and 401-500 is severe.

Additionally, as per the India Meteorological Department (IMD), smog and dense fog conditions are

likely to intensify due to the predominant surface winds from the north wind direction. A pedestrian said that the temperatures in the city were expected to drop in the coming days. "This year, the winters have come late so we are expecting it to stay till late next year. The temperature has decreased and we can expect it to decrease more in the coming days," said the pedestrian. Delhi winters pose a hard time for the poor localities of the city with no accommodation and shelter to stay in. "The people who take shelter outside AIIMS are the ones who battle the cold weather. It is really tough for them. The temperature will decrease more and it will become more difficult for them. People should take precautions and take care of their body temperatures during these weather conditions," said another pedestrian. On Tuesday, the minimum temperature recorded in the city was 5 degrees Celsius, as per IMD.

Arvind Kejriwal Questions BJP Allies Nitish Kumar, Chandrababu Naidu Amid Ambedkar Row

Arvind Kejriwal sought to know the views of the Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu over the remarks of Amit Shah.

New Delhi. A full-blown political slugfest has erupted over Union Home Minister Amit Shah's remarks on BR Ambedkar with Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convenor Arvind Kejriwal questioning the stand of the BJP allies, TDP and JD(U). Arvind Kejriwal sought to know the views of the Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu over the remarks of Amit Shah. In a post on X in Hindi, Mr Kejriwal said, "The people of the country want to ask Honorable Nitish Ji and Chandrababu Naidu Ji - 'Do you support the insult of Baba Saheb done by Amit Shah Ji?' This came after Amit Shah

lashed out at the Congress party and said that it had become a 'fashion' for the party to take Mr Ambedkar's name. "If they had taken the name of God so many times instead of Ambedkar then they would have got heaven for seven lives," Mr Shah said. Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi defended Amit Shah's remarks on Babasaheb Ambedkar and said that Mr Shah exposed the Congress' dark history of insulting Ambedkar after which they were clearly stung and stunned by the facts he presented. In a series of posts on X, PM Modi said that Congress sat in power for years but did

nothing to empower the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities. "In Parliament, Amit Shah Ji exposed the Congress' dark history of insulting Dr Ambedkar and ignoring the SC/ST communities. They are clearly stung and stunned by the facts he presented, which is why they are now indulging in theatrics! Sadly, for them, people know the truth!"



Congress can try as they want but they can't deny that the worst massacres against SC/ST Communities have happened under their regimes. For years, they sat in power but did nothing substantive to empower the SC and ST communities," PM Modi said. The Prime Minister listed the "Congress' sins" towards Babasaheb Ambedkar. "The list of the Congress' sins towards Dr Ambedkar includes - Getting him defeated in elections not once but twice. Pandit Nehru campaigning against him and making his loss a prestige issue. Denying him a Bharat Ratna. Denying his portrait, a place of pride in Parliament's Central Hall," he said.

"Will Continue To Protest In Parliament": Trinamool On Amit Shah's Ambedkar Remark

A massive political row has erupted over Amit Shah's remarks on BR Ambedkar during his speech in Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. Congress has accused Shah of being anti-Ambedkar and has demanded his resignation.

New Delhi. TMC MP Saugata Roy said the opposition will continue their protest in Parliament tomorrow against the Union

Minister Amit Shah's remarks on Babasaheb Ambedkar. "We will protest in Parliament tomorrow. We will continue the protest until Home Minister Amit Shah apologizes for his remarks on Dr BR Ambedkar..." he told reporters here. A massive political row has erupted over Amit Shah's remarks on BR Ambedkar during his speech in Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. Congress has accused Shah of being anti-Ambedkar and has demanded his resignation. Earlier, Rajya Sabha LoP and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday criticised Shah's remark on Babasaheb Ambedkar demanding an apology from Shah for his remarks during the Constitution debate in the Rajya Sabha. While addressing a press conference in the national capital, Mr Kharge also urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to sack Mr Shah by midnight if he truly respects Ambedkar. "We demand that Amit Shah should apologize and if PM Modi has faith in Dr

Babasaheb Ambedkar then he should be sacked by midnight... He has no right to remain in the cabinet, he should be sacked only then people will remain silent, otherwise, people will protest. People are ready to sacrifice their lives for Dr BR Ambedkar," he said. Meanwhile, accusing the Congress of being "anti-BR Ambedkar, anti-reservation and anti-Constitution," Mr Shah on Wednesday said the opposition party has been presenting facts about his speech in Rajya Sabha in a distorted way.

Addressing a press conference here, Amit Shah also attacked Congress over the Emergency and said the discussion in Parliament on 150 years of the Constitution "proved how the Congress opposed Baba Saheb Ambedkar." "Since yesterday, Congress has been presenting the facts in a distorted way and I condemn it... Congress is anti-BR Ambedkar, it is against reservation and the Constitution. Congress also insulted Veer Savarkar. By imposing an Emergency, they violated all Constitutional values," he said. "A discussion was held over the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. During this, we also held discussions over the country's achievements in the last 75 years. It is obvious that parties and people will have different points of view on different issues. But discussion should always be held based on facts," he added.



Best foods for quick weight loss

No matter how healthy your daily routine might be, sometimes, the sudden need for quick weight loss manages to creep in unannounced.

Whatever the reason - a school re-union or your 30th birthday - none of us are above the need to lose weight and lose it fast. And here's some good news: Coupled with the right exercise and healthy nutrient intake you can lose weight quickly and surely by consuming these best foods for quick weight loss. Remember the first tenet of a healthy diet is portion control, and you're on your way to quick weight loss success...

Lean protein:

A recent study from Purdue University has proved yet again that lean protein enables weight loss through appropriate appetite control. While non-vegetarians can get lean protein from lean meat and egg white, vegetarians should look to include these protein foods in their daily diet: Chickpeas, soybeans, kidney beans, tofu, other beans and pulses, and dairy. Even peanut butter is a good substitute as an appetite controller here.



Fruits and vegetables:

This is a best practise followed by people who lose permanent weight successfully. Even if you love meat, including at least 2-3 whole fruits and a side serving of



vegetables with each meal goes a long way in curbing your appetite and enabling quick weight loss. So leave those diet pills, exotic foods that you buy just once and never eat again, and step over to the neighbourhood grocery store. Your best bet with quick weight loss lies within these humble, yet extremely healthy, fruits and vegetables.

Broth-based soups:

Pureed and chunky broth (not cream) based hot

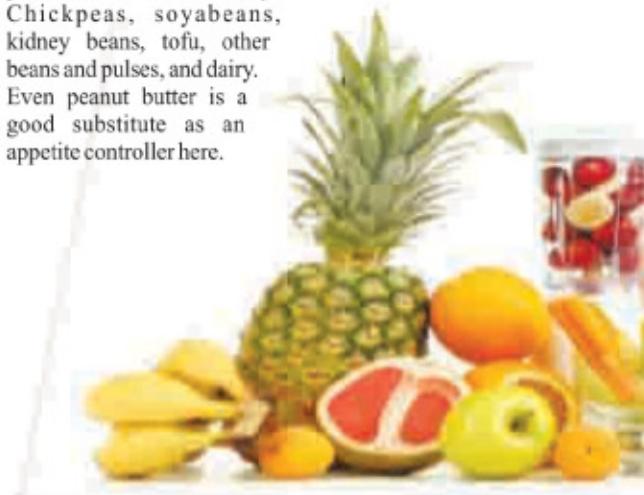


Lose Weight Fast



Low-salt and low-starch foods:

Cutting back on sodium and high-starch foods (read: bad carbs) results in a kind of cheat weight loss, which - if properly maintained can lead to permanent weight loss. In the short run, this strategy leads to low fluid retention and what you lose initially is 'water weight'. This is why most weight loss diets that promise quick weight loss begin with a no-carb, no-salt shock phase. You can do this cleverly by cutting down reasonably and continuing a daily exercise routine to maintain healthy appetite and calorie burn.



8 health benefits of Ginger tea



Nothing beats cold in the winter like a piping hot cup of ginger tea. With its high levels of Vitamin C, magnesium and other minerals, ginger root is extremely beneficial for health.

Once made into tea, you can add peppermint, honey or lemon to mask the taste of the ginger. Here's why you should have this soothing beverage.

Relieve nausea

Drinking a cup of ginger tea before travelling can help prevent the nausea and vomiting associated with motion sickness. You can also drink a cuppa at the first sign of nausea to relieve the symptom.

Improve stomach performance

Useful in improving digestion and increasing absorption of food, ginger

properties that make it an ideal home remedy for muscle and joint problems. In addition to drinking ginger tea, you can also use it to soak inflamed joints.

Fight respiratory problems

Ginger tea can help relieve congestion associated with the common cold. Try a cup of ginger tea for the respiratory symptoms associated with environmental allergies.

Improve blood circulation

The vitamins, minerals and amino acids in ginger tea can help restore and improve blood circulation that may help decrease the chance of cardiovascular problems. Ginger may prevent fat from depositing in the arteries helping to prevent heart attacks and stroke.

Relieve menstrual discomfort

This one is for all women suffering from menstrual cramps. Try soaking a towel in warm ginger tea and apply it to your lower abdomen. It may help relieve the pain and relax the muscles. At the same time, drink a cup of ginger tea with honey.

Strengthen immunity

Ginger tea can help strengthen your immunity due to the high levels of antioxidants in ginger.

Relieve stress

Ginger tea has calming properties that may help lower your stress and tension. This is thought to be due to a combination of the strong aroma and healing properties.

So sick was the Indian government of the procrastinating Indian citizen who refused to opt for preventive health care, that it bribed them to see a doctor. In 2012, the then finance minister offered a plan to save up to Rs 5,000 on tax by opting for an annual preventive check-up.

While Indians refuse to visit a hospital unless they need to be brought in on a stretcher, Americans, they say, can't get enough.

In the US, annual check-ups account for more than 8 per cent of doctor visits, and cost the health care system \$8 billion a year. Each visit takes around 23 minutes, adding up to a total of 17 million hours each year spent checking 45 million healthy people.

In Europe, a study revealed that many routine checkups led to over-diagnosis and over-treatment of relatively mild health problems, leading some patients to take medication for years with no apparent benefit.

But with the average age of patients diagnosed with cardiac problems dipping, and lifestyle-related disorders on the rise, doctors here are keen to catch the bug early. Thus, avoiding a case of 'surprise' heart attack, like actor Farooq Sheikh's.

Don't wait for a heart attack, says Dr Lekha Pathak, cardiologist. One in 10 Indians suffer from hypertension. And most aren't aware of it. For people above 40, I suggest a twice-a-year check up. This should include

Electrocardiography (ECG), cardiac stress test, 2D echo and blood

biochemistry to check blood sugar, kidney and lipid profile.

Smokers and those who have a family

history of cardiac illness, diabetes and

hypertension are part of a high risk

group. They must start with these tests

at 30.

Don't wait for a heart Attack!



Often, those suffering a 'surprise' heart attack are those who have lived with

symptoms of high cholesterol and

hypertension, without knowing it. This

is not specific to an age group or sex.

But 40 per cent of patients suffering

from cardiac issues tend to be below

40.

Start gynaec visits in mid-20s, says

Dr Rajeev Chhabra, gynaecologist

Indian women are just not in the habit

of visiting a gynaecologist regularly.

In fact, most women don't go to a doctor even when suffering from the symptom

of a illness. It's always a last minute

visit when the pain gets unbearable.

For women above 45, they need to start

caring for their bones, since

menopause will soon strike. Start with

the following tests: CBC, Creatinine

levels, SGPT and SGOT levels,

calcium and phosphorus, USG

(ultrasonography), PAP smear and

mammogram.

Women between 23 and 30 need to take

annual thyroid tests, prolactin, DHEA-

sulfate test and ultrasonography. These are purely preventive tests ensure that when they do decide to conceive, they encounter no complications. Lifestyle disorders like Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOD) are detected at such times.

In case you are sexually active with multiple partners and don't insist on the use of condoms, take the PAP smear test every year.

For every known diabetic, there's one undiagnosed, says Dr Rajiv Kovil, diabetologist

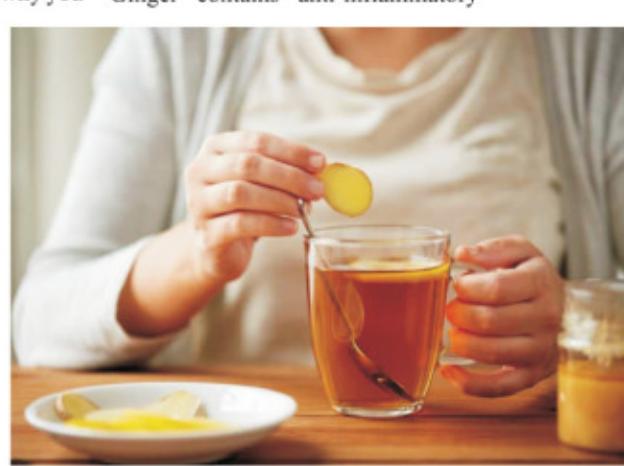
In 2012, 11.8 million patients were diagnosed with diabetes, adding to the 65 million who live with the metabolic disorder. Sixty per cent of them were diagnosed during a routine health check up, having lived with silent symptoms.

It's a cultural problem. Indians feel they are wasting money on tests if they aren't sick.

There is no age bar to check blood sugar levels. It's meant for every adult. For those who aren't diabetic, a yearly check-up should include fasting and post meal blood sugar tests. Add the HbA1c test, that's usually missing from the basic package. It's to check the average plasma glucose concentration over prolonged periods of time.

For patients who are diagnosed with diabetes, the tests need to be specific; like those that test the effect of the illness on the liver, kidneys and retina.

Post a comment



Sanathan Textiles IPO opens for bidding: Check issue size, price band, latest GMP

NEW DELHI. Sanathan Textiles Limited, a leading polyester yarn manufacturer and global supplier of cotton yarn, launched its initial public offering (IPO) on December 19, 2024. The company plans to raise Rs 550 crore through the issue, which consists of a fresh issue of shares and an offer for sale (OFS). The IPO will remain open for bidding until December 23, 2024.

IPO DETAILS AND PRICE BAND
The IPO comprises a fresh issue of 1.25 crore shares worth Rs 400 crore and an OFS of 0.47 crore shares aggregating Rs 150 crore. The price band for the IPO is set at Rs 305 to Rs 321 per share, with a minimum lot size of 46 shares. Retail investors need to invest a minimum of Rs 14,766, while small non-institutional investors (sNII) and large non-institutional investors (bNII) require investments of Rs 2,06,724 and Rs 10,04,088, respectively. Sanathan Textiles' last grey market premium (GMP), updated on December 19, 2024, as on 08:29 AM is Rs 40 per share. Based on the cap price of Rs 321, the estimated listing price is Rs 361, indicating a potential 12.46% gain per share.

The shares are set to be listed on the BSE and NSE, with the tentative listing date being December 27, 2024. The allotment of shares is expected to be finalised on December 24, 2024.

BUSINESS OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES
Incorporated in 2005, Sanathan Textiles operates across three verticals: polyester yarn products, cotton yarn products, and yarns for technical textiles. Its technical textiles are utilised in industries such as automotive, healthcare, construction, sports, and protective clothing. The IPO proceeds will be used for repayment or pre-payment of borrowings, investment in its subsidiary Sanathan Polycot Private Limited for debt repayment, and general corporate purposes.

With a sound business foundation and growth potential, Sanathan Textiles IPO presents a good investment opportunity for both retail and institutional investors.

VA Tech Wabag shares plunge 11 per cent after cancellation of Saudi order

BENGALURU. Water treatment firm VA Tech Wabag, which had secured a contract worth Rs 2,700 crore from the Saudi Water Authority in September, has announced the cancellation of the major tender, following which, shares plunged over 18% in the morning trade and settled at Rs 1,672.95, down 11.18% on the BSE on Wednesday. "With reference to our above intimation dated September 06, 2024 relating to 300 MLD Mega Sea Water Desalination Plant Order in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, we hereby inform that the Customer has notified all tender participants on December 16, 2024, that the said tender stands cancelled pursuant to their internal administrative procedures," the company said in the exchange filing. "We are currently in touch with the Customer to understand and comprehend the reasons in detail," the statement added.

In its H1 FY25 earnings conference call, Rajiv Mittal, chairman and MD of VA Tech Wabag had said that looking ahead, the company is further enhancing its presence and efforts in emerging markets like the Middle East, Africa, Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia and CIS countries. "With a promising order pipeline, we are confident in sustaining our growth momentum through the second half of the financial year and in line with our medium-term outlook. Our focus business development efforts are yielding remarkable results as demonstrated by the order inflow of over Rs 4,600 crore secured in H1 with 57% coming from international clients and 31% coming from the industrial sector," Mittal added.

Adani, under bribery scrutiny, pressed by Bangladesh to reopen power deal

NEW DELHI. Bangladesh's interim government has accused energy supplier Adani Power of breaching a multi-billion-dollar agreement by withholding tax benefits that a power plant central to the deal received from New Delhi, according to documents seen by Reuters. In 2017, the Indian company controlled by billionaire Gautam Adani signed an agreement with Bangladesh to provide power from its coal-fired plant in eastern India. Dhaka has said it hopes to renegotiate the deal, which was awarded by then-Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina without a tender process and costs Bangladesh far more than its other coal power deals, according to Bangladesh power agency documents and letters between the two parties reviewed by Reuters, as well as interviews with six Bangladeshi officials.

Dhaka has been behind on payments to Adani Power since supply started in July 2023. It owes several hundred million dollars for energy that has already been supplied, though the two sides dispute the exact size of the bill. Bangladesh's de facto power minister Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan told Reuters the country now had enough domestic capacity to cope without the Adani supply, though not all domestic power generators were operational.

Nobel peace laureate Muhammad Yunus took power in August after a student-led revolution ousted Hasina, who critics accuse of stifling democracy and mismanaging the economy. She ran Bangladesh for most of the last two decades and was a close ally of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Reuters is reporting for the first time that the contract came with an additional implementation agreement that addressed the transfer of tax benefits. The news agency is also revealing details about Bangladesh's plan to reopen the 25-year deal, and that it hopes to use the fallout from U.S. prosecutors' November indictment of Adani and seven other executives for their alleged role in a \$265 million bribery scheme to press for a resolution. Adani Power has not been accused of wrongdoing in Bangladesh. A company spokesperson said in response to Reuters' questions that it had upheld all contractual obligations and had no indication Dhaka was reviewing the contract.

Explained: Why Sensex fell over 1,000 points and will stock market bloodbath continue

Sensex and Nifty extended their losing streak as global markets plunged after the US Fed's cautious rate cut signal. Will the bears tighten their grip on Dalal Street, or is a reversal in sight?

NEW DELHI. Benchmark stock market indices faced a sharp sell-off on Thursday, extending losses for the fourth straight session amid a global market rout triggered by concerns over slower US Federal Reserve rate cuts. In early trade, the S&P BSE Sensex tumbled 1,153.17 points to 79,029.03, while the Nifty also fell sharply over 200 points. At around 12:05 pm, Sensex was down 896.84

points to 79,288.13 and Nifty was trading 232.70 points lower at 23,966.25. All the other broader market indices were also trading in negative territory.

WHAT TRIGGERED THE MARKET BLOODBATH? The US Federal Reserve's 25 basis point interest rate cut met market expectations but failed to comfort investors due to its cautious guidance. The Fed indicated only two more rate cuts in 2025, dashing hopes for a more aggressive easing cycle. This announcement triggered a Wall Street meltdown, with the Dow Jones plunging 1,123.03 points (2.6%) to 42,326.87. The Nasdaq and S&P 500 also nosedived 3.6% and 3% respectively. Asian markets followed suit, with indices in Japan, China, and South Korea losing up to 1.2%. This was the key factor behind today's meltdown on Dalal Street. Swapnil Aggarwal, Director, VSRK Capital, said, "The US Federal Reserve's recent 0.25-point rate cut, coupled with signals of reduced future



cuts, has led to a significant sell-off in global markets. This rate cut could make Indian assets less attractive to foreign investors, potentially leading to capital outflows. In addition, the rupee also hit a record low today, further hurting market sentiments. Additionally, the rupee's continued decline to new lows has further soured sentiment. A prolonged depreciation of the rupee could exacerbate the trade deficit and heighten inflationary pressures in the future," Aggarwal said. "The higher import bill stemming from a weaker rupee adds to

Start-up funding sees six per cent surge in funding at 11.3 billion dollars in 2024

BENGALURU. In 2024, the start-up ecosystem saw a marginal 6% increase in funding at \$11.3 billion compared to \$10.7 billion in 2023. However, this is a 56% decline compared to 2022 as start-ups raised a record \$25.4 billion in funding in that year, said SaaS-based market intelligence platform Tracxn in its India Tech Annual Report 2024 on Thursday.

According to the report, in the second half of 2024, start-ups received \$5.32 billion across 540 funding rounds, a growth of 8% from H2 2023 where \$4.92 billion was raised across 890 rounds. The report also indicates that in the last quarter of 2024, start-ups raised only \$1.8 billion across 219 rounds, and this is the lowest in the last three years. When compared to the same period last year, this is a sharp 47.5% drop from \$3.5 billion.



billions. This indicates a challenging macroeconomic environment and cautious investor sentiment. This year saw six start-ups entering the unicorn club compared to just two in 2023. In 2022, the country saw the emergence of 24 unicorns. Neha Singh, Co-Founder of Tracxn said, "While funding patterns have evolved towards fewer, larger rounds, the emergence of six unicorns, significant IPO activity, and sectoral growth in gig economy, retail and enterprise applications demonstrate the ecosystem's ability to adapt and innovate amidst global challenges."

Quick commerce sector secures \$1.37 billion funding Till December 19 this year, the quick commerce space has seen a significant jump in terms of funding as the sector raised \$1.37 billion in equity funding from 7 rounds, driven largely by Zepto, which secured \$1.355 billion across three \$300 million rounds. The edtech sector raised \$620 million from 72 equity funding rounds in YTD 2024, led by Physics Wallah's \$210 million funding round. According to the report, the health tech sector witnessed robust growth, with over 7,000 active companies collectively raising \$1 billion, a 133% increase from \$438.2 million in 2023. In 2024, India Tech saw 37 IPOs, a 76.19% increase over 21 IPOs in 2023 and 94.74% higher than 19 IPOs in 2022. The year also saw 20 \$100 million+ rounds when compared to 18 such rounds in 2023 and 53 rounds in 2022.

GST Council may lower tax rate on insurance premium

NEW DELHI. The 55th GST Council meeting in Jaisalmer is likely to take a decision on tax rate on insurance premium, as per finance ministry sources. The GoM constituted on the issue had recommended complete waiver of GST on insurance for health insurance policies that provide a cover up to 5 lakh against the current rate of 18%. On all other policies, premium paid would continue to be taxed at 18%. The Group of Ministers (GoM) constituted under Bihar deputy chief minister Samrat Choudhary has recommended complete waiver of GST on health insurance premium for senior citizens. As far as life insurance policies are concerned, a majority of the panel members have favoured complete waiver of GST on term insurance premium. The Council on



Saturday might agree on most of the proposals of the GoM on health and life insurance premium. The council is likely to decide on the recommendations made by the GoM on rate rationalisation. The GoM has likely recommended changes in rates of 148 items. Some of those items may be taken up by the Council in its 55th meeting on Saturday. As reported earlier by this newspaper, the GoM had decided to lower rates on 20-litre

packaged drinking water bottles, bicycles and exercise notebooks to 5% from the existing 18%. Some items in the 18% category like hair dryers, hair curlers, and beauty or make-up preparations that the GoM took up could be back in the 28% bracket. Other issues that are likely to be discussed include lowering of GST on fee charged for food delivery e-commerce platforms. The current rate is 18%, and it is expected that the Council might decide in favour of lowering it to 5%. Sources said the Council might consider a retrospective amendment to blocked credit provision to overcome impact of SC judgment in Safari Retreats case. The Supreme Court in its Safari Retreats order has allowed input tax credit on construction of a building, if such a building qualifies as plants.

PMAY-U 2.0: Who can apply for affordable homes under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Urban 2.0 aims to provide affordable housing to one crore urban families, focusing on inclusive development through various housing schemes and subsidies.

NEW DELHI. The central government has launched the second phase of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban 2.0 (PMAY-U 2.0) to provide affordable housing for one crore urban poor, middle-class families, and economically disadvantaged groups (EWS) in metropolitan areas. Approved by the Union Cabinet on August 9, 2024, the scheme aims to construct one lakh new houses within five years, starting September 1, 2024, with a financial subsidy of Rs 2.50 lakh per house. INCLUSIVE URBAN DEVELOPMENT PMAY-U 2.0, a flagship government initiative, focuses on offering all-weather pucca houses to eligible beneficiaries in urban areas. Depending on their jurisdiction, beneficiaries can avail themselves of benefits under either



PMAY-G or PMAY-U 2.0. The scheme promotes inclusive urban growth, addressing the housing needs of slum dwellers, SC/ST communities, minorities, widows, women, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised groups. PMAY-U 2.0 incorporates four verticals to address housing requirements: Beneficiary-Led Construction (BLC)/Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP)/Affordable Rental Housing (ARH) and Interest Subsidy Scheme (ISS).

WHO CAN APPLY? Families living in urban areas and belonging to EWS, Low Income Group (LIG), or Middle Income Group (MIG) segments with no pucca house in any family member's name are eligible to apply. EWS households are defined as families with annual incomes up to Rs 3 lakh, while LIG and MIG segments have income limits of Rs 6 lakh and Rs 9 lakh, respectively. Applicants who have

benefited from any housing scheme in the past 20 years are not eligible.

APPLICATION PROCESS AND DOCUMENTS REQUIRED

Eligible beneficiaries can apply via the official PMAY-U portal (pmay-urban.gov.in), Common Service Centres (CSC), or their local Urban Bodies/Municipalities. The application requires Aadhaar details of the applicant and family, active bank account information, income proof, caste/community proof, and land documents (for BLC verticals).

To check eligibility, applicants must provide their Aadhaar details, income, and other information on the portal. Upon confirmation of eligibility, they can complete the application process by entering all required details and submitting the form. With a focus on inclusive urban development and equity, PMAY-U 2.0 promises a transformative impact on India's urban housing landscape, making affordable homes a reality for millions.

NEWS BOX

I have zero regrets, want to play for CSK as long as possible: R Ashwin

New Delhi R Ashwin received a hero's welcome at his residence in Chennai on Thursday, 19 December, after returning home from Australia. The off-spinner, who recently announced his retirement from international cricket, appeared in high spirits as he was greeted by emotional parents and cheering fans. Initially, Ashwin declined to address the media at Chennai airport. One reporter asked why he chose not to complete the five-Test series in Australia before announcing his retirement. While Ashwin remained tight-lipped at the airport, he later spoke to a select group of reporters outside his residence. When asked if he regretted not captaining the senior national team during his illustrious career, Ashwin responded with characteristic humour and candour: "I can't any more. It's done," he quipped when asked about the captaincy.

"No, I have zero regrets. I have seen so many people with regrets from afar, but I don't want to live my life like that," he added.

Ashwin made the surprise announcement on Wednesday, revealing his decision at the Gabba press room shortly after the third Test



ended in a draw. His mid-series retirement sparked mixed reactions, with some speculating he was disappointed by limited overseas Test opportunities. However, Ashwin dismissed such rumours, emphasising his happiness and contentment with his career. "I am laughing; you can see I am happy," he said, expressing excitement about playing for the Chennai Super Kings (CSK) in the 2025 Indian Premier League (IPL).

WILL TRY AND PLAY FOR CSK AS LONG AS I CAN: ASHWIN

When asked about his immediate plans, Ashwin's characteristic wit shone through.

"I want to be idle--no immediate plans. Being idle is difficult for me," he joked.

He added: "I am going to play for CSK, and don't be surprised if I try and aspire to play for as long as I can. I don't think Ashwin the cricketer is done. I think Ashwin the Indian cricketer has probably called it time. That's it." Ashwin grew emotional as he addressed the crowd gathered at his residence, reminiscing about a similar reception after India's 2011 World Cup victory.

"Thanks to all of you. I didn't expect so many of you to come. I thought I would quietly reach home, but you've all made my day."

Formula 1: Sergio Perez and Red Bull part ways months after contract extension

New Delhi. Mexican driver Sergio Perez has officially parted ways with Red Bull Racing following a mutual agreement, announced on Wednesday, December 18. The decision comes as a surprise to many, particularly after Perez signed a contract extension earlier this year in May, which was expected to keep him with the team until 2026.

The sudden departure has sparked speculation, with many attributing the move to Red Bull's disappointment in Perez's recent performances. Despite his significant contributions in previous seasons, including aiding the team to claim Constructors' Championship titles in 2022 and 2023, his form this year fell under scrutiny. Perez finished eighth in the Drivers' Championship, a staggering 285 points behind teammate Max Verstappen, who claimed his fourth consecutive title. Additionally, Perez failed to secure a single

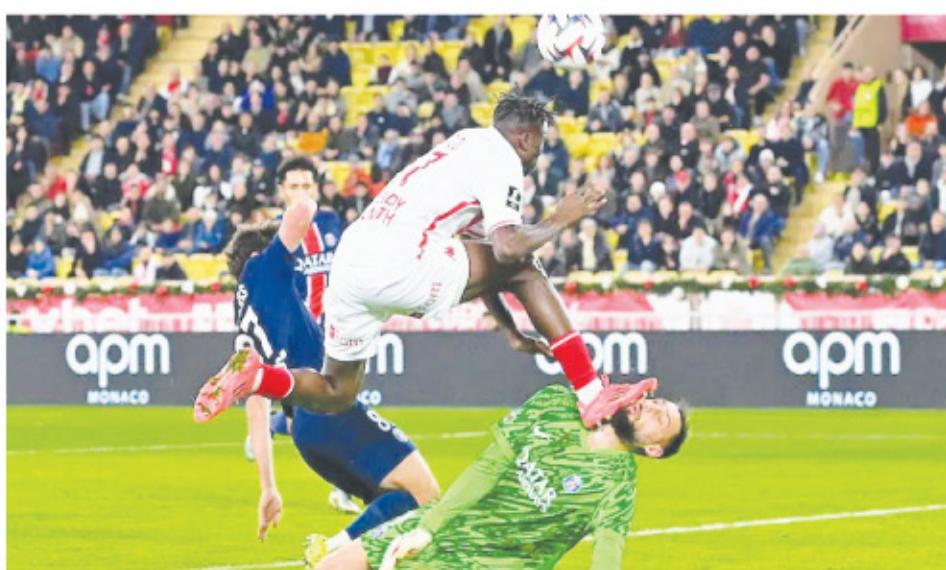


race win this season, marking him as the only driver from a top-four team without a victory. "I'm incredibly grateful for the past four years with Oracle Red Bull Racing and for the opportunity to race with such an amazing team," Perez said. "Driving for Red Bull has been an unforgettable experience and I'll always cherish the successes we achieved together. We broke records, reached remarkable milestones, and I've had the privilege of meeting so many incredible people along the way," he added.

Red Bull is expected to announce Liam Lawson as Perez's replacement in the coming days. Lawson, a rising star in Formula One, has impressed in his appearances so far and is seen as a promising addition to the team. In his parting statement, Perez expressed gratitude towards Red Bull, acknowledging the team's support and the opportunities he was given. The 34-year-old joined Red Bull in 2021 and was instrumental in their championship successes, finishing as runner-up in the Drivers' Championship in 2022.

Gianluigi Donnarumma endured a frightening injury in PSG's 4-2 victory over Monaco after Wilfried Singo's high boot struck his face. Despite the setback, PSG extended their Ligue 1 lead, though their Champions League struggles remain concerning.

New Delhi Paris Saint-Germain goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma suffered a concerning injury during PSG's Ligue 1 clash against AS Monaco on December 19, after being struck in the face by Wilfried Singo's cleats during a goal-scoring attempt. The incident occurred in the 17th minute when Singo, whose initial shot was blocked, attempted to jump over the sliding Donnarumma but inadvertently made contact with the Italian's face. The high boot



left Donnarumma lying on the pitch in visible discomfort, prompting immediate medical attention. After a few tense moments, the PSG shot-stopper was able to stand and walk off the field but was replaced by Matvei Safonov for the remainder of the match. The challenge sparked debate as Singo was not shown a red card, which is typically the penalty for a high boot

challenge. Despite this, PSG manager Luis Enrique refrained from criticising the referee's decision post-match. "The refereeing decisions? I can't do anything, I couldn't see the action, but when you see an action like that it's always difficult," Luis Enrique said in a post-match interview. "The players don't intend to hurt. It's difficult to referee this kind of match, I'm not talking

about the refereeing work," he added. PSG ultimately won the match 4-2 over Monaco. Ousmane Dembélé delivered an electrifying performance, netting a brace, while Gonçalo Ramos and Desiré Doué each added a goal to seal the win. The victory extended PSG's lead at the top of the Ligue 1 table to 10 points, showcasing their domestic dominance under Luis Enrique.

However, despite their strong league performance, PSG continues to face challenges in the newly formatted Champions League. The Parisian side currently sits outside the qualification spots for the knockout stages with only two group-stage games left to play, raising concerns about their European campaign. Monaco, on the other hand, remains in third place in Ligue 1, level on points with second-place Marseille, which has a game in hand. The loss was a setback for Monaco, but they remain firmly in the race for a Champions League spot.

The injury to Donnarumma adds to PSG's growing list of concerns as they balance their Ligue 1 dominance with the pressure of advancing in Europe. The club will now await updates on Donnarumma's condition as they prepare for a crucial phase in their season.

Underestimated intensity of world championship, was not at my 100 percent: D Gukesh

New Delhi Chess world champion D Gukesh explained why he was not at his best in the Chess World Championship tournament against Ding Liren. The 14-game final had copped criticism from legendary Magnus Carlsen Vladimir Kramnik for being poor in quality. Speaking to India Today in an exclusive interview, Gukesh responded to the criticism and accepted that he was not at his best during the finals. Gukesh stated that he underestimated the intensity of the tournament and the stress that he was going to face over the 2-week period.

In the tournament, a blunder from Liren in the final game saw Gukesh capitalise and secure the win and become the youngest chess World Champion in history. However, the quality of the final did come under scrutiny. Former world champions Carlsen and Vladimir Kramnik were vocal in expressing their displeasure at the Gukesh vs Liren match. Kramnik called it "the end of chess as we



know it," while Carlsen would comment that it felt like a second or third round clash in an open tournament. Gukesh spoke about the criticism and said that he had reached his best level in the Candidates tournament, which helped him qualify for the Chess World Championship Final and during the Chess Olympiad - where he won the individual gold medal on Board 1. "I would have preferred to play better than I have, but I also understand that this was my first experience of this kind. To be honest I underestimated the kind of intensity the tournament has. I thought it would be similar to the candidates but it was not at all that. The kind of work that we did in the openings, the kind of emotional stress I had to face was different, something that I had never experienced," Gukesh spoke about the quality of the chess in the tournament.

"So, it's understandable that I was not at hundred per cent but it is also something to realise that even though I was not at hundred per cent I could beat one of the best players in the world in an stressful environment. And you know, I have shown my best at candidates and in the Olympiad level and I am confident that I can achieve those heights again in future," he further added.

Emotional father kisses R Ashwin during hero's welcome at Chennai residence

New Delhi Ravichandran Ashwin received a rousing welcome at his Chennai residence following his retirement from international cricket. Fans, family, and well-wishers gathered to celebrate the iconic career of the former India spinner. His father greeted him with a warm hug and a kiss, while fans cheered, showered him with flowers, and celebrated with the sound of drums echoing outside his home. Ashwin announced his retirement during the post-match press conference following India's hard-fought draw against Australia in Brisbane. Returning home on December 19, the veteran reflected on his career and decision. Speaking to reporters, Ashwin revealed he plans to continue his IPL career with Chennai Super Kings (CSK) for as long as he feels capable. "It's emotional for a lot of people. It will be emotional, maybe it will sink in. But for me, it's a great sense of relief and satisfaction," Ashwin said. "I am going to play for CSK and don't be surprised if I try and aspire to play for as long as I can. I don't think Ashwin the cricketer is done, I think Ashwin the Indian cricketer has probably called it time. That's it," he added.

At the 2025 IPL mega auction, Ashwin secured a heartwarming return to his hometown franchise, CSK, for a whopping Rs 9.25 crore. This move marked a reunion with the team he represented for eight seasons until 2015. Joining forces with the likes of MS Dhoni, Ravindra Jadeja, and coach Stephen Fleming, Ashwin is poised to play a key role for the five-time IPL champions in the upcoming season.

Ashwin's Legendary Career

Ashwin's international career began in 2011 against the West Indies, where he quickly

established himself as a vital cog in India's Test setup. Over 106 Tests, Ashwin took 537 wickets at an impressive average of 24.00 and an economy rate of 2.83, etching his name as one of cricket's greatest spinners. A tactical genius, Ashwin thrived in home conditions, orchestrating numerous match-winning performances. His stellar year in 2016 saw him win both ICC Cricketer of the Year and ICC Test Cricketer of the Year awards, making him only the third Indian to claim the prestigious Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy. Ashwin's contributions were not limited to his bowling; he was a handy lower-order batter with 3503 Test runs. His ability to adapt and innovate made him a formidable opponent. Having held the ICC Test No. 1 bowler ranking multiple times, Ashwin leaves behind an unmatched legacy in Indian cricket, and his fans will continue to celebrate his achievements, both past and those yet to come in the IPL.

Anna for a reason: Ravindra Jadeja pays tribute to R Ashwin after spin twin retires

Border-Gavaskar Trophy:
Ravindra Jadeja came up with an emotional tribute to his spin-bowling partner R Ashwin, a day after the veteran retired from international cricket.

New Delhi. Ravindra Jadeja penned a heartfelt tribute to his spin twin Ravichandran Ashwin after the off-spinner retired from international cricket on Wednesday, December 18. Jadeja shared a photo of their on-field partnership in his message to Ashwin on social media on Thursday. "It's been a privilege to share the dressing room with you for many years," Jadeja wrote. He used the hashtag 'Anna for a reason', which could become a trend when the off-spinner rejoins the Chennai Super

Kings in IPL 2025. Jadeja appears to have let his emotions sink in before wishing his spin-bowling partner with the post on social media. Ashwin made an unforeseen announcement on Thursday, minutes after the third Test between India and Australia at the Gabba in Brisbane ended in a draw.

Ashwin and Jadeja forged one of the most successful spin-bowling partnerships in Test cricket. They played 58 Tests matches together and took 587 wickets between them, becoming the most successful



bowling pair for India, going past the pair of Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh - 501 wickets. Ashwin and Jadeja helped India dominate home Tests as the Asian giants went on to build a fortress. The two spinners were a nightmare to the opposition batters as they relentlessly asked tough questions. Ashwin and Jadeja will reunite at the Chennai Super Kings in IPL 2025. While Jadeja was retained by the five-time champions for Rs 18 crore, Ashwin was bought at the auction in November for Rs 9.75 crore by CSK, who won a bidding war for the off-spinner.

A day after shocking the cricket world with his retirement call, Ashwin returned to Chennai. The off-spinner

will not be part of the remainder of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy -- Boxing Day Test in Melbourne and the New Year's Test in Sydney. "I am going to play for CSK, and don't be surprised if I try and aspire to play for as long as I can. I don't think Ashwin the cricketer is done, I think Ashwin the Indian cricketer has probably called it time.

Vinicius, Mbappe, Rodrygo score as Real Madrid lift Intercontinental Cup

Real Madrid defeated Pachuca 3-0 in the 2024 Intercontinental Cup final, with Mbappe, Rodrygo, and Vinicius Jr delivering stellar performances to secure their second trophy of the season after a dominant display against the Liga MX side.

New Delhi. Real Madrid clinched the 2024 Intercontinental Cup with a commanding 3-0 victory over Mexican Liga MX club Pachuca, showcasing their attacking prowess with goals from Kylian Mbappe, Vinicius Jr, and Rodrygo Gómez. The win marked their second trophy this season, following their

UEFA Super Cup triumph. Pachuca started the match with intent, pressing forward aggressively and creating early chances. However, despite several attempts, they failed to truly test Thibaut Courtois, who remained untroubled in goal. Real Madrid, patient in their build-up, took control of the game in the 37th minute when Kylian Mbappe broke the deadlock. The French forward expertly converted a precise pass from Jude Bellingham, whose midfield dynamism stood out throughout the game.

In the second half, Pachuca nearly found an equaliser in the 52nd minute through Nelson Deosso. The midfielder's brilliant solo run into the Real Madrid box ended with a shot that narrowly deflected past the post, offering a glimpse of hope for the Mexican



side. However, their momentum was short-lived, as Los Blancos capitalized immediately afterward. In the 53rd minute, Rodrygo unleashed a stunning long-range strike to double Madrid's lead. Receiving the ball on the left edge of the penalty area, the Brazilian shifted to his right foot and curled a

magnificent effort beyond Pachuca goalkeeper Scar Ustari, leaving the crowd in awe. Real Madrid sealed the victory in the 84th minute with a penalty from Vinicius Jr., the reigning FIFA Best 2024 award winner. The penalty was awarded after Lucas Vázquez was brought down in the box, and Vinicius confidently slotted the ball into the net, putting the result beyond doubt. Despite Pachuca's spirited performance, they could not match the clinical finishing and tactical dominance of the Spanish giants. With this win, Real Madrid added another prestigious title to their illustrious history and showcased why they remain a force to be reckoned with in world football. Their attacking trio of Mbappé, Vinicius, and Rodrygo proved instrumental once again, reinforcing their status as one of the most formidable units in football.

Tamannaah Bhatia's kurta set is perfect for your Mehendi night

The wedding season is upon us, and with all the mehendi, sangeet, and shaadi celebrations, it's the perfect time to plan your ideal outfit. If you've been considering a kurta set for the mehendi night, Tamannaah Bhatia's throwback look is a total game-changer! This stunning kurta and sharara combo strikes the perfect balance of comfort, elegance, and desi glam—just what you need for a mehendi ceremony. Let's take a closer look at her outfit.

Tamannaah Bhatia looked absolutely striking in an outfit that beautifully fused traditional and contemporary styles. The short, sleeveless purple kurta with a round neckline was exquisitely detailed with a scalloped border and silver embroidery. Silver piping around the neckline added a touch of sophistication to the ensemble.



The actress paired the kurta with a white sharara featuring bold stripes in shades of purple, orange, and black. The sharara created a beautiful contrast against the purple kurta, making the entire outfit pop. To complete the look, she draped a white dupatta with red borders, adorned with the same multicolored stripes seen on the sharara. The dupatta's dot prints and tassel details brought a playful element to the outfit, making it both stylish and distinctive.

Tamannaah opted for minimal yet impactful accessories, perfectly complementing the ensemble. A pair of jhumkas added a traditional touch while keeping the focus on the outfit itself. This choice was ideal for a mehendi night, where comfort and style are essential.

For her makeup, Tamannaah went for a fresh, matte base that gave her skin a natural, glowing look. Coral blush added a soft flush to her cheeks, while neatly groomed, bushy brows polished the look with an effortlessly chic vibe. She finished with glossy nude lips, which beautifully highlighted her radiant skin and subtle features.

Tamannaah Bhatia's outfit is the perfect choice for your mehendi ceremony this wedding season. The kurta and sharara combination, paired with minimal makeup and just the right accessories, makes it unique and stylish. For those who want to stand out while keeping it comfortable, fresh, and easy-chic, Tamannaah's look is a perfect example. Get ready to twirl, laugh, and make beautiful memories while looking fabulous!



Varun Dhawan Reveals Why Diljit Dosanjh Was First Choice For Nain Matakka Song: 'Atlee Sir Was So...'

Varun Dhawan is excited about his upcoming film Baby John co starring Keerthy Suresh.

The film song Nain Matakka created a sensation among the audience. However, recently in conversation with Pinkvilla, Varun has opened up about an exciting collaboration with singer-actor Diljit Dosanjh for the foot-tapping number. revealed that Atlee always wanted Diljit Dosanjh to sing this song. During the conversation, he revealed that filmmaker Atlee had made it clear from the beginning that he wanted Diljit Dosanjh to sing a

brought the project to him, acknowledging changes in the film's geography and storyline. Speaking about the adaptation, Varun stated, "Like you see, a lot of the frames and a lot of the story angles are different. So, if someone comes in expecting a book-by-book remake, they will be disappointed because that's not what the film is. It's an adaptation. We're not running away from that, but it's more of an adaptation." The Tamil original, Theri, was released in 2016, starring Thalapathy Vijay and directed by Atlee Kumar. Featuring Samantha Ruth Prabhu and Amy Jackson in key roles, it became a major success. Now, Baby John brings a fresh spin to the story with a stellar cast including Wamiqa Gabbi, Keerthy Suresh, Jackie Shroff, and Rajpal Yadav. The film also promises special appearances by Salman Khan, Diljit Dosanjh, and Sanya Malhotra, adding to the excitement.

The Baby John trailer teases a heartfelt yet intense storyline. It highlights the bond between Varun's character and his daughter, showing him as a dedicated father who balances parenting with his role as a police officer. His daughter jokingly remarks that just because she calls him "baby" doesn't mean he is one! Glimpses of romance with Keerthy Suresh and appearances by Sanya Malhotra and Wamiqa Gabbi add emotional depth, while the film's antagonist, played by Jackie Shroff, steals the spotlight with his menacing performance. The trailer concludes with Varun's character unleashing his fury to protect his daughter at all costs.



song for the film. He also shared that the Jawan director admires the Punjabi singer a lot. He said, "Atlee sir was so clear from day one. He told me, 'We need Diljit Dosanjh to sing this song,' he made it happen." The actor praised Atlee's creative vision, who could anticipate the benefit of that opportunity. Baby John, directed by Kalees, featured Wamiqa Gabbi, Salman Khan, Jackie Shroff, and Rajpal Yadav in significant roles. The film is all set to release on December 25, 2024. At a recent press event, Varun explained why Theri director Atlee



Anurag Kashyap Fixing Daughter Aaliyah's Dupatta Is Love



Anurag Kashyap is one happy father as his daughter Aaliyah Kashyap married Shane Gregoire in a star-studded wedding ceremony earlier this month. Several pictures and videos from the wedding festivities have been doing rounds on social media. And, we must say, that the ceremonies were all things magical. Besides the traditional setting, the couple has also registered their marriage. In a new video, we can see Anurag performing his father duties as Aaliyah completed the legal formalities of her marriage. The clip shows an intimate moment where Aaliyah Kashyap and Shane are seen signing the wedding documents and completing the legal formalities for registration. Surrounded by their close family members, the couple looked beautiful in their traditional outfits. The bride wore a traditional red suit paired with a contrasting net dupatta. She also covered her head with another red dupatta, honouring the traditions. The groom also embraced Indian attire for the special occasion, wearing a coordinated red and white etnic kurta. In a wholesome moment that left many in awe, we saw the ace filmmaker and proud father Anurag Kashyap repeatedly fixing his daughter's dupatta as she signed her wedding document. Standing behind his daughter, he was all smiles when he shared the tender moment with his piece of heart.

Earlier, Anurag Kashyap also shared photos and videos from the wedding ceremony on Instagram. The wholesome clicks featured him and his ex-wife Aarti Bajaj together as they performed the wedding rituals of their daughter together. Aarti Bajaj is a film editor. Accompanying the post, Anurag wrote, "Ye bhi gayi.. Shane Gregoire my silly take care of her. And I will get back to my stubborn self. Thank you Aarti Bajaj and Rhea Dewan for making it happen so beautifully. Thank you everyone for coming."

Aaliyah Kashyap and her longtime partner, Shane Gregoire tied the knot on Wednesday, December 11 with family and close friends in attendance. The wedding celebration was all about unforgettable moments, with the standout one being Anurag turning into a DJ at the reception, much to the delight of the guests.

Jeetendra And Rakesh Roshan's Dance On Song Naino Mein Sapna Goes Viral, Fans React



Veteran actors Jeetendra and Rakesh Roshan have recently proved that age is just a number as they hit the dance floor during the celebration of Jeetendra's 50th wedding anniversary. A video of the duo grooving to the iconic song 'Naino Mein Sapna' has taken the internet by storm. Fans are seen reacting to it and dropping heart emojis.

Mushtaq Sheikh took to his Instagram handle and shared a video in which we can see a grand celebration being organised at their residence in Mumbai. Daughter Ekta Kapoor and several other celebrities marked their attendance. Rakesh Roshan also attended the party, where he was seen dancing with Jeetendra on popular songs. Neelam Kothari, Sameer Soni, Krystle D'Souza, and others, are all seen in the party. One of the fans wrote, "Wow I love the way the two heroes are still killing it with their dance moves." Another wrote, "Wow." In a sweet gesture, Ekta captured a video showing several celebrities, including herself, Krystle D'Souza and Riddhi Dogra, along with Fabulous Lives of Bollywood Wives stars Bhavana Pandey and Neelam Kothari, dancing and paying tribute to the couple's love. The celebration was made even more memorable with the presence of several renowned personalities – Anil Kapoor, Sonali Bendre, Padmaja Kolhapure, David Dhawan, Manish Malhotra, Rakesh Roshan, Anita Hassanandani, Kriti Kharbanda and Samir Soni, among others. While the dance performances added energy to the event, the highlight of the evening happened when Jeetendra and Shobha exchanged garlands and recreated the moment from their wedding.

Jeetendra and Shobha Kapoor, married in 1974, continue to share a strong bond. Looking back on their relationship, veteran actress Mumtaz once shared her experience working with Jeetendra and mentioned how difficult it was to get along with him due to his closeness with Shobha.

Recently, the OTT platform Netflix announced an exclusive docu-series on Hrithik Roshan's family. The audiences will experience the rich tapestry of their multi-generational legacy through song and stories.