

Eye on key BMC polls, Uddhav begins exercise to review position of Sena (UBT) in Mumbai

Sanjay Kumar

Mumbai, Dec. 26: Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray started a three-day exercise to assess his party's position in Mumbai, where civic polls are likely to be held next year, one of his close aides said. After the split in the



Bal Thackeray-founded Shiv Sena in 2022, the recently concluded assembly elections were seen as a litmus test for Uddhav's party, which is a constituent of the opposition bloc Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA). However, the MVA performed disastrously winning only 46, including 20 by Sena (UBT), of the state's 288 assembly seats. Of the 36 assembly seats in Mumbai, Sena (UBT) contested in 21 constituencies and won 10. Sena (UBT) leader Anil Parab said, "Uddhav ji is taking stock of the poll prepared-

ness of Sena (UBT) in all 227 municipal wards of Mumbai. The deliberations will go on for three days." Local body elections, including in Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), could be held in March/April 2025 if the Supreme Court gives its verdict over the "OBC (Other Backward Class) quota" in January. Following the setback in the state polls, the Sena (UBT) is keen to retain the BMC, which is among Asia's richest civic bodies. The corporation's last budget outlay stood at nearly Rs 60,000 crore, higher than some states in the country. The five-year term of most municipal corporations, including the BMC, and many other local bodies in the state expired in 2022. In December 2021, the Supreme Court had ruled that reservation for OBCs in local bodies would not be allowed unless the government fulfilled the triple test laid down in the apex court's 2010 order. It had ruled that until the triple test criteria was fulfilled, OBC seats would be re-notified as general category seats. The triple test required the state government to set up a dedicated commission to gather data on the backwardness of OBCs in every local body, to specify the proportion of reservation in each local body in light of the commission's recommendations, and ensure that such reservation does not exceed the overall 50 per cent quota ceiling.

Bangladeshi national living in Kolkata for a year arrested

ST Correspondent

KOLKATA, Dec 27: A Bangladeshi national was arrested on Thursday night from Collin Lane on charges of illegally living in the country on the basis of fake documents for nearly a year, police said on Friday. An Aadhaar card and PAN card, both issued using forged documents, were seized from the accused An Aadhaar card and PAN card, both issued using forged documents, were seized from the accused An Aadhaar card and PAN card, both issued using forged documents, were seized from the accused, identified by the police as Md Abidur Rahman. From health to happiness, love to career—your 2025 horoscope reveals it all! Read Now Police said Rahman, a resident of Bangladesh's Narail district in the Khulna division, had been visiting Kolkata on several occasions for business over the past 10 years. "He settled near the port area last year and even managed to procure fake Aadhaar and PAN cards," an officer said. Police are now investigating who assisted Rahman in obtaining the fake identity cards, which listed him as a resident of North 24 Parganas. He was produced before the court on Friday, which remanded him in police custody until January 6, the officer added.

No compromise on law and order: CM Reddy

New Delhi, Dec. 26: Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy made it clear to a visiting Telugu cinema industry delegation that there would be no compromise on law and order in the state and that it applies to everyone, including the film fraternity. The CM also conveyed to the delegation of Telugu film personalities led by ace producer and Telangana Film Development Corporation (FDC) Chairman Venkata Ramana Reddy, that a Cabinet Sub-Committee will be constituted to resolve the problems of the film industry and suggested to them to set up an in-house panel as well. The meeting between the CM and the film personalities was held at the Police Integrated Command Control Centre here, and in the wake of actor Allu Arjun's recent arrest that had led to speculation of 'strained' ties between the ruling dispensation and the cinema industry post the police action against the 'Pushpa' star. A 35-year-old woman died at Sandhya Theatre here in a stampede where Allu Arjun-starrer 'Pushpa 2' was screened on December 4, leading to his subsequent arrest on December 13 and release. "As the Chief Minister, it is my responsibility to enforce the laws. I do not have any personal preferences. Let us all develop the film industry together without confining ourselves to Telugu only. Government is ready to extend all support to the film industry," official sources quoted the CM as saying. Asserting that the cinema industry is as important to the government as the IT and pharma sectors, Reddy said a Cabinet Sub-Committee will be constituted to resolve the problems of the film industry.

Manmohan Singh's values of humility, integrity will continue to inspire generations to come: Mufti

Naresh Malhotra

Jammu, Dec. 27: Manmohan Singh's values of humility, integrity will continue to inspire generations to come; Mufti PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti Friday paid tributes to former prime minister Manmohan Singh, saying his contributions to the country and his values of humility, integrity, and inclusivity will continue to inspire generations to come. Mufti and her party paid floral tributes to the former PM at the party headquarters here, where a condolence meeting was also held. Mufti described Singh as the architect of modern India's economic transformation, recalling his visionary leadership during the liberalisation, privatisation, and globalisation reforms that reshaped India in the early 1990s. "Singh ushered India into a new era, setting the stage for growth and prosperity. From bringing bread and butter to the doorstep of the poorest through schemes like NREGA and the Food Security Act to securing the landmark nuclear deal, and Aadhar, his contributions have touched every Indian," she said. She said that in 2002, when PDP-Congress were in talks for government formation in J-K, Sonia Gandhi sent him to Kashmir and that was when she

met him for the first time. "I had never seen such a humble and soft-hearted person in my life. Singh had a vital role in forming the



alliance at that time and the agenda of the alliance," she added. The PDP president praised Singh's ability to navigate the country through complex challenges, and remembered his unprecedented public apology as prime minister for the anti-Sikh riots, demonstrating his humility and statesmanship.

"During his tenure of ten years, there was no communal riot anywhere. Today, there is no day when lynchings do not take place, mosques are being demolished, our shawl weavers are harassed outside," she said, adding it was his biggest legacy. The former J-K chief minister said what she liked the most about Singh was that he was a man of few words, but a "man of action". "Singh was very sincere and kind towards Jammu and Kashmir, whether we talk about economic packages or political process. He formed five working groups to address the issues. These reports, despite the hostile environment, remain relevant today as guiding documents for finding a constitutional solution to the region's problems," she said. "His era is unimaginable in its vision for peace, prosperity, and progress. His contributions to India and his values of humility, integrity, and inclusivity will continue to inspire generations to come," she added. Meanwhile, former Union minister and Congress leader Saifuddin Soz said Singh's passing away is a great loss to the nation. All Parties Sikh Coordination Committee (APSC) chairman Jagmohan Singh Rains said Singh was always concerned about peace in Jammu and Kashmir.

Manmohan Singh's life will serve as lesson to coming generations: PM Modi

Simmi Kaur Babbar

New Delhi, Dec. 27: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday described his predecessor Manmohan Singh's death as a big loss to the nation, asserting that his commitment to the people and the country's development would always be respected. In a video message, Modi recalled Singh's life journey after his family's migration to India, leaving behind everything following Partition, as he noted that his numerous achievements since then were no mean feat. His life will always serve as a lesson for the future generations on how someone can rise above deprivation and struggles to attain the heights of success, he said. Modi said Singh, who passed away at 92 on Thursday, would always be remembered as a decent human being, scholar, economist and a leader dedicated to reforms. Noting that he

served in various capacities in the government, the prime minister said Singh was Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor dur-

progress will always be remembered." He was also effusive in praising Singh's personal virtues, noting that his life was a reflection of his honesty and simplicity. Modi said despite being educated at the world's prestigious institutes and occupying leading positions, the former prime minister and Congress leader never forgot the values of his normal background. His humility, sobriety and intellect defined his life as a distinguished parliamentarian, Modi said, praising Singh's commitment to discharging his duty as MP by coming to Parliament in a wheelchair when he became frail in the last few years. Singh rose above partisan politics to remain accessible to everyone, Modi said and recalled that he would often have discussions with him on numerous national and international issues when the Congress leader was prime minister during 2004-14 and he was the Gujarat chief minister. When he became prime minister in 2014, Modi said he would speak to him, noting that they had spoken on Singh's birthday.



ing challenging times and put the country on a new economic path as finance minister in the government headed by PV Narasimha Rao. Modi said, "As prime minister, his contribution to the country's development and

Man of exceptional intellect, unparalleled humility

Navdeep Singh Sahni

Srinagar, Dec 27: Dr Manmohan Singh's very sad passing away denotes the end of a truly rare species of political leadership which was marked by exceptional intellectual capability, honesty, transparency and unparalleled humility. A man of few words, he heard everyone, high and low, and tackled the most complex issues by taking his own decisions, which best served the national interest. Years after Dr Singh returned to India, I had the privilege of having as my tutor a very eminent Economics Professor with whom Dr Manmohan Singh had done his doctoral studies at Oxford University. Dr Little and his good lady never tired of telling everyone that he was an outstanding economist, among the best who had studied at that university. He had an equally iconic reputation at Cambridge University.



during the most difficult period when the country was compelled to mortgage its gold reserves. I served, successively, as Defence and Home Secretary, and had to be daily at his office door, literally begging for some financial relief for the depart-

ments in which I worked. Dr Singh will be remembered for his deep commitment to national interests. As the father of India's economic reforms under then Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao in the early 1990s, Dr Singh's pursuit in unleashing India's entrepreneurial spirit as PM—the so-called "animal spirits"—protected India in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis. His outreach to the US, despite opposition by his own party, to sign the civil nuclear deal brought India to international attention as a responsible power. His dedication to improving ties across India's neighbourhood was exceptional; people-to-people ties were enormously improved, especially between India and Pakistan, despite the 2008 Mumbai attacks, which he had no hesitation placing at the door of the Pakistani military establishment. I had the good fortune of again serving with Dr Singh when he was the PM and I was appointed the Governor of J&K.

Indian economy owes a lot to Dr Manmohan Singh: Sunil Bharti Mittal

Tejinder Kaur Babbar

New Delhi, Dec. 27: Sunil Bharti Mittal, Founder and Chairman of Bharti Enterprises paid his heartfelt condolence to the late Dr Manmohan Singh, as the industrialist recalled his engagements and meetings with the former prime minister over the past three decades. Talking to ANI over the phone, Mittal said the Indian economy owes a lot to Dr Manmohan Singh, particularly because of his milestone reforms of the early 1990s. "I think the Indian economy owes a lot to Dr Singh, especially my generation who created remarkable success stories around aviation, broadcasting, telecom, Infosys, Wipro, and Airtel," Mittal said. "We all know his economic reforms. People like me would not have been in my position today, had the 1991, and 1992 reforms not unshackled the burden of regulations and licensing raj and lowered the barriers to imports and FDI." Dr Manmohan Singh's

demise is a big loss for the nation, Mittal said. "I must say, I have had seen his personal warmth, and engagements from time to time on many matters," he recalled of his overseas tours with the former prime minister as part of business delegations.



"He was always generous and kind." Mittal had travelled with Dr Manmohan Singh to multiple countries as CEO. "During those tours, I saw him in action on these forums and how he handled with fortitude and

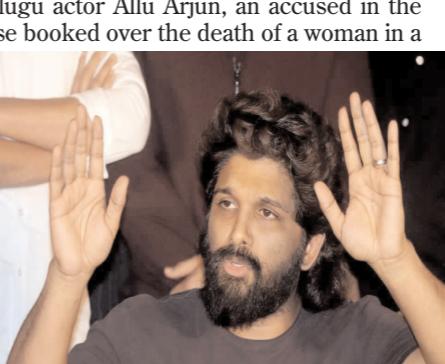
foresight, dealing with some of these issues," Mittal recalled. The removal of licensing Raj was like unleashing new energy for the entrepreneurial minds of his era, Mittal noted. The reforms he brought in when he was at the helms of affairs at the Ministry of Finance back then were "unparalleled", Mittal said. As a prime minister, late Dr Manmohan Singh worked around for continued momentum in the country's economy, ensuring all sections of the society were gaining, Mittal said. "He will be remembered as a tall giant who not only ushered in economic reforms and unsettled all of the entrepreneurs of our era," Mittal added. India's economic growth post-liberalization cannot be hailed without recognizing the significant contribution of former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh. His journey began long before he assumed charge as the 13th Prime Minister of the country. When India

was facing a balance of payments crisis, Singh, along with then Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, steered the economy onto the path of development through liberalization and served as the Finance Minister in Rao's government. As Finance Minister under Prime Minister Rao from 1991 to 1996, Singh played a pivotal role in liberalizing India's economy. He reduced the License Raj and streamlined regulations, significantly reducing government interference in industries. He also introduced trade reforms, cutting import tariffs and moving towards an open-market economy. The major reforms in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), which India continues to benefit from, were initiated under his leadership, allowing FDI in key sectors. When he assumed charge as Prime Minister, the country experienced sustained economic growth. India achieved an average growth rate of 7 per cent during his first term. According to IMF data, India's GDP from 2004 to 2014 averaged a growth rate of around 6.7 per cent.

Actor Allu Arjun appears before court virtually, files regular bail petition

New Delhi, Dec. 27: Theatre stampede case: Actor Allu Arjun appears before court virtually, files regular bail petition

Top Telugu actor Allu Arjun, an accused in the case booked over the death of a woman in a



stampede here during the premiere of his latest film 'Pushpa-2', appeared through video conference before a local court on Friday. Allu Arjun, who was named as accused no 11, also filed a regular bail petition in the court which may come up for hearing on December 30. The actor, who

was arrested on December 13 in connection with the incident, was produced before the Nampally court, which remanded him to a 14-day judicial custody which ended today. He was to present himself before the court as part of further proceedings and he appeared through video conference. Shortly after Allu Arjun was shifted to jail, the Telangana High Court granted him interim bail for four weeks (from December 13) and he was released from the jail on December 14. A 35-year-old woman died and her eight-year-old son was injured on December 4 during a stampede-like situation at the Sandhya Theatre in Hyderabad when fans jostled to have a glimpse of the actor at the premiere of 'Pushpa 2' movie. Following the incident, the city police registered a case against Allu Arjun, his security team, and the theatre management under different sections of Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita (BNS) at the Chikkadpally police station based on the complaint lodged by the deceased woman's family.

NEWS BOX

Hindu outfit alleges security guard of forcing female devotee to remove sweater at Abirami Amman temple

DINDIGUL. A Hindu outfit alleged that a security guard forced female devotees to remove sweaters and used foul language inside the Abirami Amman temple in Dindigul. The video of the incident went viral in social media circles across Dindigul, Palani, Natham and Madurai districts on Thursday. However, officials said the incident occurred one year ago and assured action against the man for using foul language. Speaking to TNIE, Hindu Tamil Katchi president Rama Ravikumar said, "The video is shocking as a female devotee about to make offerings as part of the Margazhi festival was stopped by the security guard near the entrance and disallowed entry as she was wearing a sweater, which was not allowed as per



temple dress code. When the devotee refused and argued, the guard used derogatory words with her. We seek action against the guard and temple staff." Speaking to, Executive Officer of Hindu temples said, "This video is more than a year old. He is not a security guard deployed by our department. He is an elderly man who is a part of the Temple Protection Force nominated by the local police department. He will be transferred and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken as he should not have used.

Consider providing drinking water to Punnaikayal village residents: Madras HC

MADURAI. The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court recently directed the state government to consider and decide on a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) petition seeking to fulfil the drinking water needs of the residents of Punnaikayal village of Thoothukudi district. The petitioner Kulanthai Machado filed the plea seeking a direction to the government to provide drinking water to all households in the aforesaid village. Besides this, he also wanted the authorities to complete the projects that were accorded administrative approval by the district collector under the Self-sufficiency Scheme and Jal Jeevan Mission for the village. Though he had given a representation to the authorities on August 19, the same was not considered, he alleged.

A bench of Justices MS Ramesh and AD Maria Clete observed that it is the statutory duty of the authorities to consider and respond to the representation without keeping it pending indefinitely. They disposed of the PIL by directing the authorities to consider and take a decision on the representation within three weeks.

Two government school teachers face inquiry for caste discrimination

CHENNAI. The school education department has initiated an inquiry against two teachers, who were working at Pathippaga Chemmal K Ganapathy Government Higher Secondary School in Kodambakkam, for allegedly discriminating against a class 10 boy on the basis of caste. The boy said in a video that he played the 'parai' instrument during arts and culture competitions at the school. Since then, his math and physical education teachers have been allegedly discriminating against him. "The teachers told me that I should go work along with my father, who is employed at a crematorium. They also frequently check my bag, ask me to remove my shirt before sitting down, and also order me to leave the class," said the student. Even if the headmaster intervenes and asks me to go back to the class since examinations are approaching, they would again send me out after some time, he added. P N Kubendran, general secretary of Tamil Nadu Thani Dravidar Peravai and a social activist, submitted a complaint against the teachers to school education department and Commissions for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the state and centre. "The physical education teacher even threatened the school's headmaster when I visited the school to raise this issue. They have also used the student's caste name to abuse him. The issue should be inquired thoroughly and action should be taken against the teachers," he said. Sources in the department said the boy is firm in his statement.

20 years after Tsunami, rehabilitation homes in Tamil Nadu fall into ruins

NAGAPATTINAM. The same houses that once rekindled in them the will to survive soon turned death traps. When the sea pulled the carpet from under their feet in 2004, the Tamil Nadu government and various NGOs came forward to provide the survivors of the tsunami with a roof over their heads. Yet, the same roofs have sprung leaks, and walls developed cracks. Twenty years later, thousands of such houses are in a terrible state of disrepair. Erstwhile Nagapattinam district bore the brunt of nature's wrath that Sunday morning. At least 6,065 people died, hundreds went missing, thousands were injured and lakhs displaced. As part of rehabilitation, nearly 9,000 houses were raised in the present Nagapattinam district and 7,000 in Mayiladuthurai district today, which was carved out of the former. A recent survey found that as many as 6,000 houses in Nagapattinam and at least 4,000 in Mayiladuthurai are in disrepair. In one such house at Selloor, resides S V Jayakumar (37), a construction labourer, along with his wife Pandimeena (32) and three children. Three months ago, the house meant to provide a safe haven took the life of their youngest child. The couple's two daughters had gone to stay with their grandmother on September 19. V Jayakumar, Pandimeena and their two-year-old son Yasinth Ram went to bed after dinner.



injury, but the scar left by the loss remains. TNIE visited hundreds of dilapidated 'tsunami rehabilitation' houses in Velankanni, New Nambiyar Nagar, Kameshwaram, Akkaraipettai, Keechankuppam, Thideerkuppam, Tharangambadi and Poompuhar. The houses are crumbling on the inside and out. Beams and columns are exposed in many buildings. At several of the structures, doors and windows were off the hinges. Despite

owning these houses, several families, although strapped for cash, are forced to live in houses elsewhere for rent. V Aathalakshmi, a 60-year-old widow from New Nambiyar Nagar, initially stayed at a tsunami rehabilitation house built by a nonprofit organisation. However, since portions of that house got damaged, she moved to another rehabilitation house on a rental basis. "Now this house has also begun to crumble. I work as a domestic help to keep body and soul together. The plan was to save some money and renovate my old house. But the rental house is also rickety. I don't know which house to repair first if at all I manage to save some money," she said.

Recently, the Nagapattinam district administration conducted an independent survey of the houses. "We found that around 6,000 houses built by nonprofit organisations were either severely, moderately or mildly damaged. We submitted the findings to the state government for further action," Collector P Akash said. Meanwhile, Nagapattinam MLA J Mohamed Shanavas demanded the government initiate a survey across the state and assess the condition of the rehabilitation homes. Two decades down, that December morning's waves continue to batter Tamil Nadu's survivors.

New Cherlapalli terminal to serve pax in eastern part of Hyderabad

HYDERABAD. Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw is going to inaugurate Cherlapalli railway station's second entry and a new railway terminal in the presence of Union Coal & Mines Minister G Kishan Reddy on December 28. Sources said the development works were recently completed with an expenditure of nearly Rs 413 crore. Cherlapalli, located on the eastern side of Hyderabad, is a region experiencing rapid development and is conveniently situated near the Outer Ring Road. Accordingly, the station was identified for development, not only to reduce congestion on the other existing rail terminals in the twin cities but also to particularly serve passengers in the eastern part of the city. Currently, the trains in Hyderabad and Secunderabad are mainly operated through



three main terminals — Secunderabad, Hyderabad and Kacheguda. To meet the growing needs of the city, Lingampalli on the western part of the twin city was developed as another terminal station. The second entry and new railway terminal station building with a

modern architectural facade has been constructed to handle the passengers. The station building comprises six booking counters, separate waiting halls for ladies and gentlemen, as well as an upper-class waiting area and an executive lounge on the ground floor. Additionally, the first floor will house a cafeteria, restaurant, and restroom facilities. The design will feature spacious concourse areas and a modern elevation with illuminated facade lighting. Two spacious new Foot Over Bridges one 12 metre and another six metre wide, to facilitate seamless inter-platform movement. Further, all nine platforms would have escalators and lifts i.e., a total of seven lifts and six escalators for facilitating passenger movement. It will also have coach maintenance facilities to facilitate the originating and terminating of trains at the station.

IMD issues warning for severe rainfall, strong winds in Andhra Pradesh over next two days

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. It was an impromptu visit by litterateur M T Vasudevan Nair to Malayalam Pallikoodam in the state capital during the summer of 2015 that led to the birth of what is now known as the 'Malayalam language oath'. The lines that begin with 'Malayalam aanu ente bhasha, ente bhasha ente vedanu...' (Malayalam is my language, my language is my abode) were originally a verse written by MT for the children at a summer camp. MT, who was informed about the activities of Malayalam Pallikoodam by poet V Madhusudhanan Nair, evinced interest in visiting the Pallikoodam which was established to popularise Malayalam as well as the culture and traditions of Kerala. Pallikoodam functionary and author Jessy Narayanan vividly remembers how she was informed of the visit by the literary giant just a few minutes before his arrival.

The summer camp organisers were not sure how keen MT would be to interact with the children. Madhusudhanan Nair, who accompanied MT, asked the litterateur if he could pen down something for the students. Soon, a chart paper was affixed on a board and a marker handed over to MT. "To our surprise, MT wrote the thought-provoking lines as if it came straight from his heart. He then asked a student to read it aloud. Only when it was read aloud did we realise that the words had a lot of depth," said Jessy, who is now the secretary of Malayalam Pallikoodam.

The oath reflects how one's mother tongue is one's home; the sky; the star one sees; the gentle breeze that caresses and the water that quenches one's thirst. It sums up finally that one's being is one's first language. It was the then director of Pallikoodam summer camp Gopi Narayanan who suggested Madhusudhanan Nair that MT's lines had all the merits of an oath that captures the charm and pride of Malayalam. Reading the verse carefully, Madhusudhanan Nair found out that MT's words also encompassed 'Panchabootha' -- the five basic elements of nature.

The low-pressure area, located over the Southwest and adjoining West Central Bay of Bengal off South Andhra Pradesh-North Tamil Nadu coasts, and its cyclonic circulation remains extended up to 1.5 km above mean sea level. In response to the ongoing conditions, the IMD has issued a third-level danger warning for all ports in the State. All ports and coastal areas are on high alert, and fishermen have been advised against



venturing into the sea due to the rough conditions. In light of the IMD's alert, officials from the State Disaster Management Authority have instructed district Collectors to prepare ground-level staff to assist farmers. They have also advised farmers not to dry or harvest their produce in the open due to the impending rainfall. Speaking to the media, Visakhapatnam Meteorological Officer Sudhavalli stressed the importance of caution over the next two

days. She urged citizens to avoid unnecessary travel, as the IMD's forecast predicts the likelihood of severe winds and heavy rains. Furthermore, fishermen in Visakhapatnam, Vizianagram, and Srikakulam districts have been specifically warned not to venture into the sea for fishing for the next week. The IMD continues to monitor the situation closely, and residents are advised to stay updated on weather advisories.

Kuppam Horticulture Hub wins Skoch Award for setting benchmark agricultural innovation

CHITTOOR. Kuppam in Chittoor district has transformed into a thriving horticulture hub, setting a benchmark for agricultural innovation and contributing significantly to farmers' livelihoods. Leveraging advanced Israeli technology, the Kuppam Horticulture Hub has introduced modern farming practices. These innovative methods have revolutionised agriculture in the region. The hub, formally inaugurated on January 2, 2019, by then Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, was envisioned to make Kuppam a model for horticulture. Spanning across 22.8 acres, the Centre of Excellence (CoE) at Pedda

Bangarunatham village in Kuppam mandal focuses on the cultivation of flowers and vegetables, utilising cutting-edge techniques like drip irrigation, polyhouses, and grafting. The hub supports farmers in producing high-quality crops with minimal resources, ensuring increased productivity and profitability.

The favourable climate supports a variety of vegetables, flowers, and fruits, including marigolds, tomatoes, and capsicum. Farmers, officials, and students receive training on modern agricultural practices, improving skills at



the centre. By introducing innovative methods and supporting market access, the hub has significantly enhanced the income

Nila: An emotion that ebbed and flowed in MT Vasudevan Nair's writings"

KOCHI. "I prefer the Nila that I know to the great oceans that hold unknown wonders in their wombs," M T Vasudevan Nair once said in an interview. Alongside his characters, the Bharathapuzha river -- which is romanticised as the Nila, mostly in literary works -- plays a significant role in the writings of MT. Published in 1962, 'Asuravithu' stands out as one of MT's remarkable works that portrays the myriad emotions of the river. Skilfully written and featuring well-crafted characters, the novel's narrative offers a candid examination of the deteriorating matrilineal order and the collapse of the joint-family system. Readers find themselves next to Govindankutty, who gazes at the Nila from atop a wall, with his emotions reflecting in the nuances of the river. "You cannot keep Nila away from the characteristic thoughts of MT. I would say, MT encapsulates the Nila and Kudallur (MT's hometown, in Palakkad district). There is none who has loved Nila this much," says M T Raveendran, who penned 'MTyum Kudallur' (MT and Kudallur). Raveendran is the son of MT's aunt. MT also poignantly captures the changes that Nila underwent over the years. In the novel 'Kaalam' (1969), when Sethu leaves his village in search of a better life, MT places the character against the backdrop of a flooded river. When Sethu returns, believing he has gained everything in life, the river has been reduced to a dribble. MT alludes that despite his good fortune, Sethu has lost his roots and beloved ones. Sethu says, "Behind me, the river lies motionless like the body of a man covered in blood." MT is peerless in narrating Sethu's agony. The narration is intense and affects every reader who has left their past in search of a better life, says Sathesh M P, a teacher and resident of Kudallur, who has written many magazine and newspaper articles on MT.

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News box

Delayed, drain in flood-prone Gurgaon sectors to be ready in 3 months

Gurgaon. The construction of a stormwater drain between AIT Chowk and Southern Peripheral Road (SPR) will be completed within the next three months, the GMDA said on Thursday. "We are now hoping to complete the project within the next three months. The new stormwater drain will mitigate waterlogging issues in sectors 55, 56 and nearby areas," a senior GMDA official said. Originally scheduled for completion in June this year, the project was delayed due to the shifting of electric poles along the drain's alignment. With the power utilities now shifted, construction has resumed. The drain will be connected to Leg-3 on SPR and will cost the GMDA Rs 3.9 crore. Once ready, it will provide much-needed relief to residents of sectors 55, 56, 57 and adjoining areas, which have been plagued by severe waterlogging during heavy rain. The metropolitan authority awarded the contract to an agency in Oct last year for the construction of a 1.5km master drain at the dividing road of sector 55-56. The absence of a master drain in sectors 55 and 56, located at the foothills of Gwal Pahari, has led to frequent flooding as rainwater rushes downward into the area. This has disrupted traffic and caused significant inconvenience during heavy rainfall. The delay in drain construction has also stalled the Rs 9.8-crore road revamp project on the 1.4km stretch between AIT Chowk and SPR. This work, initiated by GMDA's infra-1 division in June 2023, includes overlaying the main carriageway, constructing service roads, installing surface drains, and building footpaths and cycle tracks. While the road project had a timeline of 12 months, progress has been slow, with only about one kilometre of service road completed and bitumen work yet to start on the opposite side. Footpaths and cycle tracks remain unfinished as well. Meanwhile, the residents criticised the GMDA for the slow pace of work. RWA president of Sushant Lok 2 and 3 Pawan Yadav said, "During the monsoon, the area gets heavily flooded, and even our internal lanes get inundated."

NCR sees 44% jump in new realty launches, prices up 30% too

Gurgaon. The Delhi-NCR real estate market exhibited remarkable growth in 2024, despite a 4% year-on-year decline in housing sales across India's top seven cities. According to the year-end report by real estate consultancy Anarock, NCR recorded a 44% surge in new launches, the highest among major regions. This contributed significantly to the 412,520 units launched nationwide in 2024, though it marked a 7% decline compared to 445,770 units in 2023. The NCR housing market also witnessed an impressive 30% spike in prices, the steepest increase across India, underscoring strong demand from homebuyers. This price growth surpassed the 21% average increase recorded across other leading cities, positioning NCR as a key driver of the country's real estate momentum. In terms of sales value, India's top cities collectively recorded transactions worth Rs 5.68 lakh crore in 2024, a 16% jump compared to the previous year.

Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) remained the leader in housing sales, followed by Pune, but NCR's performance stood out due to its sharp price hikes and supply growth. The report highlights that NCR,



alongside Bengaluru and Chennai, was one of the few regions to see a growth in new supply during 2024. Unsold inventory in NCR also saw an 8% decline, reflecting improved absorption rates and a shift towards balanced demand and supply dynamics. MMR and Bengaluru together accounted for nearly 50% of the total new housing supply in 2024.

However, NCR's significant 44% surge in launches signals rising interest from developers and buyers in this market.

Crematorium to come up for new sectors in 8 months in Gurgaon

Gurgaon. A crematorium will be built in Sector 88 to cater to the needs of people living in residential societies of the Manesar municipal area, the minister for industries, commerce and environment, Rao Narbir Singh, said on Sunday. The construction of the crematorium is expected to be over in six to eight months, said the minister during a grievance redressal meeting held with representatives from over 25 RWAs along the Dwarka Expressway. "Despite rapid development in this part of the city, there is no crematorium to cater to society residents," said Pramod Khullar, RWA president of Royal Ville. "The condition of arterial roads is bad, and the lack of functional streetlights poses serious safety risks. Moreover, stray cattle remain a nuisance, despite repeated complaints to the municipal corporation," he added. Responding to the issue of stray cattle disrupting traffic, the minister said Rs 56 lakh was sanctioned for the Manesar gaushalas. "A drive will soon be launched to relocate stray cattle to this facility," he said. The minister also addressed complaints about illegal meat shops, instructing police and municipal officials to launch a joint crackdown. "Maintaining a clean and safe environment is essential. Illegal activities affecting public welfare will not be tolerated, and encroachments on government land will be dealt with firmly," Singh added. Dharamveer Singh, RWA President of Casabella, highlighted incomplete infrastructure projects and pointed to the master road in Sectors 82 and 83. "The road has been lying incomplete for years," he said. Sunil Sharma, RWA President of Palm Garden, raised concerns about incomplete sewer lines in the newer parts of the city.

Nodia's battle with 'poor' air continues

Noida. The city's air quality further deteriorated, but remained in 'poor' category for second day with the AQI recording at 277 on Thursday, up from 225 a day before. Ghaziabad's AQI also remained 'poor' as air deteriorated to 267 from 255 the day before. Greater Noida's AQI was recorded at 280, up from 222. Air monitoring stations across the two districts recorded AQI ranging between 'poor' and 'very poor' on Thursday. Sector 125 and Sector 1 stations recorded 'poor' AQI at 212 and 282. Meanwhile, Sector 116 and Sector 62 stations recorded 'very poor' at 310 and 304, respectively. In Greater Noida, both Knowledge Park 3 and 5 stations recorded 'poor' AQI at 384 and 289. In neighbouring Ghaziabad, all four stations recorded 'very poor' AQI, with Indirapuram recording the worst AQI at 314, followed by Loni (276), Vasundhara (268), and Sanjay Nagar (211). Meanwhile, the city recorded a minimum temperature of 10 degrees Celsius, and a maximum was 22 degrees Celsius. Ghaziabad's minimum temperature touched 10 degrees Celsius, and the maximum was 23. According to



IMD, there was a slight fall in minimum temperature over Delhi/NCR during the past 24 hours. The maximum and minimum temperatures over Delhi were between 22 to 24 degrees Celsius and 08 to 09 degrees Celsius, respectively. The minimum temperature was above normal by up to 01 degrees Celsius, and the maximum temperature was above normal by up to 01 to 03 degrees Celsius over most places. Mainly smog/dense fog conditions with predominant surface wind from the west direction, with wind speed reaching 04 to 10 km/h, prevailed in the past 24 hours. Mainly smog conditions with wind speeds of less than 04 kmph and variable direction prevailed over the

region in the forenoon today. As per the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, the ventilation index lower than 6000 m³/s with an average wind speed of less than 10 km/h is unfavourable for the dispersion of pollutants. The air quality is likely to be in the poor category on Friday. The air quality is likely to be in the 'moderate' category on Dec 28. The air

quality is likely to be in the 'poor' bracket on Dec 29. Mahesh Palawat, vice president for meteorology and climate change at Skymet Weather, said, "Rain is expected on Friday. Light rain the day after tomorrow. There may be moderate fog on Dec 28 and 29. Temperatures will drop significantly, leaving from 30, and 31st".

25% dues upfront, rest in instalments: Haryana govt revises policy for stalled projects

Gurgaon. Haryana govt this week revised its policy to kickstart stalled real estate projects and ensure recovery of outstanding external development charges (EDC) and state infrastructure development charges (SIDC).

The revised policy says that developers with dues exceeding Rs 20 crore can pay the entire amount upfront to get approvals for the project. If they aren't able to pay the full amount, they can opt for a phased payment model. Under this, they can pay 25% of their dues initially, give a bank guarantee that they will pay another 25%, and the remaining half can be paid in eight half-yearly installments along with interest. They have a third option – developers can pay 25% of the dues, mortgage 10% of the saleable or built-up area in lieu of the bank guarantee, and the remaining in installments. The revised policy, issued by the department of town and country planning on Dec 23, replaces the March 2024 guidelines that required developers to clear all dues before any change in project ownership. Developers could also pay 50% of the principal amount upfront, along with 65% of the outstanding interest and penal interest. The remaining 50% could be paid in four half-yearly installments, with 8% annual interest on delays and 2% annual interest on defaults.

Manmohan Singh's final visit to Panjab University on a sweltering April day

GURGAON. On a sweltering April day, Dr Manmohan Singh arrived at Panjab University, dressed in an immaculate and pristine white kurta-pyjama, complemented by a grey Nehru jacket and his characteristic blue turban. This marked his final visit to his alma mater.

During this visit, the former Prime Minister and Panjab University alumnus, Singh, stopped briefly at the economics department, where he both studied and taught. Due to physical limitations preventing him from ascending the 47 steps to the second floor, he interacted with faculty members and students on the ground floor. The purpose of his visit was to present the inaugural Professor SB Rangnekar memorial lecture.

MA economics class at Panjab University 1954 He interacted with student volunteers from the department. The students and faculty members, who were thrilled to meet him, took photographs with him.

During the occasion, Singh inscribed his profound and notable quote: "I am confident about the future of India. I firmly believe that the emergence of India as a major powerhouse of the



evolving global economy is an idea whose time has come. Blending tradition with modernity and unity with diversity, this nation of ours can show the way forward to the world." At PU, he completed his bachelor's and master's degrees in economics in 1952 and 1954, respectively. In 1957, Singh took up the position of senior

lecturer in economics at PU. He continued teaching at the department until 1965, departing in 1966 to assume the role of economic affairs officer at UNCTAD, United Nations Secretariat, New York, where he served as chief of the financing for trade section. Following his departure from university teaching in 1966, he made two subsequent visits to the institution. During these occasions, Panjab University bestowed upon him honorary degrees.

He received the honorary cause degree of Doctor of Literature on March 12, 1983, followed by another honorary cause degree of Doctor of Laws on March 11, 2009. After accepting the Jawaharlal Nehru Chair at Panjab University in 2016, Singh pledged to gift his library collection to the institution where he studied. True to his word, he fulfilled this commitment.

Instagram influencer, former RJ Simran Singh found hanging in Gurgaon's room, called self 'girl with giggles' in last post

GURGAON. Simran Singh, a 26-year-old former radio jockey and social media influencer, was found hanging from the ceiling fan of her room at a rented flat in Sector 46 on Wednesday evening. Her flatmates rushed her to a nearby hospital, where she was declared dead. Originally from Jammu and known to her 6,84,000 Instagram followers as 'Jammu Ki Dhadkan', Simran had allegedly locked herself in her room since morning. Inspector Sunil Kumar of Gurgaon Sadar police station said her flatmates broke open the door to her room around 8.30pm on Wednesday when she did not respond to calls, text messages or repeated

done on Thursday and the body was handed over to Simran's family following legal procedures. The reports were awaited on Thursday evening. A team of forensic officers accompanied cops to Simran's room and examined it. There was no note that pointed to suicide. "We have initiated an investigation. The autopsy report will make it clear," inspector Kumar said. Quoting Simran's family members, police said the 26-year-old was going through depression lately, but the exact cause was not immediately clear. "The family has not alleged any foul play regarding the cause of death so far. They haven't yet

costume rental agency, captured her characteristic cheerfulness – "just a girl with endless giggles and her gown, taking over the beach" – she captioned the reel. The news of Simran's death prompted condolences from prominent political figures, including Jammu & Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah and JKNC president Farooq Abdullah. In a joint statement released through JKNC's X platform, they expressed "profound grief over the tragic and untimely demise" of Simran, acknowledging her significant contribution to the Valley's cultural landscape. "Simran's voice and charm resonated with the spirit of

NGT cites report on sand mining, asks for govt replies

Noida. National Green Tribunal (NGT) has taken suo-moto cognisance of a TOI report last month highlighting how sand miners had constructed unauthorised roads across the Yamuna between Alipur in North Delhi and Panchayat of Ghaziabad and sought replies from the Centre, pollution boards and district magistrates. In a Dec 16 order, NGT chairperson Prakash Srivastava and expert member A. Senthil V named several parties to the case, including the Ghaziabad and North Delhi DMs, the central, UP and Delhi pollution control boards and the ministry of environment, forest and climate change as parties to the case. The order noted that these unauthorised roads – not covered by mining leases – severely damage the river's ecosystem. It also mentioned violations of riverbed

mining rules, which prohibit the use of heavy machinery and restrict excavation depth to 3 metres on floodplains. "The article alleges that the river's banks have been plundered by the sand mafia, damaging its ecology and making it prone to large-scale encroachment. The article states that rules don't permit mining on the riverbed, and the use of heavy machines is not allowed. On the floodplain, excavations are not permitted beyond a depth of 3 metres, and the lessee must ensure the flow of the river is not impeded in any way," the tribunal said in its order. Citing violations of the Water (Prevention and

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Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, the NGT

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as POOJA KUMARI alias POOJA JHA W/O SHUBHASH KUMAR JHA R/o-18/10/1966, residing at Millennium City Centre, Cyber Park, Sector 41, Noida, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as POOJA JHA

NAME CHANGE

I, hitherto known as KRISHNA DEVI PARMAR & KRISHNA DEVI W/O SHUBHKARAN SINGH PARMAR residing at NO-A-433, VILL-ONDYUR, PO-SAMANTHALAMALI, TEH & DIST-KRISHNAGIRI, TAMIL NADU-635115, have changed my name to BHARAT BHUSHAN for all future purposes.

PUBLIC NOTICE

my clients Urmila Gupta, W/O Late Sh. Raj B-1883, Near Lalita Block School Shastri Nagar Delhi-52 have severed all their relations with their son Manoj Kumar & his wife Anjana Gupta and his her child Maitri and disowned them from all their movable and immovable properties and they shall not be responsible for any act, deed, thing etc. Deepak Kashyap Advocate.

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Open E-Tender Notice
The Sr. Divisional Engineer-II, Northern Railway, Delhi Division invites E-Tender for the following work.

Name NIT-59-24-25-W-2 Name I, BHARAT SIO BANGALI BABU residing at H NO-A-433, VILL-ONDYUR, PO-SAMANTHALAMALI, TEH & DIST-KRISHNAGIRI, TAMIL NADU-635115, have changed my name to BHARAT BHUSHAN for all future purposes.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Information is given to general public at large that our client (1) Premeshwari Motu, (2) Mr. Vijay Mani & (3) Mr. Ramesh Kumar is the owner of Freehold Residential Property Bearing No. 3663, area measuring 50 Sq. Yds. with terrace/roof rights. Out of Khasra No. 125/212, Situated in the area of Village - Burari, abadi known as Gali No. 95, Block - B, Delhi 110084. By Virtue, Gift Deed dated 01/03/2024 vide Doc. No. 2024/19/2299, Vol. No. 10463, Book No. 1, Pages No. 1-14, SR-I, Kashmere Gate, New Delhi & Rectification Deed Dated 30/08/2024 Duly Regd. in SR-I, as per Deed No. 2024/19/9974, Vol. No. 11159, in Book No. 01, on Pages 113-122, on dated 30/08/2024, now our client is declaring that that any other Person does not have any right over the said property, and same has been financed by Inred Financial Services Limited; Branch C.P. New Delhi. If any person is having objection right of claim against the said property, contact to undersigned along with supporting documents within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice or the same to the undersigned if found by anyone. Thereafter no claim shall be entertained.

NAVEEN KUMAR VERMA

Advocate
F-211, sector-3 Vaishali Ghaziabad
Uttar Pradesh-201010, Contact at 09958671432

Serving Customers With A Smile

NEWS BOX

Baby Driver Teen Star Hudson Meek Dies After Falling From Moving Vehicle

World. Teenage actor Hudson Meek has died after falling from a moving vehicle in Alabama, authorities confirmed. Meek, 16, was injured on December 19 while on a street in Vestavia Hills, a suburb of Birmingham. He succumbed to his injuries two days later, according to the Jefferson County Coroner's Office.

The Vestavia Hills Police Department is currently investigating the incident, but no public statements have been made regarding the cause of the accident. A post on Meek's Instagram account Saturday said, "Our hearts are broken to share that Hudson Meek went home to be with Jesus tonight. His 16 years on this earth were far too short, but he accomplished so much and significantly impacted everyone he met." Specific details regarding a Celebration of Hudson's Life to be held on December 28, as well as how to contribute to a scholarship in Hudson's memory at Vestavia Hills High School in lieu of flowers, will follow. Please pray for Hudson's family and friends as we all process this sudden and tragic loss," the post further said.

The accident occurred Thursday night in Vestavia Hills, Alabama, according to local news site AL.com. Meek "sustained blunt force injuries after falling to the road from a moving vehicle," Chief Deputy Coroner Bill Yates told AL.com. Meek was taken to a hospital and died Saturday night. Vestavia Hills police are investigating his death, as per Variety. Hudson Meek rose to fame with his portrayal as a young version of Ansel Elgort's main character Baby, a professional getaway driver with a passion for music. He also appeared in "MacGyver," "The School Duet," "Genius," "Found," "Legacies," "Union," "Momma Jenny & the Brooks Boys," "Providence," "Half Pint," "90 Minutes," "The List" and "The Santa Con."

Panama President Rules Out Talks With Trump Over Canal Threat

Panama City. Panamanian President Jose Raul Mulino on Thursday ruled out negotiations with US President-elect Donald Trump over control of the Panama Canal, denying that China was interfering in its operation. Mulino also rejected the possibility of reducing tolls for US vessels in response to Trump's threat to demand control of the vital waterway connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans be returned to Washington.

"There's nothing to talk about," Mulino told a press conference. "The canal is Panamanian and belongs to Panamanians. There's no possibility of opening any kind of conversation around this reality, which has cost the country blood, sweat and tears," he added.

The canal, inaugurated in 1914, was built by the United States but handed to Panama on December 31, 1999, under treaties signed some two decades earlier by then-US president Jimmy Carter and Panamanian nationalist leader Omar Torrijos.

Trump on Saturday slammed what he called "ridiculous" fees for US ships passing through the canal and hinted at China's growing influence.

"It was solely for Panama to manage, not China, or anyone else," Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform. "We would and will NEVER let it fall into the wrong hands! If Panama could not ensure 'the secure, efficient and reliable operation' of the channel, 'then we will demand that the Panama Canal be returned to us, in full, and without question,' he said.

-'No Chinese interference'

An estimated five percent of global maritime traffic passes through the Panama Canal, which allows ships traveling between Asia and the US East Coast to avoid the long, hazardous route around the southern tip of South America.

Mars or new world Elon Musk's bold plan to redefine humanity's future on red planet

World Elon Musk, the ever-visionary CEO of SpaceX and Tesla, is reaching for the stars—literally. On Friday, he hinted at a radical idea: renaming Mars to "New World" once humanity establishes a colony there. Musk took to X and posted an image of the Martian landscape from Gale Crater by the Curiosity rover. He captioned it saying, "Mars will be called the 'New World,' just as America was in past centuries."

But for Musk, the name is only a small part of a grander vision that involves transforming the Red Planet into a thriving, self-sustaining hub for human civilization. Why Mars? Musk's bigger picture.

Musk has long championed Mars as humanity's "backup plan." On X (formerly Twitter), he described it as "critical to the long-term survival of consciousness." To Musk, Earth's future is uncertain, and a thriving colony on Mars could ensure the continuity of human civilization in the face of catastrophic events.

"Earth is great, but it's fragile. We need a backup," Musk stated recently, underscoring his belief in Mars as humanity's next frontier.

The SpaceX game plan

SpaceX's Starship rocket is central to Musk's Mars ambitions. Capable of carrying up to 100 passengers, the Starship is designed to make interplanetary travel affordable and frequent. Musk revealed that five uncrewed missions are planned over the next two years to deliver vital resources—water, oxygen, and fuel—and test equipment. Starship will make life multi-planetary, preserving life as we know it from extinction events on Earth." Musk emphasized, with the first crewed mission potentially taking off in the early 2030s. Critics push back. Not everyone shares Musk's enthusiasm. Astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson has been a vocal skeptic. "What's the return on investment? Nothing," Tyson recently remarked, questioning the feasibility of colonizing Mars.

WHO Chief Escapes Unhurt As Israel Strikes Yemen Airport, UN Condemns Attack

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus narrowly escaped an aerial bombardment at Sanaa International Airport in Yemen on Thursday.

Sanaa. World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus narrowly escaped an aerial bombardment at Sanaa International Airport in Yemen on Thursday, which resulted in the deaths of at least two people. Dr Tedros, along with his United Nations (UN) and WHO colleagues, was about to board a flight when the attack took place, injuring one of the plane's crew members. In a post on X, the WHO chief Ghebreyesus said, "Our mission to negotiate the release of @UN staff



detainees and to assess the health and humanitarian situation in #Yemen concluded today. We continue to call for the detainees' immediate release. As we were about to board our flight from Sana'a, about two hours ago, the airport came under aerial bombardment. One of our plane's crew members was injured. At least two people were reported killed at the airport. The air traffic control tower, the departure

lounge -- just a few meters from where we were -- and the runway were damaged. We will need to wait for the damage to the airport to be repaired before we can leave. My UN and @WHO colleagues and I are safe. Our heartfelt condolences to the families whose loved ones lost their lives in the attack."

The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the attack and called for the

South Korea's acting president Han Duck-soo faces impeachment vote

World South Korea's acting president faced an impeachment vote on Friday, as the country struggled to shake off political turmoil sparked by his predecessor's martial law declaration that shocked the world. Han Duck-soo took over as acting president from President Yoon Suk Yeol, who was suspended following a parliamentary vote over his move to impose martial law on December 3. But opposition MPs now want Han, who is also prime minister, removed from office too, arguing that he is refusing demands to complete Yoon's impeachment process and to bring him to justice. "Today our Democratic Party impeaches Prime Minister Han Duck-soo in accordance with the people's order," said Democratic Party leader Lee Jae-myung. "The 'acting authority' has transformed into 'insurrectionary authority'." In the impeachment motion put before parliament, the opposition said Han is "intentionally avoiding the special investigation to probe those involved in the insurrection and has clearly stated his intention to reject the appointments of three Constitutional

Court judges". Such actions, the motion said, are "in violation of a public official's duty to uphold the law... and serve the public". If the opposition succeeds in its bid, South Korea will see its second impeachment of a head of state in less than two weeks, further destabilising its vibrant political scene. It will also mark the first time South Korea has impeached an acting president. Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok would step in as acting president in Han's place. Holding an emergency press conference with cabinet members, Choi pleaded against the opposition's action. "An impeachment motion against the acting authority is no different from an impeachment motion against the entire cabinet," Choi said. "Our economy and people's livelihoods, which are walking on thin ice in a national emergency, cannot bear the expansion of political uncertainty surrounding the acting authority," he added.

True colors

At the heart of the current row is the composition of the Constitutional Court, which will decide whether to

uphold parliament's decision to impeach Yoon. The court is currently short of three judges. While it can go ahead with its six members on the bench, a single dissenting vote would reinstate Yoon. The opposition wants Han to approve three more nominees to fill the nine-member bench, something that he has so far refused to do, essentially leaving both sides in deadlock. Han's refusal to formally appoint the three judges "revealed his true colours", said Democratic Party lawmaker Jo Seoung-lae. The refusal "is a direct challenge to the Constitution and the law", said Jo, adding the party would seek to impeach Han to "restore constitutional order and stabilise state affairs". Han has said that he would certify the judges' appointments only if his ruling People Power Party (PPP) and the opposition reach a compromise on the nominees. The consistent principle embedded in our constitution and laws is to refrain from exercising significant exclusive presidential powers, including the appointment of constitutional institutions.

Israel Strikes Houthi Military Targets In Yemen

Jerusalem. Israeli Air Force conducted strikes on military targets belonging to Houthi on the western coast and inland Yemen, the Israel Defence Force (IDF) said on Thursday. The IDF said that the plan of the airstrike was approved by the Prime Minister, Defence Minister and the Chief of the General Staff of Israel. The attacks were carried upon the Houthi military infrastructure used for its military activities. The sites targeted include the Al-Hudaydah, Salif and Ras Kanatib ports on the western coast. "The Houthi terrorist regime has repeatedly attacked the State of Israel and its citizens, including in UAV and surface-to-surface missile attacks on Israeli territory. The targets that were struck by the IDF include military infrastructure used by the Houthi terrorist regime for its military activities in both the Sana'a International Airport and the Hezyaz

and Ras Kanatib power stations. In addition, the IDF struck military infrastructure in the Al-Hudaydah, Salif and Ras Kanatib ports on the western coast," the IDF said in a post on



X. The IDF further said that military targets were used by the Houthi terrorist regime to smuggle Iranian weapons into the region and for the entry of senior Iranian officials.

This is a further example of the Houthi's exploitation of civilian infrastructure

for military purposes. The Houthi terrorist regime is a central part of the Iranian axis of terror, and their attacks on international shipping vessels and routes continue to destabilize the region and the wider world.

The Houthi terrorist regime operates as an autonomous terrorist group while relying on Iranian cooperation and funding to carry out its attacks. The IDF will not hesitate to operate at any distance against any threat to the State of Israel and its citizens," the IDF concluded. This recent operation comes days after Israel had conducted a similar strike on December 19 on Houthi targets in Yemen.

The IDF had announced that Israeli fighter jets struck Houthi targets in Yemen after the rebel group carried out repeated missile and drone attacks on Israel, The Times of Israel reported.

for the Canary Islands, the Spanish migration NGO Caminando Fronteras said in a report on Thursday.

That was an average of about 30 a day, making it the deadliest year in the organisation's records. At their closest point, the Canaries lie 100 kilometres (62 miles) off the coast of North Africa. The shortest route is between the coastal town of Tarfaya in southern Morocco and the Canary island of Fuerteventura. But to avoid controls, smugglers sometimes take longer, more dangerous journeys, navigating west into the open Atlantic before turning north to the Canaries.

The Atlantic route is particularly deadly, with many of the crowded, poorly equipped boats unable to cope with the strong ocean currents. Some boats depart African beaches as far as 1,000 kilometres from the Canaries.

Mali has been suffering a serious security crisis since 2012, facing attacks from jihadist groups linked to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State organisation, as well as by separatist movements and criminal gangs. The International Organization for Migration, a UN agency, estimates that since 2014, more than 16,400 migrants have died trying to reach Europe from Africa, a figure that includes those headed to the Canary Islands.

Russia Warns Against "Hypotheses" In Azerbaijan Airlines Crash

Astana. Azerbaijani and US officials believe a Russian surface-to-air missile caused the deadly crash of an Azerbaijani passenger jet, media reports and a US official said Thursday, as the Kremlin cautioned against "hypotheses" over the disaster. The Azerbaijan Airlines jet crashed near the Kazakh city of Aktau, an oil and gas hub, on Wednesday after going off course for undetermined reasons. Thirty-eight of the 67 people on board died. The Embraer 190 aircraft was supposed to fly northwest from the Azerbaijani capital Baku to the city of Grozny in Chechnya, southern Russia, but instead diverted far off course across the Caspian Sea. An investigation is underway, with pro-government Azerbaijani website Caliber citing unnamed officials as saying they believed a Russian missile fired from a Pantsir-S air defence system downed the plane. The claim was also reported by The New York Times, broadcaster Euronews and the Turkish news agency Anadolu.

Some aviation and military experts said the plane might have been accidentally shot by Russian air defence systems because it was flying in an area where Ukrainian drone activity had been reported. A former expert at France's BEA air accident investigation agency said there appeared to be "a lot of shrapnel" damage on the wreckage. Speaking on condition of anonymity, he said the damage was "reminiscent" of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, which was downed with a surface-to-air missile by Russia-backed rebels over eastern Ukraine in 2014. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters: "It would be wrong to make any hypotheses before the investigation's conclusions."

-Shrapnel strikes reported-

Euronews cited Azerbaijani government sources as saying that "shrapnel hit the passengers and cabin crew as it exploded next to the aircraft mid-flight".

A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, also said early indications suggested a Russian anti-aircraft system struck the plane. Kazakh news agency Kazinform cited a regional prosecutor as saying that two black-box flight recorders had been recovered. Azerbaijan Airlines initially said the plane flew through a flock of birds, before withdrawing the statement. Kazakh officials said 38 people had been killed and there were 29 survivors, including three children.

Jalil Aliyev, the father of flight attendant Hukme Aliyeva, told AFP that this was supposed to have been her last flight before starting a job as a lawyer for the airline.

"Why did her young life have to end so tragically?" the man said in a trembling voice before hanging up the phone. Eleven of the injured are in intensive care, the Kazakh health ministry said.

-Day of mourning-

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev declared Thursday a day of mourning and cancelled a planned visit to Russia for an informal summit of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), a grouping of former Soviet nations.

"I extend my condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in the crash... and wish a speedy recovery to the injured," Aliyev said in a social media post Wednesday.



NEWS BOX

Rise in narcotics cases, arrests; drug menace continues in Kochi

KOCHI. Drug menace continues to plague Kochi with the number of narcotics cases registered by the excise department in the district so far this year far exceeding last year's count. Data from the department shows 941 cases under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act were registered until December 11 this year, compared to 718 cases in all of 2023 in Ernakulam. The number of arrests also rose, from 759 people in 2023 to 928 as of December 11 this year. The number of Abkari cases increased from 982 last year to 1,317 this year, as did the number of arrests in these cases – from 984 people in 2023 to 1,264 until December 11, 2024. However, excise officials maintained that the rise in cases and arrests does not only indicate an increase in drug flow but is also a result of enhanced enforcement. "Drug menace is one of the major issues in Ernakulam district, especially Kochi. We cannot deny that drugs are flowing to Kochi. However, the rise in arrests is an indicator of enhanced enforcement activities. This year, we managed to nab people who used to smuggle drugs in large quantities and supply them to other peddlers. Several women who were into drug peddling were also arrested this year," said a senior excise officer in Ernakulam. As for the contraband, excise officials seized 337kg of ganja in the district until December 11. Fifty-five ganja plants, 459g of MDMA, 138g of hashish oil and 107g of methamphetamine, besides 430g of heroin and 152g of brown sugar were also seized this year during various anti-narcotic operations. "There has been a decrease in the quantity of MDMA, hashish and hashish oil recovered in 2024 (from the previous year). However, the quantity of ganja seized is substantially higher.

RVSS seeks budget provision for two key rail lines in Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand

OURKELA. Ahead of the Union budget, the Rail Vikas Sangharsh Samiti (RVSS) has demanded provisioning for the Sardaga-Sundargarh-Pathalgao and Dharamjaigarh-Pathalgao-Lohardaga new rail line proposals. For both proposals, the final location surveys (FLSs) collection of field details for geo-technical investigations, and preparation of general arrangement drawings and estimates have been completed. Members of the RVSS from Chhattisgarh and Sundargarh submitted a joint memorandum to Union Railway minister Ashwini Vaishnav seeking budget provisions for both the proposals on December 16. The outfit comprises stakeholders of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha. RVSS general secretary Dhruva Kalo said, the Sardaga-Sundargarh-Pathalgao new line proposes a total length of 128 km which would meet at Pathalgao under Raigarh district in Chhattisgarh. If it materialises, the nearest station for Sundargarh town will be Balijodi which is hitherto deprived of rail connectivity. At present, people of Sundargarh town and nearby blocks take trains from Jharsuguda station travelling 30 km to 50 km by road. Similarly, the proposed Dharamjaigarh-Pathalgao-Lohardaga line envisages the shortest rail link from Chhattisgarh to Jharkhand. This proposal has made significant progress than the Sardaga-Sundargarh-Pathalgao proposal the DPR for which is pending, and an RVSS delegation recently.

Crop damage due to unseasonal rains claim lives of two farmers in Odisha's Berhampur

KENDRAPARA/BERHAMPUR. Widespread damage to standing crops by the unseasonal rains has claimed lives of two farmers across the state which is in the midst of kharif paddy procurement. A sharecropper ended his life in Ganjam while another farmer died of shock in Kendrapara after watching his paddy harvest destroyed by the showers. Both the incidents were reported on Wednesday. In Ganjam's Chatrapur block, a 64-year-old farmer of Barang village under Badamadhapur panchayat allegedly died by suicide over the crop loss. The farmer, Banamali Penthei had raised paddy over five acres of land on a sharecropping basis but saw his hard work washed away by the relentless rains. A father of three daughters and a son, Banamali had borrowed around ₹2 lakh from private lenders for the cultivation. On the morning of the incident, he visited his farmland to find the paddy fields submerged in water. Distraught, he returned home and took his life by hanging himself in the bathroom outside of his house. His sister, Apasara recounted that Banamali had been deeply worried about repaying his loans. Ganjam Collector, Digya Jyoti Parida confirmed the farmer's death but stated that authorities are probing the exact reason behind the suicide. Chatrapur police reached the spot, sent the body for postmortem and initiated an investigation. Ganjam has been reeling under continued rains, leading to extensive crop damage. Meanwhile, in Kendrapara, 52-year-old Gourahari Mallick died of cardiac arrest.

Mother, newborn escape from elephant attack in Kerala

PALAKKAD. A 20-year-old who gave birth to a baby boy en route to a hospital, and a team of health department officials, who got stuck between a wild elephant and wild buffaloes, had a miraculous escape on Christmas morning in Nelliampathy. According to health officials, Samba, wife of Sujay Sardar, a migrant worker living in Seetharkundu in Nelliampathy, was on their way to the Nelliampathy Primary Health Centre on Tuesday late night after she experienced labour pain. En route, the couple informed about the woman's condition to Sudina Surendran, the junior public health nurse at the health centre. The nurse advised the couple to reach the Nelliampathy Primary Health Centre immediately and contacted Dr Lakshmi, the medical officer and gynaecologist, over the phone. As per the doctor's instructions, Sudina and nursing assistant Janaki made arrangements for the delivery at the hospital. As 108 services were not available at midnight, Sudina and her husband, with the help of Poabs Estate Dispensary pharmacist Mithlaj and driver Sabu, set off for the hospital in a Poabs Estate jeep. However, before reaching the hospital during the difficult journey, the woman gave birth to a baby boy in the jeep itself at midnight. After reaching the Kaikatty Health Centre safely, Sudina and Janaki cut the umbilical cord of the baby, as per the instructions of Dr Lakshmi. Upon examination,



it was found that the woman's health condition was poor and as she could not be moved from the jeep, the authorities decided to shift her to the Nenmara Community Health Centre. According to health officials, Sudina and Janaki left Kaikatty with Samba in the jeep. "Within minutes, the jeep was blocked by a wild tusker and it became impossible for the party to proceed further. Immediately, Nelliampathy health inspector Joyson contacted deputy forest range officer Jayendran and then the forest officials arrived at the spot. Meanwhile,

health inspector had informed the Patagiri police station authorities. The wild elephant stood firm on the road for about two hours right in front of the jeep. When they tried to reverse the jeep, they noticed a huge herd of wild buffaloes stationed in the rear side of the vehicle. During this time, the doctor gave instructions over the phone. With the help of forest officials, the party waited until the elephant left. The mother and the baby could be shifted to CHC Nenmara only after the elephant went back to the forest.

No BBMP polls: Rule of law has gone down the drain

BENGALURU. Looking back over the last year, what comes to mind most strongly is the collapse of the six-storey under-construction building in Babusab Palya, near Hennur, killing nine workers. The building had blatantly violated several bylaws. It seems to denote the complete collapse of accountability on the part of the BBMP to curb violations. Several circulars were subsequently issued on the responsibility of various officials to undertake demolitions of buildings violating bylaws. Still, except for one or two that were demolished symbolically, most illegal buildings continue to thrive.

There was also flooding in several parts of Bengaluru after the rain, including at Kendriya Vihar Apartments in Yelahanka and Sai Baba Layout in Horamavu, which has been flooding repeatedly for several years now. The Paliak had to deploy tractors to evacuate residents. There was also an episode of illegal road construction and encroachment by a law-maker himself over a lake-bed, its buffer zone and raja kaluve,



flooding a whole neighbourhood. What this flooding seems to signify is the complete washing away of the rule of law in the BBMP. There were also myriad stories of uncontrolled illegal drilling of borewells without permission. Repeated orders of the Karnataka High Court to establish local processing centres

for wet waste in all wards continue to languish. But a person in authority himself has termed the garbage authorities in Bengaluru "a mafia", almost expressing helplessness in the government to control it. It has also been claimed by the government that only waste-to-energy projects with investments of up to Rs 2,000 crore can be sustained. In addition, Rs 500 crore has been earmarked for a sky deck, which could have been used to give each one of the 3 million households in Bengaluru a compost bin, available at Rs 1,500 each, and solve the garbage crisis at source. The chief engineer in charge of BBMP's garbage has himself said, "Citizens must now segregate and process their waste... even in individual homes, as there is nothing more we can do." But it seems, the costlier the projects are, the better they are. The BWSSB hopes to solve the water crisis of Bengaluru by bringing water through the Cauvery Stage V at an investment of around Rs 4,336 crore.

CAG finds serious gaps in trauma care centres in Odisha

BHUBANESWAR. Even as Odisha government claims to have set up trauma care facilities with advanced medical equipment in all district headquarters, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has highlighted the lack of such support in several districts leading to stress on tertiary care centres and suffering of patients. Of the seven test-checked district headquarters hospitals (DHHs), the 2022-23 audit found non-availability of trauma care centres (TCCs) in Kandhamal, Nabarangpur, Nuapada and Puri, for which patients requiring intensive medical services had to be referred to tertiary care/trauma centres located at distant places. As per the CAG report tabled in the Assembly recently, the critical patients could not be provided required treatment within the golden hour. The TCCs available in three of the test-checked DHHs at Bhadrak, Dhenkanal and Sundargarh had severe deficiencies in their functioning.

The ICU at Bhadrak TCC was not functional due to the absence of anaesthetists and major cases were being referred to SCB Medical College and Hospital (MCH) at Cuttack, which is about 100 km from Bhadrak, thereby risking the lives of the victims. Equipment such as ventilators, ECG and ultrasound machines, valued at around ₹60.86 lakh, were lying idle due to improper functioning of the TCC. Similarly, no dedicated TCC was available in Sundargarh and Dhenkanal DHHs. Only one trauma stabilisation unit was present in Dhenkanal with three HDU beds and there was no ICU facility. Five ventilators, received in February 2021 from the state medical corporation, were lying idle in the storeroom of the hospital. Dedicated human resources for functioning of the TCC were also not provisioned, the audit found. Highlighting that the non-availability of TCCs coupled with inefficient accident and emergency services put the life of accident victims at stake, the CAG report said 29,720 people in the state lost their lives in road accidents during 2016-2021.

Work on to transform lakes in city, suburbs into drinking water sources

CHENNAI. Preparations are under way by the Water Resources Department (WRD) to transform several lakes in the city and suburbs into drinking water sources. This move aims to address concerns of water scarcity in the future and ensure a steady supply for the growing population. Officials said the goal is to add 21 tmcft of storage capacity. "We are preparing a detailed project report ahead of the next budget session," an official said. The proposal includes work for increasing rainwater storage capacity upstream of Chennai by creating new



reservoirs, expanding existing water bodies, improving water flow systems, and interlinking water bodies wherever feasible. A senior official told TNIE, "As of now, six reservoirs – Cholavaram, Chembarambakkam, Poondi, Red Hills, Kannankottai-Thervaikandigai and Veeranam – with a combined capacity of 13,213 tmcft cater to the needs of Chennai city's drinking water requirements. However, this storage capacity is far below the city's annual drinking and industrial water demand of 24 tmcft which is expected to rise to 34 tmcft by 2035." Officials recognise the importance of developing drinking water sources in and around the city, but the challenge lies in tackling the pollution in

Fresh survey turns focus on fluorine in Nalgonda

NALGONDA. The Nalgonda district administration has launched a comprehensive survey to evaluate fluorine levels in Marriguda mandal, an area historically associated with high fluorine content in drinking water. Notably, Bhatlapalli village in the mandal once recorded 29 mg in a litre of water, the state's highest fluorine concentration. The survey, initiated on the order of district Collector Ila Tripathi, will cover 40 villages, including remote areas. Asha workers are conducting door-to-door assessments to gather data on the prevalence and impact of fluorine contamination.

The issue of fluorine has dictated the narrative during elections for decades with Congress and BRS (formerly TRS) vowing to eradicate it. After forming the government in 2014, BRS launched the Mission Bhagiratha scheme to address the problem, constructing overhead water tanks and providing tap connections in affected villages. In 2020, the then chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao announced in the Assembly that fluorine contamination in Nalgonda had been completely eradicated due to the scheme.

However, the Congress alleged that Mission Bhagiratha failed, citing irregularities in the water supply and continued contamination in some areas. Since coming to power last year,



the Congress administration acknowledged that fluorine contamination persists in some mandals. The government proposed the Srisailam tunnel project as a permanent solution, criticising the previous administration for neglecting the project and promising its completion during their tenure.

Against this backdrop, the district administration's current survey in Marriguda has drawn scepticism, with some suspecting political motives. However, officials have denied any such

involvement. Speaking to District Medical and Health Officer P Srinivas clarified that the survey was being conducted purely for public health purposes. "Asha workers are identifying cases of dental and skeletal fluorosis and categorising them as mild, moderate or severe," he said.

Dr Srinivas said that the survey aims to safeguard future generations, adding that no new cases of fluorosis have been reported so far during the week-long assessment.

Karnataka: Tsunami severely exposed women's vulnerabilities

BENGALURU. It has been 20 years since the deadly tsunami struck, killing around 230,000 people across more than a dozen countries and causing unprecedented damage in India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Thailand. Dr K Sekar and Dr C Jayakumar, experts in Psychiatric Social Work (PSW), the National Institute of Mental Health & Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), who, along with other mental health experts from NIMHANS, were at ground zero, narrated the impact of the deadly earthquake under the Indian Ocean on women and their mental health. "Majority of victims (of the tsunami) were women. Most of them did not know how to swim. There was death, devastation, loss and raw emotions of people. They were angry with kadal (ocean), which they had

looked upon historically as god till that fateful morning of December 26, 2004. In Cuddalore, there was a belief that tsunami was the wrath unleashed by the sea goddess after some menstruating women touched the sea," said Dr Sekar. The tsunami exposed and tested the vulnerability of women like never before. "While many widowers got remarried, widow remarriage was not an easy option in many of the affected places except for some of those, who were childless and were given huge compensation by the government. This was in Nagapattinam," he said. "In some places in Kerala, women, who lost their children, were branded inauspicious by their families. After the first tide receded, it left behind a lot of fish on the



seafloor. Ignorant of what lay ahead for them, these women with their kids went to pick up the fish and lost their little ones when the tide returned," Sekar said. "Many women, especially from the fishing

community, also suffered naked syndrome," the PSW expert said. "As a practice, fisher women go to receive their menfolk, who go to sea in trawlers. That morning, many women had gone to receive their men and ran for their lives on seeing huge walls of tides in the ocean. As they ran their saris got entangled in the bushes and other obstacles, and came out. They suffered naked syndrome when they were taken to relief centres. We had to counsel them," Sekar said. He narrated a poignant incident of some children in Nicobar, who caught hold of the sari of their teacher, who they saw being washed away in the sea. "They preserved the sari in a suitcase and at midnight, they would gather around it at the relief centre."

Unparalleled doyen of parallel cinema

TO understand the filmmaking feat Shyam Benegal pulled off, just imagine that you were a regular cinegoer of 1974 vintage. Cinema was the only means of mass entertainment in those days.

Would you rather buy tickets for 'Roti, Kapada Aur Makaan' (starring Manoj Kumar, Zeenat Aman), 'Chor Machay Shor' (Shashi Kapoor, Mumtaz), 'Majboor' (Amitabh Bachchan, Parveen Babi), 'Roti' (Rajesh Khanna, Mumtaz), 'Dost' (Dharmendra, Hema Malini) or 'Ankur', featuring Anant Nag and Shabana Azmi and directed by Shyam Benegal — two actors and a director, whom you had never heard of? Worse, would you willingly subject yourself to a film with no songs and no dholshoom dholshoom? And yet, somehow, enough people did that. The rest is history. For, 'Ankur' (The Seedling) truly sowed the seeds of what is often referred to as the Indian new-wave parallel cinema period — a decade in which realistic, thought-provoking films found an audience and produced a bumper crop of pathbreaking celluloid gems that are still talked about. Benegal received numerous accolades, awards and honours; his craft and films have been analysed threadbare. But what is surprisingly under-appreciated is that unlike many stalwarts of parallel cinema, both before and after him, Benegal successfully managed to escape becoming a prisoner of a certain style or school of filmmaking. It astonishes one to realise that there is no Benegal brand or genre of direction, treatment and storytelling — such was his versatility. If anything, his style was straightforward, unpretentious and audience-engaging. Moreover, he is not identified with a recurring motif or choice of subject. Look at his repertoire: while he started his career with three films — 'Ankur' (1974), 'Nishant' (1975) and 'Manthan' (1976) — that were set in rural India, dealing with the ills of feudalism, oppression and caste conflicts, he quickly shifted to the urban milieu with a period film, 'Bhumika' (1977), shot partly in black and white, based on the turbulent life of Marathi actress Hansa Wadkar in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. His next film, 'Junoon', (1979), produced by film star Shashi Kapoor, harked back to the 1857 mutiny, unspooling a poignant, cross-cultural love story between a Pathan chieftain and a young Anglo-Indian woman during a time of rebellion and bloodshed. Based on Ruskin Bond's novella 'A Flight of Pigeons', 'Junoon' is actually one of those rare films which is better than the book. 'Kalyug' (1981) was even more unusual for those times, creating a contemporary version of the Mahabharata through the narrative of an intercine warfare between two branches of a wealthy business family. Produced again by Shashi Kapoor, the plush settings, urbane characters and central conflict in this corporate feud were worlds away from the universes depicted in Benegal's previous films. It was, perhaps, the veteran director's background in advertising and insights into Mumbai's elite that enabled him to craft this work of sophisticated dramatisation featuring modern-day Pandavas and Kauravas. All through his career, Benegal displayed this bold trait of refusing to be strait-jacketed and selecting stories that were cinematically and thematically different from what he had done earlier. But probably his most valuable piece of work was 'Bharat Ek Khoj' — a brilliant adaptation of Jawaharlal Nehru's tome, 'The Discovery of India', into a 53-episode TV series telecast by Doordarshan in 1988-89. Benegal commenced work on the series in 1986 and brought alive on the small screen 5,000 years of India's history. Not just that, the series added a wealth of impeccably researched material and chapters that hadn't been covered by Nehru. Innovatively conceptualised as a docudrama, merging narration, dramatisation and discourse seamlessly, 'Bharat Ek Khoj' would not have had the authenticity, accuracy and depth of content had anyone other than Benegal been at the directorial helm. In the 1990s, Benegal worked on his trilogy featuring Muslim women protagonists — 'Mammo' (1994), 'Sardari Begum' (1996) and 'Zubeida' (2001) — tales of feisty and spirited women from different classes.

How economic slowdown can be countered

Post-liberalisation policies must be reassessed and reformed to create faster learning enterprises and more productive employment.

THE Indian economy seems to be on a slow downswing — 2024-25 is heading for 6.4 per cent growth against the earlier estimate of 7 per cent. The following financial year is expected to maintain the same trajectory, say a range of global analysts. The economy is clearly on a downward shift. Even on this lower gear, the economy will be moving at a faster pace than most of the other large countries. So, this slowdown is not worrying the leadership as this will still allow the system to function at a stable state. But finding the reason for the slowdown and its remedy is important as large sections of the people continue to remain very poor. What is worse is that there is a sharp difference in incomes, with only a small section enjoying the fruits of the country's high economy.

In 2022-23, the top one per cent of the population received 22.6 per cent of India's national income. Plus, there is a rural-urban divide. The per capita consumption expenditure in rural India was Rs 3,773 as compared to Rs 6,459 in urban India. Thus, it is the urban consumption that is doing the heavy lifting. The key reason for the slowdown is the inadequate consumption. This is particularly so for the urban middle class, which is the key mover for the overall demand. This will result in slack for consumption-producing businesses. These will cease to go ahead at full steam. As a result, the firms will hire fewer workers. This will slacken demand and heighten the slowdown in overall consumption. In rural India, the situation is, if anything, worse. To make ends meet, women in rural households are going out to work to help feed the families by supplementing the men's inadequate wages. But, critically, the women are working in fields, not in factories. So, they are missing out on the higher wages that factory workers earn. The high growth rate has been enabled by two forces — growing manufacturing and services. But the robust manufacturing is now slackening, as mentioned earlier. Broad-based growth would have taken place if the women in rural areas moved to factories instead of staying in farms. The high growth has also been enabled by a sharp rise in capital investment in more factories and public infrastructure, the latter made possible through higher public investment. Better roads, power and railways caused factories to feel optimistic and grow more. This caused cars, trucks and two-wheelers to face booming markets. Hence, it resulted in consumption expenditure by the middle class, particularly in urban areas. Today, these factories, mostly producing fast-moving consumption goods, are slackening. So, the dream that we have been waiting for — more jobs in factories in urban areas for more women from the rural areas — has paled. Now, let us look at services, which has been highly robust through the period of high growth. The robust consumption has caused more jobs to be created to service cars, two-wheelers, TV sets etc. As manufacturing slackens, the high growth in services is



also likely to see a slowdown.

That leaves us the export services, which are made possible by the software engineers who are going up to the higher level of artificial intelligence. Here also, a negative impact is coming to the fore — nearshoring. Developed economies are becoming stricter with immigration so that there is a growing need for leading Indian software companies to go in for nearshoring. They are seeking to people development centres in the developed countries themselves with more local talent. The bright sign is that large companies of developed countries are setting up more and more highly sophisticated global development centres in India, which is creating more high-level engineering jobs. This is good news for highly skilled Indians, but the total numbers are small. The service exports by these companies and the country are real, but the total impact on national growth is minimal. In response to the slackening growth and the exigencies of the elections, the government has decided to pay cash grants to women. This will be positive for the gender economy and demand push for consumption, but this is not a lasting economic solution. The right way to begin is to reform agriculture. This will raise agricultural productivity and raise farm incomes. This will raise rural consumption and do the economy good. But this will lead to fewer

farmhands through greater mechanisation and also better seeds and agricultural practices.

The farmhands will have to be found jobs in urban areas through factories, construction and urban services by being used by municipalities to deploy services like handling of urban dry waste. But the key issue is how factories will find the need to grow capacity and set up new factories. So, the great need is to grow demand by persuading the Reserve Bank of India to lower interest rates and increase the money supply. The obvious risk will be a spurt in the inflationary level. Right now, the hope is that the rabi crop will deliver the goods, unlike the kharif crop which has been a partial letdown.

The growing money supply will create higher demand for factories, which will hopefully expand their machineries and set up new plants. This will create higher demand for capital goods. The government, with its fiscal slight opening up, will create more supply for higher demand for capital goods, creating more roads, bridges and a better functioning railways. There is a need to give economic growth a push so that at the end of the day, higher demand will reduce poverty and increase the numbers of the middle class. But there is a catch in this whole scenario. If the climate lets us down, leading to droughts, floods and untimely rain damaging growing crops, it will all come to naught.

Pak ups the ante

Airstrikes on Afghan soil bode ill for the region

THE irony is too obvious to be missed — Pakistan, notorious for sponsoring cross-border terrorism, is itself feeling the terror heat and making desperate moves. Pakistan's airstrikes have killed around 50 people, mostly women and children, in eastern Afghanistan, a couple of days after its security forces gunned down 11 suspected terrorists in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Relations between Islamabad and Kabul have worsened this year as the banned Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has stepped up operations against Pakistani military and police forces. Pakistan has repeatedly accused the Taliban of sheltering members of this terror group, but the Afghan government continues to be in the denial mode.

The airstrikes have exposed Pakistan's duplicity. They were carried out hours after its special representative for Afghanistan visited Kabul to discuss ways to improve ties. It is apparent that Islamabad is paying



lip service to resolving the dispute through diplomatic means. This strategy can have dangerous consequences for the region, with the Afghan government warning that it would not leave this "cowardly act unanswered".

The Shehbaz Sharif-led government is in no mood to appear vulnerable at a time when it is holding talks with jailed ex-PM Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. Last month's crackdown on protesting PTI supporters has not endeared the ruling coalition to the masses. The Balakot-style airstrikes might be a ploy of the establishment to rebuild its public image. Another trigger could be the growing closeness between the Taliban and the Indian government that has clearly annoyed Pakistan. In any case, Islamabad needs to brace itself for a fierce retaliation not only from the Taliban but also from the TTP. India, a victim of terrorism for decades, must keep a close eye on the developments.

Hasina's extradition is a non-starter

Developments in artificial intelligence can have far-reaching implications



AS expected, Bangladesh wants its former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina back. After all, an arrest warrant had been issued in October, and interim leader Muhammad Yunus called for extradition and an Interpol Red Notice in his November speech. That's pretty tough talk, especially since Yunus and student leaders know full well that New Delhi will not extradite a leader who prioritised good relations with India and brought stability to her own country. The per capita income more than doubled from a mere \$600-odd when she was first elected to the present \$2,646 as the economy grew some 18 times. All that is now forgotten. India's Ministry of External Affairs has acknowledged that a note verbale was received from Dhaka, seeking extradition, but has made no further comment. The two countries have an extradition treaty framed by the need to combat terrorism and other ills. It bars extradition for offences of a political character, in line with international law. Extradition and the right to asylum are determined by the UN Declaration on Territorial Asylum, which is based on Article 16 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The latter states very simply, "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution". It adds that this right does not include "prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations". Given that some 155 cases are lodged against Hasina, it would seem to be a simple matter — send her back. But international law is not simple, because states are never black and white in their behaviour. The 'political exception' was historically seen as applying to those seeking democracy in totalitarian states. But legally, it applies to all — democratic, nihilist or anarchist. In essence, it is up to the sheltering state to decide on whether or not a

particular act is political or not, since the law is vague on exactly what that is. Meanwhile, the bilateral treaty also requires a magistrate's arrest order and presentation of evidence of a crime. Those are yet to be provided. Another aspect worth noting while considering an extradition request is the right to a fair trial, which is codified in international law. Though not directly connected to extradition, the UN Model Law on extradition does make the lack of a proper legal process a basis for refusal of extradition. Consider the recent acts of the Bangladesh judiciary. It has commuted the death sentence of Paresh Baruah, leader of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) that had once created mayhem in India. He had been caught smuggling 10 truckloads of arms from a state-run jetty in Chittagong

in 2004. Also implicated was Lutfozzaman Babar of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), besides several others. Babar was also given the death penalty for a grenade attack which killed 24 people and left Hasina injured. He and other BNP leaders indicted in this case were freed earlier this month. Worst of all has been the refusal to grant bail to Hindu priest Chinmoy Krishna Das on the grounds that no lawyer represented him in the court. The state did not provide a defending lawyer, though it is duty-bound to do so. Apart from all this is the situation on the ground. Bangladesh has witnessed a frenzy of hate against not just Hasina but also her supporters and Awami League members. The party has claimed that 400 of its cadres have been killed. A UN report notes that nearly 650 people were killed between

July 16 and August 11 this year. It has suggested a thorough, impartial and transparent investigation into reports of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions. Clearly, there is a great danger to the life of the Awami League leader if she returns. Then are moral and other aspects too. Hasina was sent to India by the Bangladesh army for her own safety. That trust would be betrayed if India sends her back. Diplomatically, India's image would be hit, especially in the neighbourhood, if it gives in to Yunus' demand. Politicians and others who have stood by us in the past would have second thoughts about their future actions if India is not seen as a sincere friend. The most curious aspect is that Yunus and his band of students are making extradition an issue despite knowing that it would spoil relations with India. This is not an elected government, and accordingly, it has no requirement to score brownie points with its electorate. It seems that Yunus is in no hurry to go; his students have already declared their intention of forming a political party of their own. That's fine, except for a growing anti-Indian sentiment among the students now at the helm of affairs. That includes a now-deleted Facebook post by the interim government's student adviser Mahfuz Alam that showed a map of Bangladesh claiming Indian territory. Then there is the puzzling objection to a perfectly harmless post by Prime Minister Narendra Modi praising the Indian Army for the victory in the 1971 war by Bangladesh officials and student advisers. Besides, questions are being raised about a clutch of India-backed projects, most recently the Rooppur trilateral nuclear power project that also includes Russia. New Delhi has to tread carefully. There is clearly more to all this than meets the eye, and possibly more than one outside actor is involved. Meanwhile, Hasina stays. No two ways about that.



Consider these tips while moving into a New home

Buying a new house is one of the most fulfilling experiences in life. Your home is your personal space and you would always want to make it special. Although, it is extremely exciting to move into your home, make sure you keep these tips handy so that the transition is smooth.

Pack the stuff in slots, name them into categories

Show them what needs to be packed

together, slot them out into living room, bedroom, kids' room, kitchen and bathroom accessories. Mark every box with specific details so that you understand what's there in each box. Pack delicate stuff like handicraft, artefacts, crockery etc in cushioned boxes and mark them as 'fragile'.

Supervise the process

Don't try to manage everything by yourself, take help from parents and friends to supervise the process of moving in. Allot one member at every point of change in hand. This will ensure that everything reaches your new home in one piece. Ask them not to rub heavy furniture against each other, not the bang boxes marked as 'fragile' and handle them carefully, etc.

Make sure all the work is complete before you move in

Do not plan to move in even if a tad bit of the work is incomplete. Since, it is extremely difficult to make any changes once you move in. Even if small things like one of your designer walls is yet to be done or a cabinet in your kitchen is yet to be fixed, wait till they are all set. Do not hurry up.

Start with one section at a time

Do not open all the boxes at a time, start with one section at a time. This will ensure

accuracy and finesse. Its best to begin with the living room as it is the first room that opens the door to your home. Then gradually set the other rooms. Although, you can seek help from friends to set up all sections of your house, make sure the bedroom is done only by you and your spouse, since its your personal space and needs to be done up with love and care.

Celebrate summer with a Sundowner



Pick the perfect place

A sundowner typically takes place from 5pm and goes on till 8 pm or so... So, pick a place where the romance of the evening is accentuated. A pool side sundowner is always a hot pick, just have some floats, deck chairs and pool side recliners handy. Those who want to chill by the pool will do so, and others can cool off in the water. Another alternative is your terrace! Just make sure you arrange for some comfy furniture for the guests — plenty of floor cushions, swing chairs, recliners, and an open bar. Ah ha! Lawn parties in a fab garden setting is another sundowner staple. Think pretty gazebos, flowy drapes, garden chairs... If all that sounds like too much work, throw a party at a rooftop pub from where you can catch a

beautiful sunset. This way drinks, decor and food are taken care of, and the hosts too can chill, literally.

Dress down

Loud clothes and makeup are not apt for sundowners. Maxi dresses, shorts with tank tops, comfortable footwear — slip ons, flip flops in bright colours — are the key to dressing up for such a do. Leave your tresses loose or opt for a high ponytail. Just a hint of mascara and gloss and you should be set!

Music sets the mood

You can always invite an in-house DJ to play for you if you are hosting a sundowner at a pub. But if you are hosting it at home premises, make sure to have a peppy playlist ready because you have to get your guests in the mood to party quite early before the usual hours.

Keep the munchies light

No one wants to gorge on heavy food during sundown. Anything that is bite-sized and easy to eat, such as canape, dimsums, crunchy salad, nachos, chips, fresh fruit popsicles, mini donuts, pop-in-the mouth desserts are some of the yummy dishes that you can choose for an ideal sundowner platter.

What you gonna sip

Some of the best drinks to serve at a sundowner are Long Island Iced Tea, Cosmopolitan, sangrias, Mojitos, Vodka-cranberry concoction and any other drinks with a hint of fruit or fresh lime is the best way to start your evening. Those who want beer can be served draught beer too. Chilled Mojito popsicles are also a great idea for summer sundowners.

5 ways to organise your Book shelf

you're a bookworm and not a particularly organised person, you're sure to have tons of books lying around the house. It is easy to segregate your book collection in an organised and functional manner, this not only makes your work easy but also makes your work and space a lot more clear and



of the book. For example, if most of your books are black and white, you can create a monochrome section.

4. Arrange according to publications: If you do not wish to mix your books, the ideal way to arrange them is by separating them according to the publisher. You can build different sections for each publisher, so that you do not get confused while arranging your books.

5. According to emotions: You don't have to ideally follow the usual method of arranging books. You can do it a bit differently. If there are books that have been gifted to you by friends and family, you can make a separate section for them and label it accordingly.

1. Categorise it alphabetically: One of the best ways and the most common method of organising your book shelf is by arranging the books according to the alphabets. You can either do it by the author's first or last name or by organising it according to the book title.

2. According to genre:

This is the easiest way to organise your books and also find them when you are looking to read a particular genre. Make separate shelves for comedies, classics, thriller, suspense etc.

3. Colour coded:

You can turn your book shelf into a giant rainbow by arranging them according to the colour



Delhi Wakes Up To Light Rain And Fog Reducing Visibility- Check Weather Here

This improvement was attributed to better meteorological conditions, such as increased wind speed, as forecasted by the IMD and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM).

NEW DELHI. Light rain lashed across several parts of Delhi on Friday morning, accompanied by a layer of fog that reduced visibility. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the city recorded a minimum temperature of 12°C and a maximum of 20°C. The IMD has also forecast "thunderstorms with rain" for Friday and Saturday, with more showers expected. Local resident Deepak Pandey shared, "The weather feels like Kashmir now. It's pleasant and great for traveling, though it's cold. The rain has also reduced pollution levels." Similarly, tourist Raman Kushwaha from Madhya Pradesh said, "It's cold, but the light rain makes it enjoyable to explore places, and the pollution has decreased." Drizzle, dense fog, and pleasant weather were seen at Kartavya Path, but despite the rain, Delhi's air quality remained in the 'very poor' category. As of 7 am, the Air Quality Index (AQI) was 371, according to the



Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). Specific AQI levels at various locations included 398 in Anand Vihar, 340 at IGI Airport (T3), 360 at Aya Nagar, 345 at Lodhi Road, 380 at ITO, 315 in Chandni Chowk, and 386 at Punjab Bagh.

Delhi AQI level

On December 24, the Central government's air quality monitoring panel revoked Stage IV ("Severe+") restrictions under the Graded

Response Action Plan (GRAP) due to improving air quality. However, measures under Stages I, II, and III are still in place to prevent worsening conditions, according to the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM). This improvement was attributed to better meteorological conditions, such as increased wind speed, as forecasted by the IMD and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM).

Stage IV measures, which were implemented on December 16 when AQI levels crossed 400, included restrictions on industrial activities, construction, and entry of non-essential trucks into Delhi. These measures aim to combat severe pollution levels. GRAP is a system of emergency actions taken in Delhi-NCR to address air pollution based on AQI severity. Stay informed on all the latest news, real-time breaking news updates, and follow all the important headlines in India news and world news on.

Delhi University plans to introduce PhD in Hindu Studies from 2025-26 session

NEW DELHI. Delhi University is planning to introduce a PhD programme in Hindu Studies from the 2025-26 academic session, according to a proposal by a Standing Committee.

The Governing Body of the Centre for Hindu Studies has recommended that the PhD programme be introduced in 2025-26. The programme was intended to begin earlier in the current academic session but was postponed, as per the proposal. The initiative to introduce a PhD in Hindu Studies is aimed at creating opportunities for students, the Joint Director of the Centre for Hindu Studies, Prema Malhotra said. "Our Governing Board has recommended starting a PhD in Hindu Studies, and the matter will be placed before the Academic Council. Students have been approaching the Centre, enquiring about research opportunities, especially those who have already qualified JRF and NET in Hindu Studies. As a premier institution, Delhi University is committed to providing such opportunities and advancing research in diverse areas of Hindu Studies.

Security beefed up for New Year's Eve in national capital

NEW DELHI. The Delhi Police has intensified security arrangements and increased deployments in the border areas of the national capital for New Year celebrations, officials said on Thursday.

More than 10,000 police personnel, including traffic police are expected to be on the ground to rein in hooliganism and traffic violations, they said.

"After Christmas, we have made a robust plan for the security arrangements for New Year eve. We want everyone to welcome the new year with great zeal but no one will be allowed to breach the law," a senior police officer said. According to police, additional pickets, barricades and personnel -- including paramilitary deployment -- will be made at the borders to tackle nuisance by people from the adjoining states, said the officer.

Delhi shares borders with Haryana and Uttar Pradesh and lies close to Rajasthan. A large number of people from these three states arrive in the national capital for New Year celebrations. The police said they have already deployed police personnel at more than 10 locations for Christmas, but now they have intensified their security and heavy deployment has already been done on more than 15 locations from where vehicles enter the national capital.

The traffic police has already chalked out a plan to combat motorcycle stunts and drink driving. Additional forces from different police stations will be deployed to help the traffic police, another senior police officer said. According to the police, there will be shift duties and SHOs have been ordered to be on the road with their teams to maintain law and order on New Year Eve.

26-Year-Old Man Sets Himself On Fire Near Parliament, Dies During Treatment

NEW DELHI. A 26-year-old man who set himself on fire near the Parliament on Dec 25 died during treatment at RML hospital here on Friday, officials said. On Wednesday, Jitendra from Uttar Pradesh's Baghpat tried to immolate himself near the new Parliament building after pouring a petrol-like substance on his body.

The fire was extinguished with the help of security personnel deployed near the parliament. He was then



taken to RML hospital and admitted to the burn wards. According to initial investigations, the man took the extreme step due to a dispute with some people back home in Baghpat.

His family has been facing two cases of assault with another family in their village due to which he was upset, police said. According to the hospital authorities, he suffered 95 per cent of burn injuries and expired at 2.23 am on Friday.

The cause of death was burn shock due to inhalational burns, resulting from 95 per cent of second-degree deep dermal burns, the authorities stated. A police officer said that Jitendra's body had been handed over to his family after the post-mortem.

"He Used To Praise Me A Lot": Lalu Yadav Pays Tribute To Manmohan Singh

NEW DELHI. In the wake of the passing of former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, Rashtra Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad Yadav fondly recalled his close association with the esteemed economist and leader. Speaking to ANI, Lalu Yadav highlighted the strong personal rapport he shared with Manmohan Singh frequently praising his efforts during their time together in government. "It is a great loss to the country. Dr Manmohan Singh was an honest leader against whom no allegations were ever made. I was also a minister in his cabinet, and I received immense support from him when I was serving as the Railway Minister. Hearing the news of his passing has come as a deep shock. I pray to God to grant peace to his soul," he said.

"We had a very good relationship, and he used to praise me a lot. It was during his time that significant progress was made in the railway sector, and the country saw advancement. He served as the Prime Minister for 10 years. His passing has deeply saddened me," Lalu Yadav added.

The RJD chief also emphasized that today, the country needs more people like Dr Singh.

"He was renowned as an economist around the world. Today, the country needs more people like him, and his absence will certainly be felt," he said. According to the Congress sources, the remains of the former Prime Minister will be brought to AICC headquarters in New Delhi tomorrow for people to pay their last respects. His last rites will be performed near Rajghat.

Manmohan Singh passed away at AIIMS, Delhi, on Thursday evening at the age of 92 due to age-related medical conditions. He had a sudden loss of consciousness at home after which he was rushed to the AIIMS Delhi. President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, and leaders across the political spectrum condoled Manmohan Singh's death.

Manmohan Singh was born on September 26, 1932. Apart from being an economist, Manmohan Singh served as Reserve Bank of India governor from 1982-1985. He was the 13th PM of India with his tenure from 2004-2014 and was the longest-serving PM after Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi.

Namo Bharat trains record five million commuters since launch of RRTS

Data reveals that the highest numbers of passengers have traveled from Ghaziabad and Meerut South stations on the corridor.

NEW DELHI. Since the launch of operations on the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut RRTS corridor in October 2023, over five million commuters have travelled in the Namo Bharat trains, according to a statement released on Wednesday (December 25).

Data reveals that the highest numbers of passengers have traveled from Ghaziabad and Meerut South stations on the corridor. The 17 km priority section (Sahibabad-Duhai Depot) of the RRTS corridor was inaugurated on Oct 23, 2023, by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. On March 6, 2024, Namo Bharat services were extended to an additional 17 km section from Duhai to Modi Nagar North. Further expansion took place on August 18, with the addition of an eight km stretch



from Modi Nagar North to Meerut South. Following the connection to Meerut, commuter interest in the Namo Bharat trains increased significantly. On August 19, during Raksha Bandhan, a record 34,000 commuters traveled on the trains. The total number of commuters has now surpassed five million. The operational section from Sahibabad to Meerut

South spans 42 km and includes nine RRTS stations. Passengers can travel between Sahibabad and Meerut South in just 30 minutes.

Final trial runs underway on Delhi section of RRTS

Currently, Namo Bharat trains are undergoing final trial runs from Sahibabad to Delhi, with stations at Anand Vihar and New Ashok Nagar. Anand Vihar, an underground station, will be the first of its kind on the RRTS corridor.

Soon, the operational corridor will expand to 55 km as Namo Bharat trains begin service from Sahibabad to New Ashok Nagar. In addition, NCRRTC has launched a loyalty points program, offering a 10% discount on fares for commuters who purchase QR code-based tickets through the RRTS Connect app.

The traffic police has already chalked out a plan to combat motorcycle stunts and drink driving. Additional forces from different police stations will be deployed to help the traffic police, another senior police officer said. According to the police, there will be shift duties and SHOs have been ordered to be on the road with their teams to maintain law and order on New Year Eve.

Delhi HC seeks reply from Uber, Centre after plea alleges bias against disabled people

The petitioner's counsel alleged his client faced disrespectful and discriminatory behaviour while booking an auto ride on the app besides several other challenges while availing its company's services.

NEW DELHI. The Delhi High Court has sought the stand of Centre and Uber on a plea by a lawyer who suffers from visual disability alleging discrimination while availing services of the ride-hailing app.

On December 24, Justice Sanjeev Narula issued notice on the petition by advocate Rahul Bajaj and asked the Centre and Uber India Technology Private Limited to respond.

Bajaj's counsel alleged his client faced disrespectful and discriminatory behaviour while booking an auto ride on the app besides several other challenges while



availing its company's services. He shared the incident where the auto driver not only refused to drop Bajaj at the desired destination for not wanting to assist him navigate the route, but was also disrespectful to him after reluctantly

agreeing for the ride. The petitioner argued the driver's conduct exemplified discrimination and said ride-hailing services such as Uber had failed to ensure their drivers were adequately trained and sensitized according to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act.

Though Uber claims of having a zero-tolerance policy against discrimination, it was ineffective in facilitating disability sensitization, the petitioner said. Bajaj said despite his posting about such incidents on social media, he has continued to experience reluctance by Uber's auto drivers. The plea sought appropriate measures to address the situation. The matter would be heard on March 27.

Waqf Panel Dissatisfied With Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan Responses

BJP member Jagambika Pal, chairman of the Joint Committee on Waqf Amendment Bill, said the panel has given the representatives of the three states a fortnight to furnish their responses and would call them again to appear before it if required. The committee has sought details about the Waqf properties in states, including their registration with the government, listing of the properties by their character - waqf by user or waqf by deed, the income generated by such properties and whether their nature can be changed.

Mr Pal said the committee will also tour Kolkata, Patna and Lucknow between January 18 and 20 to interact with various stakeholders there.

Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh about the status of Waqf properties in their respective states.

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Mr Pal said the committee will also tour Kolkata, Patna and Lucknow between January 18 and 20 to interact with various stakeholders there. He said some members have also expressed their desire to visit Jammu

and Kashmir and a decision in this regard will be taken after consulting Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.

"The responses given by the delegations of the three states were not satisfactory, we have given them 15 days time to furnish the responses and will call them again if required," he said. Mr Pal said these states have not furnished the responses in the format specified by the Department of Minority Affairs.

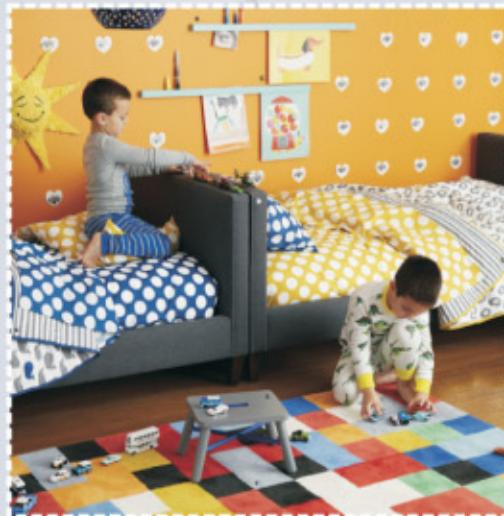
Delhi's Food and Supply Minister Imran Hussain is scheduled to address the

committee on Friday, followed by the recording of evidence by the representatives of the Delhi government.

The deposition of officials from the Congress-led Karnataka government comes in the wake of a row over claims by BJP leaders that over 1500 acres of land belonging to farmers in the state were being taken over by the Waqf Board. Mr Pal had visited Karnataka and interacted with the farmers who had received notices from the state government regarding encroachment over properties belonging to the Waqf Board. The committee had also written to state governments seeking details of Waqf properties occupied by them in an unauthorised manner as per the Sachar panel report. The UPA government constituted the Sachar Committee in 2005 to study the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community in India.



Making room for the Baby



Don't let your kid's personal space be an afterthought. Here's how to get started: Recently, Bollywood's favourite promoter of nepotism got his babies home to a swanky and pristine-white nursery designed by friend Gauri Khan. A child's nursery is not just any other room; they are well thought out spaces for the child to call his/her own from the day he/she's born.

While Karan Johar's nursery is right out of a catalogue, you don't have to break the bank to get your child's room ready. All you need is a well thought out concept.

Just cribbing

The crib is the centre point of a nursery. Interior designer Namrata Joshi says, "Be sure to get the right one. Don't go for fancy but functional - read, a good quality crib with

proper safety guidelines." Most cribs convert to toddler beds, that's why pick a piece that will last. Invest in plenty of crib sheets, and a crib skirt for extra drama. Think 100 per cent cotton, hypo-allergenic - and keep it gender neutral.

For a change

Babies come with dirty diapers. To put a positive spin to the poop drama, opt for a changing table. If you don't have enough space, Sandeep Kumar, founder of a Bengaluru-based interior eCommerce venture advises on changing pads that can be attached to the top of any dresser.

Store more

Babies mean more stuff. Up your storage game. Create your own storage solutions with clever hacks. Interior designer Ayushi

Kanodia advises on wall shelves and the use of bins and baskets to separate supplies. Use open bins for blankets, while shorter bins can be tucked away under the crib. Kumar advises on washable wall colours. "Use easy clean wall decals to give kids room to doodle and make the walls their own," he says.

Nursery notes

- Don't make it too sunny. Babies need their sleep and light curtains can work against them setting their circadian rhythms.

- Baby-proof the room. Cover electrical outlets, tuck away cords, anchor furniture and secure rugs.
- Don't use harsh lighting. Install dimmer lights.
- Don't use rugs that can't be washed easily. Floor rugs are the biggest carriers of mites.



Create your own Rock garden at home



Little comes close to being as peaceful as a rock garden. It exudes serenity and is a visual landscape, too. It's also not tough to make your own one at home. Here are tips on how to do so:

- 1) Choose the area: The foundation matters so choose a spot, maybe on your patio or terrace for the rock garden space. You will also need it to have depth (around one foot).
- 2) Arranging rocks, plants: The next step is to arrange the layout of the garden. You will need to get rocks in different sizes and shades. Large slabs of rock make for a staircase and flat, coloured stones can be used for the walkway. Place the flowers and plants around this.
- 3) Water effect: You can also create an artificially flowing fountain or water path through the garden.
- 4) Furniture: Use cane furniture around your rock garden. It looks good all year through.

Get money savvy with these simple tips



Are you one of those who cannot manage your money? Be well informed and plan better for the future if you want to enjoy all that money you make. Here are some simple tips -

1. Gather knowledge: Start early in life to know what you can do with your money. Gather enough knowledge and read as much as you can before investing.
2. Look out for best investments: Once you know where all you can invest in, start doing it in a methodical manner. Do not invest in one particular scheme but try to divide your savings into making investments at various places.
3. Plan your life: Set up your priorities and goals in life. If you want to save for your retired life try to limit your expenses and curb all those indulgences.

Use old bottles to add greenery to your home

Got a wall that's blank? This time, instead of hanging the usual photo frames on it, opt for some horizontal greenery via a plant bottle wall. Choose the herbs like thyme, rosemary and cilantro for this. To start, cut out the mid-section of the bottle and place the soil and plant inside. You can also have



a vertical design, where you cut the bottle in half and turn them upside down so that the water from the open neck of the bottle drips onto another bottle. It's nifty and aesthetic, too!

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Transrail Lighting shares list at 36% premium on Dalal Street debut

New Delhi. Transrail Lighting made its debut on the stock market today, listing at Rs 590 on the NSE, at a premium of 37% over its IPO price of Rs 432 per share. The shares opened at Rs 585.15 per share on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE). The market debut aligns with market expectations and reflects robust investor interest during the IPO, which was oversubscribed by 81 times. The engineering and construction company raised Rs 839 crore through its IPO, which closed on December 23. The offering included a fresh issue worth Rs 400 crore and an offer-for-sale amounting to Rs 438.9 crore by promoter Ajamna Holdings. The funds raised from the fresh issue will be used for working capital needs, capital expenditure, and other corporate purposes. Analysts are upbeat about the company's long-term prospects. Narendra Solanki, Head of Fundamental Research at Anand Rathi Shares, recommends holding the stock to benefit from Transrail Lighting's solid order book of Rs 10,213 crore and strong market visibility. He notes that the IPO was reasonably priced and that the company's diversification strategies and global presence provide a solid foundation for growth.

For risk-averse investors, booking partial profits on the listing gains might be prudent. Meanwhile, long-term investors are encouraged to retain their shares to benefit from the company's anticipated growth in the power transmission and distribution sector.

15 income tax changes in 2024: What you need to know for filing ITR in 2025

New Delhi. The year 2024 brought significant changes to income tax laws, altering how taxpayers will approach filing their Income Tax Returns (ITRs) in 2025. With the backdrop of general elections earlier in the year, the government introduced sweeping changes to income tax laws, many of which are already in effect for FY 2024-25. These reforms—ranging from revamped tax slabs to new rules for capital gains and TDS—promise to impact how you plan, save, and file your Income Tax Return (ITR) in 2025. Confused about how these changes affect you? Here's a concise breakdown of the 15 most significant updates and their implications on your finances. Get ready to plan smarter and save better!

REVISED INCOME TAX SLABS UNDER THE NEW REGIME The new tax regime has introduced revised income tax slabs designed to benefit individual taxpayers. Under the updated structure, income up to Rs 3,00,000 is exempt from tax, while earnings between Rs 3,00,001 and Rs 7,00,000 are taxed at 5%. Income from Rs 7,00,001 to Rs 10,00,000 is taxed at 10%, and the next bracket, Rs 10,00,001 to Rs 12,00,000, is taxed at 15%. For earnings between Rs 12,00,001 and Rs 15,00,000, the tax rate is 20%, and any income above Rs 15,00,000 is taxed at 30%.

These changes offer taxpayers opting for the new regime the opportunity to save up to Rs 17,500 annually.

INCREASED STANDARD DEDUCTION LIMIT For those under the new tax regime, the standard deduction limit has risen to Rs 75,000 from Rs 50,000. Family pensioners, too, see a hike to Rs 25,000 from Rs 15,000. The old tax regime retains the existing Rs 50,000 limit for salaried individuals and Rs 15,000 for family pensioners.

This increase in deductions under the new regime effectively lowers taxable income, enhancing its appeal to a broader range of taxpayers.

ENHANCED NPS DEDUCTION FOR EMPLOYERS' CONTRIBUTION

Under the new tax regime, individuals can now claim deductions of up to 14% of their basic salary for employer contributions to the National Pension System (NPS), up from 10%.

Quick commerce growth in 2024: From gold, groceries to gadget delivery in 10 minutes

BENGALURU: The quick commerce sector in 2024 not only witnessed significant venture funding and growth, but also saw the entry of major players and extraordinary growth in terms of users. Swiggy went public this year and Zomato-backed Blinkit business turned adjusted EBITDA positive in March 2024.

While Flipkart forayed into quick commerce with 'Minutes', Amazon announced Tez and Myntra launched 'M-Now'. All major players are now focusing on the rapidly booming quick commerce market. Thanks to widespread adoption and demand not just in metro cities but also across tier-2 and 3 cities. As per Traxx report, the quick commerce space in 2024 saw 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. In the next three years, Redseer predicts a 40-45% GMV CAGR for q-commerce. Not just groceries and food, all players have now expanded their offerings that include toys, gold during Dhanteras, beauty products, fashion and electronics, among others. On Thursday, Swiggy's quick commerce platform Instamart in its 2024 report said the fastest delivery of the year happened in Kochi in 89 seconds and that a single user spent Rs 8.3 lakh on gold during Dhanteras. People in Delhi have spent about Rs 60 crore on noodle snack. The capital topped the charts for maximum orders of potato chips and instant noodles. Vizag went big on playtime, with a user spending Rs 27,742 on toys this year. The cheapest order of the year came in at Rs 3, a pencil sharpener, purchased by a user in Hyderabad at 8:15 pm. A user from Chennai splurged Rs 1,25,454 on electronics, electricals and home appliances this year, picking up nearly 85 items. Instamart is aiming to double its dark store count by March 2025 from 523 in March 2024. In its first-ever results post IPO, Swiggy said its quick commerce arm saw improved performance where its gross order value growth accelerated to 24% sequentially to reach Rs 3,382 crore.

It can be noted that the rupee's drop to 85 from 84 happened over two months, while the decline to 84 from 83 took nearly 14 months.

MUMBAI. The rupee continued to bleed for the third consecutive day on Thursday, pressured by a firm dollar and importers' month-end dollar demand. At the end of the market hours, the currency lost 6 paise against the dollar at 85.2625 from 85.20 in the previous session and had an all-time low of 85.2825 intraday. A trader said importers were very active in the market, though trading volume was relatively low as the year-end is nearing. It can be noted that the rupee's drop to 85 from 84 happened over two months, while the decline to 84 from 83



took nearly 14 months. Yet in terms of the real effective exchange rate (REER) at over 108.14 in November, or its value relative to multiple foreign currencies after adjusting for inflation, it is still at

record high as its pair currencies have lost much more than the rupee. Since slipping below 84 in mid-October, the rupee has been falling gradually amid growth slowdown, massive foreign

outflows (over \$12 billion in a month), worries over US president-elect Donald Trump's trade policies and a hawkish Federal Reserve. However, persistent interventions from the Reserve Bank have kept the rupee's decline in check. According to RBI, it has sold more than \$47 billion in October alone to defend the rupee. According to the RBI bulletin for December, the Reserve Bank net sold \$9.28 billion in the spot forex market in October while the net outstanding forward sale stood at \$49.18 billion compared to the net sale of \$14.58 billion in September. The central bank said it purchased \$27.5 billion and sold \$36.78 billion during October. As against this the central bank has bought a net of \$9.64 billion in the spot market in September. It can be noted that October was the most volatile month for the rupee which began with foreign funds starting a selling spree of domestic equities and then Donald Trump winning the US presidential polls only added to the pain for the currency.

Sanathan Textiles shares list at 31% premium over IPO price. Hold or sell

New Delhi Sanathan Textiles made a strong debut on the stock exchanges, listing at Rs 422 per share, a 31% premium over its issue price of Rs 319.

The listing comes after the company's initial public offering (IPO) witnessed robust demand, with subscriptions exceeding 36 times the total shares on offer. The IPO, open between December 19 and December 24, aimed to raise Rs 550 crore, comprising a Rs 400 crore fresh issue and a Rs 150 crore Offer for Sale (OFS). Sanathan Textiles made a strong debut on the stock exchanges, listing at Rs 422 per share, a 31% premium over its issue price of Rs 319. The listing comes after the company's initial public offering (IPO) witnessed robust demand, with subscriptions exceeding 36 times the total shares on offer. The IPO, open between December 19 and December 24, aimed to raise Rs 550 crore, comprising a Rs 400 crore fresh issue and a Rs 150 crore Offer for Sale (OFS). SHOULD YOU HOLD OR SELL?

Analysts remain cautious despite the strong listing. Shivani Nyati, Head of Wealth at Swastika Investmart, noted the company's shrinking margins and declining profitability as concerns.

While the IPO was reasonably priced, Nyati



finalised on December 24, and investors could check their allotment status via the BSE website or registrar Link Intime India Pvt Ltd. Nuvama Wealth Management Ltd acted as the book-running lead manager for the IPO.

IS IT A LONG-TERM BET?

Analysts have shared mixed perspectives on the stock's long-term potential. Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research) at Mehta Equities, noted the healthy listing gains were driven by reasonable valuations and strong market sentiment. He advised conservative

investors to book profits above expectations, while long-term investors willing to embrace volatility could hold their shares. He highlighted DAM Capital's 12.1% market share in IPOs and QIPs in FY24 as a sign of its strong market positioning. Shivani Nyati, Head of Wealth at Swastika Investmart Ltd, highlighted the company's strong growth in investment banking services, including equity capital markets, mergers and acquisitions, and private equity advisory. While she acknowledged the IPO's fully priced valuation, Nyati recommended investors book partial profits while maintaining a stop loss at Rs 390. With its solid debut, DAM Capital Advisors has positioned itself as a key player in India's equity markets. However, investors are advised to closely monitor the company's performance and broader market trends before making long-term decisions.

India sees higher oil demand growth than China

NEW DELHI. The year 2024 is going to end with a higher oil demand growth rate as compared to China's. This will position the South Asian country as one of the fastest-growing consumption centres in the global oil market, according to a report by S&P Global Commodity Insights.

This shift is expected to continue into 2025, prompting India's refiners to accelerate expansion efforts and broaden their crude diversification strategies to keep pace with the surge in demand. Despite China's slower demand growth, its market size—more than three times larger than India's—will continue to contribute significantly to global oil demand by volume. However, oil market stakeholders are increasingly turning their focus to India, as its peak demand is expected to occur much later than

China's. "India will be the leading driver, along with Southeast Asia and other parts of South Asia, of the region's future oil demand growth," said Kang Wu, global head of macro and oil demand research at S&P Global Commodity Insights.

He added that in 2025 India is forecast to deliver a relatively faster growth in oil demand of 3.2% as against China's 1.7%. He emphasised the role of petrochemical feedstock requirements in oil consumption growth in both countries next year. In the first ten months of 2024, India's oil demand rose by 180,000 barrels per day (b/d), or 3.2% year-over-year, significantly outpacing China, which saw a rise of 148,000 b/d, or 0.9%, according to data from S&P Global Commodity Insights. As the global oil market adapts to these shifting dynamics, all eyes will remain

on India as it takes centre stage in driving future growth in global oil demand. India is also set to see significant refining capacity growth in 2025. The country is just months away from launching its first greenfield integrated refinery complex in nearly a decade, leading to active negotiations with global oil producers for term crude imports for a project with the potential to generate incremental annual feedstock demand of up to 9 million metric tons. HPCL Rajasthan Refinery Ltd., an integrated refinery and petrochemical complex under construction in Pachpadra, Balotra district of Rajasthan, has already seen certain units enter the pre-commissioning stage. The refinery is designed to process over 83% imported medium-grade crude, with the remainder being domestic crude.



suggests investors consider booking profits given the attractive 31% listing gains.

"Company made a quiet stock market debut, listing at a significant 31% premium over its issue price of Rs. 321. Those who took part in the initial public offering (IPO) may take listing gains profit," Nyati said.

With a focus on reducing debt and expanding its business verticals, Sanathan Textiles aims for steady growth. However, investors must weigh the company's fundamentals against broader market conditions before deciding to hold or sell.

How Indian stock market benefitted under Manmohan Singh

Manmohan Singh's policies, introduced during a time of economic crisis in the early 1990s, reshaped India's economy and transformed the Indian stock markets.

New Delhi No power on earth can stop an idea whose time has come. I suggest to this August House that the emergence of India as a major economic power in the world happens to be one such idea. Let the whole world hear it loud and clear," said Dr. Manmohan Singh during his first budget speech on July 24, 1991, as India embarked on its journey of economic liberalisation. And rightly so, since India has not looked back and scaled new heights to emerge as an economic powerhouse and ranks fifth globally in GDP for 2024. The foundation for this growth was laid by Former Finance and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, known as the architect of India's economic liberalisation, who died in Delhi at the age of 92, leaving behind a lasting legacy. His

policies, introduced during a time of economic crisis in the early 1990s, reshaped India's economy and transformed the Indian stock markets. Singh's policies came at a time of deep financial distress for India, with foreign reserves nearly depleted and the country on the brink of economic collapse. The reforms he introduced were historic, dismantling decades of restrictive controls and opening the economy to global markets.

TRANSFORMATIVE ECONOMIC REFORMS Manmohan Singh's tenure as Finance Minister saw the implementation of bold measures that liberalised India's economy. The most notable among them were the abolition of the Licence Raj, opening the economy to foreign investment, reducing import tariffs, and introducing fiscal discipline. Singh also led various institutional reforms, including the formation of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) as the regulatory authority, which marked a critical step in ensuring transparency and accountability in the

stock market," said Palka Arora Chopra, Director, Master Capital Services. The reforms introduced back then laid the groundwork for the India we know today. They transformed India's economic structure, making it more competitive and globally integrated. This also created a strong foundation for the Indian stock market to flourish.

A REMARKABLE RISE IN THE STOCK MARKET The liberalisation measures had a direct and long-lasting impact on the Indian stock

market. In 1991, the Sensex was trading at around 1,000 points. Today, it has surged past the 78,000 mark, delivering exponential returns to investors over three decades. "As the nation pays homage to Manmohan Singh, the architect of liberalisation in India, investors must be acknowledging with gratitude the wealth created by the Indian stock market after the initiation of liberalisation in 1991. Sensex which was around 1000 in 1991 has multiplied about 780 times since then to trade above 78000 now delivering excellent returns to long-term investors. The market will continue to deliver superior returns to investors in the years to come since the India Growth Story, which liberalisation triggered, is very much intact," said Dr. V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services. "Singh also took steps to strengthen Sebi in 1992, enhancing transparency and regulatory oversight, which in turn helped build trust among investors. By opening the market to Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) and Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs).



NEWS BOX

Sumil Gavaskar defends Virat Kohli's fine: Can't hang a man for picking a pocket

New Delhi Legendary Sunil Gavaskar reiterated his stance against Virat Kohli shouldering Sam Konstas on Day 1 of the Boxing Day Test, but said there were no favours done to the superstar cricketer in terms of the fine that was handed to him by the International Cricket Committee. Gavaskar quoted instances of players getting similar sanctions for physical contact on the field, stressing that protocols were followed in Kohli's case as well. Speculation was rife that Virat Kohli would be handed a one-match ban for shouldering 19-year-old Sam Konstas at the MCG in a heated on-field moment. However, Kohli escaped a suspension and was fined 20 percent of his match fee. Match referee Andy Pycroft charged him for Level 1 offence, the lowest level of punishment for physical contact on



the field.

A section of the Australian media, however, hit out against the governing body, accusing it of being lenient towards Virat Kohli. Former cricketers Ricky Ponting and Mark Waugh lashed out at the authorities for not handing Kohli a harsher punishment for the Boxing Day act. "Yes, you would say that the punishment may be light, considering the experience that he has had. But, that's the maximum punishment that is decided by the ICC. He has not been done any favour," Sunil Gavaskar told Star Sports. "If, for example, the fine was 10 percent, then you could have said 'ah, he has been done a favour'. But, the fine for a Level 1 offence is maximum a 20 percent. I am not 100 percent on that, but I am given to understand that there is one demerit point and a fine. That's the maximum allowed, that's what has been levied on him. 'No special favours have been done to him. You can't hang a man for picking someone's pocket. That's what the Australian media is asking for.' The Australian media think they got away because he is Kohli. But, that is not the thing," he added. Virat Kohli was handed a demerit point for the offence.

Physical contact on cricket field is complete no-no, says CA CEO

MELBOURNE Cricket Australia CEO Nick Hockley on Friday said there is no place for physical contact on the cricket field, following the physical altercation between India superstar Virat Kohli and Australian debutant Sam Konstas. The brief showdown took place after the 10th over of the Australian innings on the opening day of the fourth Test when the players were crossing over. Kohli and Konstas bumped shoulders while moving across the pitch in the face off that was initiated by the travelling star. Following the incident, Kohli was charged with breaching Level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct and accepted the sanctions proposed by match referee Andy Pycroft at the end of the day. He was also fined 20



percent of his match fee.

"Not a great look I mean you know physical contact on the cricket field is a complete no-no so it wasn't great," Hockley told SEN Radio. "I think clearly Virat in accepting the charge has taken responsibility," he added. Konstas downplayed the incident, explaining that Kohli had accidentally bumped into him, a response Hockley considered remarkably mature for a teenager. "I actually thought Sam showed maturity beyond his years and was actually very kind of gracious to brush it off," Hockley said. "What it does is it highlights just the intensity of the competition but also just how much is at stake in this series but yeah not a great look," he added. Kohli also received one demerit point from the ICC. When asked whether the penalty was sufficient, Hockley left it to the officials. "I think that's for the for the officials. I've got a really experienced panel of officials here and the main thing is that kind of Virat has accepted the charge and taken responsibility." When questioned about the potential response had an Australian player been involved, Hockley replied.

The sorry state of affairs in wrestling continues even though Aman Sehrawat, with an Olympic bronze, salvaged some pride. As 2024 nears end, a look at the issues ailing the sport and the way forward to reclaim the good old days.

CHENNAI. Earlier this month, a Greco-Roman wrestler from Railway Sports Promotion Board (RSPB), who was representing Rajasthan in the senior national championships in Bengaluru, got a few calls after he won the first bout. He was instructed to pull out of the tournament as the RSPB has not given him a no-objection certificate (NOC) to compete in the championships. A few Railway wrestlers though represented

their home states and even won medals but a majority of them were deprived of the nationals organised by the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) for the second straight year. The same was the case last year as well. Repercussions for non-participation, however, could be more this time as in 2023 two nationals were organised — one by the WFI and other by the ad-hoc committee. The second one was hosted by the RSPB and hence their wrestlers got a tournament even if they were not allowed to compete in the WFI's event. Besides, winners of Railway nationals were considered for future events given the situation at that time. It may not be the case now and this can affect Railway, who employs the country's top wrestlers, badly. "It's sad but wrestlers who didn't compete in Bengaluru nationals would not be considered for upcoming camps and tournaments," Sanjay Kumar Singh, WFI president, told this daily. The deadlock between the RSPB and WFI is an open secret and what makes it more intriguing is the fact that unlike Railways, the Services Sports Control Board (SSCB) competed at the championships. Both RSPB

and SSCB are members of the WFI. Interestingly, RSPB secretary Prem Chand Lochab is also the secretary-general of the WFI. It all started last year in January when the country's top wrestlers — Olympic medallists Bajrang Punia and Sakshi Malik and multiple World Championships medallist Vinesh Phogat — staged a protest against former WFI president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh accusing him of sexual harassment. A lot has happened since then with Brij Bhushan being sidelined, Sakshi

announcing her retirement and Bajrang and Vinesh joining politics ahead of the Haryana assembly elections. Despite all these changes, the sorry state of affairs in wrestling continues and the Bengaluru tournament exemplified it. "The protest caused irreparable damage to wrestling in the country. The biggest impact was reflected on the Indian wrestlers' show at the 2024 Paris Olympics. Had it not happened, Indian wrestlers would have won at least four medals but unfortunately only one medal could be earned," lamented Sanjay Singh. It's usual for national sports federations (NSFs) to predict medals before every Olympics but not all of them are always on the mark. However, the negative impact of the unrest was clearly visible as only one freestyle wrestler, Aman Sehrawat, managed to qualify for the Paris Games. Since the 2004 Olympics, at least three or more men wrestlers (freestyle and Greco-Roman) have qualified for the Olympics but the number took a nosedive ahead of the 2024 Olympics thus affecting India's medal chances at the quadrennial event.

Rohit Sharma's captaincy pathetic: Ex-selector tears into India skipper in MCG Test

New Delhi. Former India chief selector MSK Prasad has questioned Rohit Sharma's 'ordinary' run with the bat and his 'pathetic' captaincy in the ongoing Border Gavaskar Trophy against Australia. Prasad also drew a link between Rohit's individual batting performance and the team's performance. Rohit managed scores of 6, 3, and 10 in his first three innings batting in the middle order. Rohit's return to the top of the order in Melbourne brought no improvement, as he was dismissed for just 3. His captaincy has also come under scrutiny, with questions raised about his field placements and bowling rotations. Rohit Sharma missed the first Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test, which India

**Mark Waugh questions ICC for being 'lenient' with Virat Kohli in Konstas incident**

New Delhi. Former Australia batter Mark Waugh has slammed the International Cricket Council (ICC), calling its 20 percent fine on Virat Kohli for shoulder barge against Sam Konstas on Day 1 too lenient. "It doesn't matter who you are; that sort of behaviour is unacceptable," Waugh said on Fox Cricket. "He's extremely lucky the penalty was so lenient ... it could easily have been deemed a Level 2 offence." The fine should be at least 75% of the match fee if you're going to impose a monetary penalty. Incidents like this could escalate, involving players or even the crowd, especially in hostile environments. Physical contact of this nature is simply not acceptable."

ICC match referee Andy Pycroft classified the incident as a Level 1 offence, resulting in a 20 percent fine on Kohli's match fee and the addition of a demerit point. Level 1 breaches carry a minimum penalty of an official reprimand and a maximum penalty of 50% of the player's match fee, along with one or

two demerit points. On-field umpires Joel Wilson and Michael Gough, third umpire Sharfuddulla Ibne Shahid, and fourth umpire Shawn Craig brought the charge against Kohli. Kohli was found to have breached Article 2.12 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which pertains to "inappropriate physical contact with a Player, Player Support Personnel, Umpire, Match Referee,

or any other person (including a spectator) during an International Match." The incident occurred at the end of the 10th over of Australia's innings on Day 1 of the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne when Kohli walked up to batter Sam Konstas and negligently bumped shoulders with him.

Kohli admitted to the offence and accepted the sanction proposed by Andy Pycroft of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees, eliminating the need for a formal hearing.

Legendary India cricketer Sunil Gavaskar, speaking on the same pre-match show, expressed hope that Kohli would not be remembered for this incident.

"That's just a slap on the wrist. These players are highly paid professionals, so any fines must serve as a deterrent. I understand the ICC match referee followed the rulebook and the playing conditions, but I hope Kohli, one of the greatest players in the world, is remembered for his incredible achievements with the bat, not for this," Gavaskar said.

Nathan Lyon sledges KL Rahul after batter drops to No.3 for Rohit Sharma

New Delhi. Australia spinner Nathan Lyon sledged India batter KL Rahul during Day 2 of the Boxing Day Test match in Melbourne. When KL Rahul came out to bat at No.3, Lyon asked the batter - what did he do wrong to be demoted in the batting order?

KL Rahul, who has done well as an opener in the tour of Australia, shifted one place down to make way for India captain Rohit Sharma. Rohit, who was batting at No.6, to accommodate Rahul in the opening spot decided to shift up to his natural position after failures in the Adelaide and Brisbane Test. However, the move did not work out for India as Rohit was dismissed after playing just 5 balls. Rohit failed to negotiate a harmless delivery from Pat Cummins and was dismissed after top edging the ball.

Facing a short-of-length delivery outside off, Rohit attempted an awkward pull shot. It was a half-hearted effort, resulting in a mistimed top-edge that ballooned towards mid-on. Scott Boland made no mistake, completing a straightforward catch to send Rohit back to the pavilion. This experiment



of opening alongside Yashasvi Jaiswal, seemingly an effort to revitalise his approach, failed to bear fruit for Rohit as his series scores now read a disappointing 3, 6, 10, and 3. Rohit's struggles against Cummins in Test cricket have become a recurring theme, with the statistics painting a stark picture of his challenges. Rohit has faced 199 deliveries, scoring just 127 runs while being dismissed seven times by Cummins in 13 innings. "That's just a lazy, not switched on, not up for the moment type of shot," Ricky Ponting said on Seven Cricket. "He's been known as one of the best hookers and pullers of the ball since he's made his debut but that's just not there." KL

Rahul on the other hand looked assured for the majority of his innings. Rahul was undone by an absolute ripper from Pat Cummins in the final ball of the second session on Day 2. Cummins got the better of Rahul with an outswinger, when the batter was looking steady at 24 runs off 41 balls. After KL Rahul's dismissal, Virat Kohli and Yashasvi Jaiswal had taken the reins of the innings and had added 90 runs. Kohli was batting at 35* while Jaiswal was closing in on his century.

IND vs AUS: Australia spinner Nathan Lyon sledged KL Rahul after the batter came out at No.3 during India's batting innings at the MCG. Lyon jokingly asked what did Rahul do wrong to be shifted down to No.3 in the batting order.

won by 295 runs in Perth, led by Jasprit Bumrah. Since Rohit returned to the side in Adelaide, things have not gone well for India. As Australia continued to pile on the runs, with Steve Smith reaching his 11th Test century against India, former BCCI chairman of selectors MSK Prasad voiced his frustration during commentary. Prasad strongly criticised Rohit's captaincy, batting, and overall demeanour, describing him as seemingly clueless. You really raised the topic of Rohit Sharma's captaincy. Heading into this series, you know, we had our 3-match series against New Zealand. It was pathetic. It never happened in the history of Indian cricket that we lost back-to-back 3 games. Rohit got absolutely no runs in that series, so he comes into this series. He didn't play the first game. Bumrah led the side very well, so Rohit comes after the backdrop of continuous failures," MSK Prasad said while speaking on commentary on Day 2 of Boxing Day Test.

Manchester United just have to survive: Ruben Amorim on Boxing Day loss vs Wolves

Manchester United must embrace survival mode to break their wretched run after losing for the fourth time in five Premier League games, according to manager Ruben Amorim.

New Delhi. Manchester United manager Ruben Amorim admitted his team must shift to "survival mode" after a 2-0 loss to Wolverhampton Wanderers compounded their Premier League woes. United suffered their fourth loss in five matches to languish in 14th place, just eight points clear of the

relegation zone. The Portuguese manager, who replaced Erik ten Hag six weeks ago, pointed to limited time to train with his players as a key reason for the team's struggles. Amorim has become the first United boss since Walter Crickmer in 1932 to lose five of his first 10 games across all competitions.

"I manage, but I didn't train [the players]," Amorim said. "They need time to adapt to the new style of play. Without results, it's even harder for them to believe in the process. Right now, we just have to survive and win time to work on the team. It's a long journey." "Wolves took the lead through Matheus Cunha's 58th-minute corner, which curled over United goalkeeper André Onana and into the net—a strikingly similar mistake to one made during United's Carabao Cup exit against Tottenham. Wolves manager Vitor Pereira, who has now overseen back-



to-back wins since succeeding Gary O'Neil, credited tactical planning for the goal. "We analysed their weaknesses," Pereira said. "Cunha is a special player who made the difference." United's task was made even harder when captain Bruno Fernandes received a second yellow card two minutes after halftime. Despite their numerical

disadvantage, Amorim noted moments of promise but admitted the team lacked potency even before the red card. "With 10 men, we were near the goal, which is a positive, but we lost," he said. Marcus Rashford was left out for a fourth consecutive match, with Amorim reiterating that the forward is not in his plans. The England international has reportedly sought a "new challenge," and Amorim's post-match comments suggest little chance of reconciliation. "It's always the same reason," Amorim said. "If he's not here, you can make your mind up." When asked about qualifying for European competitions, Amorim dismissed similar aspirations, stressing the need to focus on rebuilding. "We have to work on a lot of things—on and off the pitch. Let's focus on each game and make use of every training session," he said.

Hina Khan

Makes A Comeback To Television With Grahilaxmi Amid Breast Cancer Battle

Popular TV actress Hina Khan, who is currently fighting breast cancer, is making a powerful return to the screen with "Grahilaxmi." Despite her ongoing battle, the actress has decided to keep moving forward. The upcoming gripping drama, centered around power and survival, also stars Chunky Pandey, Rahul Dev, and Dibyendu Bhattacharya. The makers of the show have unveiled its teaser. "Grahilaxmi" tells a compelling story of resilience, survival, and personal transformation. The intense drama will stream on EPIC ON.

In July, Hina announced her return to work for her first assignment since her breast cancer diagnosis. In a heartfelt post, the "Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai" actress wrote, "My first work assignment after my diagnosis. Walking the talk is challenging, especially when facing life's biggest challenges. So, give yourself a break on bad days; it's okay... you deserve it. However, don't forget to live your life on the good days, no matter how few they are. These days still hold importance. Accept the change, embrace the difference, and normalize it."

On June 28, Hina Khan confirmed that she had been diagnosed with stage three breast cancer. Taking to her Instagram, the actress shared a note that read, "Hello everyone, To address the recent rumor, I want to share some important news with all the Hinaholics and everyone who loves and cares for me. I have been diagnosed with stage three breast cancer. Despite this challenging diagnosis, I wish to reassure everyone that I am doing well. I am strong, determined, and fully committed to overcoming this disease. My treatment has already begun, and I am ready to do everything necessary to emerge from this even stronger."

Meanwhile, on the work front, Hina earned significant recognition for her portrayal in "Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai." She is also widely remembered for her negative role as Komolika in "Kasautii Zindagi Kay." She also appeared in the comedy-drama series "Namacool," directed by Ritam Srivastava, as well as "Shinda Shinda No Papa."

Sanjeeda Shaikh

Says Animal Changed Her View Of Rashmika Mandanna: 'With Pushpa 2, My Respect...'

Pushpa 2: The Rule continues to wreak havoc at the box office! It has scripted history as it has crossed the record of Prabhas starrer Baahubali 2: The Conclusion, to emerge as the highest-grossing Indian film of all time. While Allu Arjun's fans continue to gush over his box office standing and mega-stardom, it wouldn't be wrong to state that even Rashmika Mandanna hasn't gone unnoticed. Now, in an exclusive chat with News18 Shows, Sanjeeda Shaikh too can't stop raving about Rashmika. She

and Kyaa Hoga Nimmo Kaa actor remarks, "I thought she was really good and graceful in Animal. That one scene she had with Ranbir in the film changed my idea of her and she came in the category of a very good performer. And then I watched her in Pushpa 2 and my respect for her increased even more." Lauding Rashmika for managing to capture the audience's attention in an Allu Arjun film, Sanjeeda adds, "I like watching good performances. Pushpa 2 is an Allu Arjun film but for Rashmika to stand out and make her mark was laudable. She performed her scenes so effortlessly! That one scene where she answers back to everyone that yeh mera husband hai was so beautifully done. She really left an impact on me."

As for Sanjeeda, she too is infused with the spirit to take her career a notch higher in 2025. And she has no qualms about having 'smaller parts' anymore. "I'm okay with it. One matures with age. When you spend enough time in the industry, you understand how it works. I know what I can do and what I can't, as an actor. When I was doing TV, I only wanted to play lead characters. Once I saw progression in myself, I became confident. When you know that you've the ability to stand out and be noticed no matter what you do, your whole perspective changes," she says.

exclaims, "The last film I watched was Pushpa 2. I loved it! I never thought that I'm competing with my contemporaries but I've this new-found love for Rashmika." But her 'admiration' for Rashmika began with Animal, which hit the screens last year. Sanjeeda says, "Earlier, I used to see her on social media a lot but after watching a couple of her performances, especially in Animal, my perspective changed." Pointing out the sequence of Rashmika's confrontation scene with Ranbir Kapoor in the film, the Heeramandi



Gauahar Khan And Zaid Darbar Celebrate 4 Years Of Love



Gauahar Khan and Zaid Darbar, one of the most loved celebrity pairs, marked four years of their marriage on December 25. To make the occasion extra special, the Bigg Boss 7 winner took to her social media handle and treated her Instafam with a collage video featuring moments of their journey together. The clip depicted significant major milestones in their relationship, capturing adorable pictures from their wedding day to their exciting pregnancy journey. Sharing the post, Gauahar penned down a heartfelt note that reads, "No matter what the chronology, my memories of the last four years with you have only been, All Heart!!!! I love you, husband. Thank you for being my greatest source of joy, support, and peace! Allahumma Baarak Fee Happy anniversary, Jaanu! #25thdecember."

Zaid, on the other hand, posted a few moments from their fourth wedding anniversary celebrations. In a video, the couple fed cake to each other. The highlight of the clip was a sweet lip kiss between them. As it moves forward, we see Zaid playing with his son's toy. Sharing the video, Zaid wrote, "My world #happyanniversary Jaanu."

As soon as the posts were shared online, the comment section was flooded with reactions from fans and celebs alike. Zaid's brother Awez Darbar wrote, "Happy happy Anniversary aap dono ko dekh kar mera bhi mani ho raha hai... Ab main bhi karlu shaadi." Actor Sandeep Goyat wrote, "Happy anniversary Stay happy and blessed." TV actor Gautam Rode wrote, "Happy anniversary both of you." Gauahar got married to Zaid, the son of renowned music composer Ismail Darbar, on December 25, 2020. The duo announced the pregnancy in December 2022 and welcomed their first child, a son named Zehaan in May 2023. Meanwhile, on the work front, Gauahar is currently starring in the show Fauji 2, which airs on DD National. Backed by Sandeep Singh, the show is a sequel to the iconic 1989 series Fauji, which featured Shah Rukh Khan in his debut role.

Apart from this, she is seen in Ravi Dubey and Sargun Mehta's show Lovely Lolla alongside Isha Malviya, Dolly Ahluwalia and Nikhil Khurana.

Ananya Panday Devours A Burger In Kho Gaye Hum Kahan BTS; Siddhant, Adarsh Goof Around



Kho Gaye Hum Kahan, the coming-of-age drama starring Ananya Panday, Siddhant Chaturvedi, and Adarsh Gourav, has officially completed one year since its release in 2023. To mark the special milestone, Adarsh took to Instagram to share a series of behind-the-scenes moments, offering fans a glimpse into the camaraderie and fun shared by the cast. The BTS photos captured the trio in various candid and goofy moments. In one picture, Adarsh and Siddhant are seated on a sofa with Ananya perched playfully on their legs. Another photo features Ananya enjoying a burger with her eyes closed, embracing her inner foodie. Adarsh even shared a snapshot of himself sitting in a tub of water, along with other cheerful moments of the cast bonding on set.

Reflecting on the film's anniversary, Adarsh wrote a heartfelt caption, celebrating the memories and friendships the film brought him. "1 year to the film that's given me so many core memories, good friends, and an experience of a lifetime," he wrote. He also expressed gratitude to the film's team, including director Arjun Varain Singh, producers Zoya Akhtar and Excel Movies, and the casting team, for believing in him to portray a gym enthusiast. "Grateful to @arjunvarain.singh and @zoieakhtar @excelmovies @nandinishrikentcasting @karan_mally for trusting me to play a gym bro when I looked nothing like one when I started out," he added.

Adarsh also thanked his fitness trainers for helping him undergo a significant transformation for the role and shared how much he missed working with his co-stars, Ananya Panday and Siddhant Chaturvedi, calling the film an "extremely special" project. Siddhant Chaturvedi responded to the post with a red heart emoji, while fans flooded the comments with love for the film. Comments included, "Forever my favorite film," and "This was a cool movie... will get rich by time." Others expressed their plans to rewatch the film, with one fan calling it their New Year's ritual. Kho Gaye Hum Kahan was a poignant coming-of-age drama that delved into the complexities of friendship, self-discovery, and navigating adulthood in the digital age.