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Formation of Cong govt in Delhi will end 11 yrs of corruption, destruction

Sanjay Kumar

New Delhi, Jan 07: New Delhi, Delhi Congress chief Devender Yadav on Tuesday said that the formation of a "people-friendly"



Congress government after February 8 will pave the way for Delhi's development and end 11 years of corruption and destruction by the BJP and A governments. Yadav's reaction came just after the Election Commission of India announced that the assembly polls in Delhi will be held on February 5 and the votes counted on February 8.

Congress have been announced. Today, the dates have also been announced when Delhi will become pollution free, garbage-free, the national capital will be free from crime and Yamuna river will be cleaned," Yadav stated. He further claimed that the date has also been announced when the Congress government will implement the '2,500 Pyari Didi Yojna'. This means that the time has been decided for the people of Delhi who are eager to see the Congress government in the national capital. The date has also been announced when the 'Sheesh Mahal' will be opened to the public, where a poor family will be allowed to stay every day, he said. Qazi Mohammad Nizamuddin, AICC In-charge of Delhi, said that on February 8, people will fulfil their 'Congress Hai Jaruri' demand in Delhi. "It will be a big day for the people of Delhi when they will see the end of 11 years of corruption and destruction by the BJP and A governments.

Delhi to vote on February 5, counting on February 8: CEC Rajiv Kumar

Simmi Kaur Babbar

New Delhi, Jan. 07: Assembly polls in Delhi will be held on February 5 and the votes counted on February 8, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar announced on Tuesday. The last date to file nominations is January 17 and the scrutiny of nominations will be done by January 18. Candidates will be able to withdraw their nominations till January 20. "It is a single-phase election... We have deliberately kept polling on a Wednesday so more people come out to vote... like we did in Maharashtra," Kumar said at a press conference. Bypolls to two assembly constituencies - Milkipur in Uttar Pradesh and Erode in Tamil Nadu - will also be held according to the same schedule. Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar on Tuesday urged candidates and political party leaders to refrain from making remarks against women and involving children during poll campaigns. Kumar, who was addressing a press conference to announce the assembly poll schedule in Delhi, was asked about the recent comment made by BJP leader Ramesh Bidhuri against Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. Bidhuri, the BJP candidate

from Kalkaji, sparked controversy when he had said he would make the roads in his constituency "like Priyanka Gandhi's cheeks", if elected. While not tak-



ing names, Kumar said the Election Commission would ensure no remarks were made against women when the Model Code of Conduct was in force. "Any remarks against women should not be made, we have issued very strict guidelines... We condemn this but only when Model Code of Conduct is in place,"

he said. "Children should not be associated (with campaigns) at all... We will not allow anti-women remarks," he added. "On one hand we are trying to bring more and more women to the booth... If you speak in such a manner about mothers and sisters, it is shameful," he said. The Election Commission will write to the cabinet secretary, informing that no Delhi-specific provision can be made in the Union Budget that can disturb the level-playing field, CEC Rajiv Kumar said on Tuesday. Polling for the 70-member Delhi Assembly will be held on February 5 and the votes counted on February 8, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Kumar announced. Responding to a query about the Union Budget, scheduled days ahead of the polls, Kumar said, "We will write to the cabinet secretary that no Delhi-specific provision can be made in the Union Budget that can disturb the level-playing field." The last date to file nominations is January 17 and the scrutiny of nominations will be done by January 18. Candidates will be able to withdraw their nominations till January 20. Bypolls to two assembly constituencies - Milkipur in Uttar Pradesh and Erode in Tamil Nadu - will also be held according to the same schedule.

'Daraarvadi', 'Hridayheen': Akhilesh coins new sobriquets to target BJP

ST Correspondent

Lucknow, Jan. 07: Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Tuesday coined two new sobriquets - "Daraarvadi" (divisive) and "Hridayheen" (heartless) - to target the Bharatiya Janata Party in Uttar Pradesh. Speaking to reporters at the party office here, Yadav said, "These BJP people in power are not in favour of brotherhood. It is a 'Daraarvadi' party. Human life does not hold any value for them, because they only want to use it to derive political benefits." "If you see BJP's work, you will notice how 'Hridayheen' it is. It doesn't have sympathy towards anyone. Many incidents are occurring in Uttar Pradesh despite the BJP's tall claims of running a zero-tolerance government,"



Yadav said. Claiming that there are two sides to the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh, the Samajwadi Party (SP) chief said, "One is injustice towards PDA, and the second is corruption, with both surpassing each other from time to time. To hide the imbalance, the BJP hatched a conspiracy to orchestrate violence in Sambhal. It was also done to hide the loot during the recent bypolls at Kundark and Meerapur." 'PDA' is an acronym coined by Yadav for 'picchde, Dalit, alpankhyak' (backwards, Dalits and minorities). Yadav also claimed that the leader of opposition in state Assembly, Mata Prasad Pandey, wanted to visit Sambhal and speak to the people there, but the BJP government imposed prohibitory orders. "However, when they (SP delegation) went for a second time, the same administration allowed them. It is not clear what the government wanted to hide," he said. Violence erupted in Sambhal during a survey on November 24 last year, as protesters gathered near the Shahi Jama Masjid and clashed with the security personnel, leaving four dead and several injured. "The government used its officials to trigger the violence in Sambhal. Otherwise, what was the urgency to conduct the survey," the SP chief asked. "You cannot conduct such surveys under the Places of Worship Act. Yet the government and its officials went ahead with it.

One Nation One Election: Parliamentary panel to hold first meeting today

New Delhi, Jan 07: The parliamentary panel constituted to scrutinise the two simultaneous election bills will hold its first meeting on Wednesday, with officials of the Law and Justice Ministry scheduled to brief its members on the provisions of the proposed laws. The 39-member joint committee of Parliament is headed by BJP MP P P Chaudhary and includes members of all major parties, including Priyanka Gandhi Vadra of the Congress, Sanjay Jha of the JD(U), Shiv Sena's Shrikant Shinde, AAP's Sanjay Singh and TMC's Kalyan Banerjee. Chaudhary is a former minister of state for law. The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill were introduced in the Lok Sabha during the Winter Session and referred to the committee. The government decided to increase the committee's strength from 31 to 39 as more political parties expressed the desire to be part of the exercise to examine the two draft legislations on simultaneous elections. Former Union ministers Anurag Thakur, Parshotam Rupala and Manish Tewari and several first-term lawmakers, including Bansuri Swaraj and Sambit Patra, are also members of the committee.

Centre earmarks site for memorial of Pranab Mukherjee

Navdeep Singh Sahni

New Delhi, Jan 07: The Narendra Modi government on Tuesday earmarked a designated site within the 'Rashtriya Smriti' complex, a part of the Rajghat precinct, for erecting a "samadhi" (memorial) of former President Pranab Mukherjee, PTI reported. "The Competent Authority has approved the earmarking of a designated site within the 'Rashtriya Smriti' complex (a part of the Rajghat precinct) for erecting a Samadhi of Late Shri Pranab Mukherjee, former President of India," the government said in a letter to Sharmistha Mukherjee informing her of the decision. Pranab Mukherjee, awarded India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna, served as President of India from 2012 to 2017. He passed away in 2020 at the age of 84. Sharmistha Mukherjee, the daughter of the late former President, took to X and

thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the gesture. "Called on PM Narendra Modi ji to express thanks & gratitude from



core of my heart for his govts' decision to create a memorial for baba. It's more cherished considering that we didn't ask for it. Immensely touched by this unexpected but truly gracious gesture by PM," Mukherjee said. "Baba used to say that State honours shouldn't be asked for, it

should be offered. I'm so grateful that PM Modi did this to honour babas' memory. It doesn't affect baba where he is now - beyond applaud or criticism. But for his daughter, words are not sufficient to express my joy," she added. Pranab Mukherjee's son Abhijit too hailed the government's move, saying, "It is a great day for the family, West Bengal, Congress and others. Pranab Mukherjee belongs to all." "I also expect Pranab Mukherjee's home state, West Bengal to do something...I will send a thanks letter to him (PM Modi)...I am very happy that Congress stalwarts like former PM Manmohan Singh, former President Pranab Mukherjee are getting recognised by the party and the government," he added. Sharmistha Mukherjee had recently attacked Congress after it accused the BJP-led Centre of "insulting" former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh by conducting his state funeral at Delhi's Nigambodh Ghat.

Atishi claims Centre 'snatched away' her official house

Tejinder Kaur Babbar

New Delhi, Jan 07: Delhi chief minister Atishi on Tuesday alleged that the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Centre evicted her out of the official chief minister's residence, a day before the Election Commission announced the schedule for the assembly elections in the capital. "The schedule for Delhi elections was announced today. Last night, the BJP-led central government, for the second time in three months, threw me out of my official residence, which has been allotted to me as being the CM. They cancelled the allotment of the CM residence through a letter and snatched away the residence from an elected CM of an elected govt," PTI quoted Atishi as saying. Continuing her attack on the BJP, the chief minister added, "They did the same thing three months back. When I was elected as the CM, the belongings of me and my family were thrown on the streets. BJP thinks

they will stop our work by snatching our houses, abusing us and making below-the-belt remarks about our families. But, I want to tell people of Delhi that the work won't stop even if they take away our home." Atishi's allegations were supported



ed by her cabinet colleague Saurabh Bharadwaj, who said, "BJP doesn't care to work for the people of Delhi. They don't care if children are getting education, or if people are getting electricity. All they

do is to do something against AAP leaders. Today, BJP has done something that we couldn't think of. BJP has once again removed Delhi CM Atishi's belongings from his official residence. You all must remember when they did it earlier as well. I don't think this would have happened anywhere in the world before." BJP's IT cell head Amit Malviya rejected Atishi's charges, saying, "Delhi Chief Minister Atishi Marlena is LYING. She was allotted SheeshMahal on 11-Oct-2024. She hasn't still occupied it because she doesn't want to offend Arvind Kejriwal. Hence, the allotment was withdrawn and two more bungalows have been offered to her, instead." Malviya shared a purported letter issued by the Delhi government's Public Works Department which said, "Under these circumstances and aforesaid reasons, the offer of allotment of Bungalow No. 6, Flag

Staff Road, issued to Ms. Atishi, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Delhi vide letter no FA/6 Flag Staff Road/PWD&H/2024/1472-73 dated 11-10-2024 by Public Works Department Secretariat, Govt. of NCT of Delhi stands withdrawn, with immediate effect. In the light of withdrawal of offer letter dated 11.10.2024, it is further proposed by PWD to offer two bungalows viz bungalow No. 2 at 8 Raj Niwas Lane, Civil Lines, New Delhi & bungalow No. 115 at Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi to choose one, for which a separate 'offer letter' will be issued to Ms. Atishi, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Delhi." The Election Commission on Tuesday announced that the assembly election in Delhi will be held in a single phase on February 5, and result will be declared on February 8. "It is a single-phase election... We have deliberately kept polling on a Wednesday so more people come out to vote... like we did in Maharashtra," CEC Rajiv Kumar said at a press conference.

Abuse me or call me Dawood, but help Delhi farmers: Chouhan

Naresh Malhotra

New Delhi, Jan. 07: Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday urged Delhi Chief Minister Atishi to implement central government farmer welfare schemes in the national capital, saying he was willing to weather personal attacks if it benefits Delhi's farming community. "Abuse me or call me Dawood, it does not make any difference to me, but implement the farmer welfare schemes of the Government of India for the farmers of Delhi, give them the benefit of the schemes," Chouhan said in a meeting with a group of Delhi-based farmers here. He requested the Delhi CM to submit proposals immediately and take central funds for implementation of the central schemes. Chouhan's reference to Dawood Ibrahim, the notorious gangster, appeared to be a response to previous criticisms from Delhi's leadership. "I don't mind if you abuse me, but give the benefits of the schemes to the

farmers... It is not in my nature to abuse anyone. With folded hands request you to implement the schemes," he said. Several central government schemes meant for farmer welfare have faced implementation hurdles in



Delhi, the minister said, adding that he had written to Delhi CM flagging this issue recently. "I am saying with great pain that the farmers of Delhi are not getting the benefit of many schemes of the central government. Farmers

are not getting the benefit of subsidy being provided by the Centre," he said. The implementation of central government agricultural schemes in Delhi has been a point of contention between the Centre and the Delhi government. Several farmers at the meeting highlighted their exclusion from crucial programmes available in neighbouring states. Captain Kanwarlal Dagar, former national president, Bharatiya Kisan Union, said, "The farmer of Delhi, once considered the king of India, has become the most backward in the country, despite three master plans implemented over the last 40-50 years." Unlike farmers in neighbouring states, Delhi's agricultural community is excluded from crucial central government programmes such as the soil health scheme and crop insurance initiatives, said Satyawandehi, a farmer from Darya Pur Kalan village in northwest Delhi. They are also unable to access the substantial subsidies available for drip irrigation systems that farmers in adjacent states enjoy, he said, adding that while other states have implemented solar schemes to support agriculture, Delhi lacks such provisions.

Collegium recommends Patna HC CJ K Vinod Chandran as top court judge

New Delhi, Jan 07: The Supreme Court collegium on Tuesday recommended Patna High Court Chief Justice K Vinod Chandran to be appointed as a judge of the apex court. The five-judge collegium led by Chief Justice of

compared to the sanctioned strength of 34 judges. Supreme Court judge Justice C T Ravikumar demitted office on January 3. "He has served as a judge of the high court for more than 11 years and as a chief justice of a



big high court for more than a year. During his long tenure as a judge and chief justice of the high court, Justice Chandran has acquired significant experience in diverse fields of law," said the collegium resolution. The apex court collegium also comprising Justices B R Gavai, Surya Kant, Hrishikesh Roy and Abhay Oka said Justice Chandran stood at number 13 in the combined all-India seniority list of high court judges. "In the seniority of judges hailing from the high court of Kerala, Justice K Vinod Chandran stands at serial number 1. While recommending his name, the collegium has taken into consideration the fact that there is no representation on the bench of the Supreme Court from the High Court of Kerala. The collegium has, therefore, unanimously recommended that Justice K Vinod Chandran be appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court of India," the resolution said.

NEWS BOX

Mocha Mousse: Warm, versatile hue transforming 2025 home decor

CHENNAI. As the years pass by, the one thing that has seen a significant rise is the investment one makes in their homes and spaces. Be it in the form of premium finishes, the vibe that the space brings out or making conscious sustainable decisions. With the New Year being here, so is Pantone colour of the year! It is Mocha Mousse — a warm hug-like brown that so effortlessly pairs with just about any colour. A colour that depicts comfort and helps creating spaces that feel good while establishing core connections. There are numerous ways this hue can be incorporated in your spaces this year; let's breakdown each one for you. The colour of this year is perfect when we are recreating or designing wellness-like spaces. Infused with an earth undertone, mocha mousse will be a hot favourite in bedrooms and rightly so. This colour can be incorporated as soft bedding or used to colour drench the space, either way when combined with olive tones it would reflect nature in the most glorious form. Mocha mousse can be the star of the show here, accent walls in this cosy hue will breathe comfort into your spaces instantly. When paired with a luxe plush sofa set and armchairs, along with textures of natural wood, you have made for yourself the cosiest lounge space. Think cabinetry, backsplashes, island counters. Mocha mousse adds warmth, making the space welcoming and following the in-vogue scheme of colours. Kitchens with mocha mousse when paired with white quartz countertop, keeps the space light and modern. Brushed brass and black hardware can also be added to create the required edge. Workspaces have become one of the most personalised spaces in the recent times, owing to the awareness that a well-designed personal.

Conman arrested for extortion attempt using ED officer's name in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD. The Hyderabad zonal office of the Directorate of Enforcement conducted searches on January 3 under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 and seized multiple SIM cards and mobile phones from the residence of alleged conman Sandeep Desai. The SIM cards and phones are believed to have been used in fraudulent activities targeting individuals under ED investigation. The January 3 searches were a follow-up to the ED's searches of two premises of CSK Realtors Ltd. and Singh Mansions Pvt. Ltd in Hyderabad on December 19, 2024.

Following the searches, Desai allegedly contacted Suresh Kumar Agarwal, the managing director of CSK Realtors and attempted to extort money. Desai arranged a meeting at a five-star hotel in Hyderabad, introducing himself as "Rakesh" and claiming to be a relative of an ED officer. He allegedly demanded a large sum to mediate with ED officials. Based on a written complaint from Agarwal, the ED launched an investigation. Surveillance and CCTV footage led the ED team to Desai.

During questioning, Desai admitted to the extortion attempt, falsely claiming connections with ED officers.

Stand-up comedian Rajat Chauhan reflects on his road to success

HYDERABAD. It's not every day that you meet someone like Rajat Chauhan, a stand-up comedian whose journey from nervous open-mic nights to packed shows across the country is as inspiring as it is entertaining. But Rajat will be the first to tell you that the road to comedy stardom is anything but easy. "I remember my first open-mic in Mumbai, I was very nervous. The slot was for four minutes, but it felt like an eternity. And then, when a joke didn't land as I wanted it to — the silence was brutal. It hits you like a wave, and you feel every second stretch on forever," he begins, and a nostalgic smile lights up his face. Yet, even in those early days, Rajat found a glimmer of encouragement. "The Mumbai crowd is amazing. Even if you're struggling, they'll clap and cheer, just to keep your spirits up. That support made all the difference for me," the comedian further adds. Comedy wasn't something Rajat set out to do professionally. "I was always the funny guy in the group, in school, college, and even later, people would say, 'You're hilarious, you should try stand-up' and then I thought everyone is telling me to do stand-up, then there'll be something for sure and with that thought I started doing stand-up," he shares. Rajat doesn't shy away from admitting that not every show is a hit. "Out of ten shows, two might leave you questioning everything, and it's the part of the process. You ask yourself, 'Was it my delivery? Was it just an off night?' And then you go back, analyse, and work on getting better," he says with a shrug.

Over the years, Rajat has grown to love performing in different cities, but Hyderabad holds a special place in his heart. "Hyderabad has one of the best audiences, we do new age comedy and we tell our story through that and the audience relates.

Kerala State School Arts Festival: For SKV HSS students in Palode, Kalolsavam and money matter

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. A school tucked away in remote Palode in Thiruvananthapuram, sharing borders with hilly terrains and sprawling plantation space. A school where most students are from economically weaker sections and which itself is not affluent to fund its projects. Yet, SKV HSS in Nanniyode will not compromise on the opportunities it offers students. This Kalolsavam, 52 of its students are participating in 12 events, and are racking up 'A' grades in individual as well as group events, after months of practice for perfection.

However, every year, before they embark on the quest to be the best, the school and students have to take up another challenge — raising money for the props, costumes, trainers and everything else they would require for the fest. "Participation in the Kalolsavam requires a minimum of Rs 6 lakh if we avoid star events like group dance. We have to shell out anywhere from Rs 50,000 to Rs 2 lakh for events like vattappattu, poorakkali, parichamuttu and drama," says political science teacher Aneesh M S, who also coordinates youth festival training and activities. Before Kalolsavam 2022, the school registered participation in stray individual events. After 2022, the students were motivated to take the Kalolsavam seriously.

However, funds remained a bother. Since most students are children of plantation workers, seeking money from them is not an option, says



Aneesh. "The school too lacks the wherewithal to fund it fully. So, we organise events such as scrap challenge and coupon challenge to raise money," he says. The training begins seven to eight months before the fest, when trainers arrive periodically to impart lessons. "The trainers must be of high quality for the students to win prizes at the Kalolsavam. They know our situation and hence, provide services on economical rates," says Aneesh.

"In between the training and classes, we split into groups, go out, and collect scrap from houses, which is then sold to raise money for the festival. This time, we conducted a coupon challenge and raised around Rs 1.5 lakh," says Ajin Krishna M S, a Class 12 student of SKV HSS competing in ottanthullal and other group events.

The remaining money is pooled in by the management, teachers, and students. However,

the students' activities ease the burden of the school and parents," says Aneesh.

From finishing 19th at the HSS district level and sending no students to the state level in 2022, then finishing third in the district level and sending 52 students for 11 events in 2023-24, to being adjudged overall winner at the district level and sending 52 students for 12 contests this year, the school and its students have come a long way.

"Yet, we can only encourage participation in group items. For rare individual participation, like Ajin's in ottanthullal, we pool in money," says Aneesh. Ajin's father works in a petrol bunk. Meanwhile, his exposure to ottanthullal has opened up avenues Ajin says he would like to explore after studies. The best trainers from across the state are brought to us. Thus, we learn nuances we would otherwise not know," he says.

Kerala: CPI raises a toast to comrades, with rider

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. In a first-of-its-kind move by a communist party, the Kerala unit of the CPI has freed its cadre from the age-old taboo of overconsumption of alcohol, but with a rider — don't overdo it. In a new code of conduct approved by the party state council, the CPI has advised its leaders and cadre to "refrain from habitual drinking" and "not to tarnish the reputation of the party by being in a drunken state in public places".

Till now, there was a blanket ban on CPI workers consuming alcohol. However, CPI's fraternal organisation, the CPM, continues with its rigid stand against alcoholism. The CPM expels its cadre once it's proved that they consumed alcohol.

It was in its 1992 special national organisational conference in Thrissur that the CPI passed its first code of conduct. The party has revised the stand after 33 years. The new code of conduct, in possession of, however, clarifies that abstinence from alcohol is the CPI policy.



"We should protect the moral values of society, and also be a model for others by way of our personal life. The cadre should, through their behavior, earn the respect and trust of the public," the new model code said. "The party workers and masses expect a communist party worker, especially in an elected party post, to work as a model politician upholding Leninist organisational principles," the new model code said. There was no criticism of the new

instructions in the party executive. "It is a stance taken to keep with the changing times," a senior CPI leader told TNIE on condition of anonymity. "If we decide to take a tough stand, where will we find cadre? The times have changed. We cannot prohibit anything, only control and reduce its impact," he said.

The new model code also instructed the cadre to lead a simple life and set a model to other party workers. People's representatives, from MLAs to local body members, should not approach the government with recommendations related to subjects of corruption and allegations.

"No one should pressurise or influence the government which is against the view and position of the party. MPs and MLAs should attend parliament and assembly sessions and report the summary of the proceedings to the party and the public. Cadre should not accept dowry. They should not be part of any rituals or programmes propagating superstition.

Heavy police presence at Dharmapuri Collectorate as residents protest panchayat merger with municipality

DHARMAPURI. Preempting a possible protest in the collectorate by residents of A Jettihalli, Thadangam, Elakkiyampatti, and Sogathur opposing the merger of their panchayats with the Dharmapuri municipality, a huge posse of police was deployed at the collectorate premises on Monday. Further, officers brought five representatives from each panchayat in a police vehicle to submit a petition during the weekly grievances meeting and dropped them back home. Hundreds from A Jettihalli, Thadangam, Elakkiyampatti, and Sogathur panchayats have been visiting the collectorate in the last few days to submit petitions registering their objection to being part of Dharmapuri Municipality. On Monday, police received a tip-off that a large gathering would be at the collectorate.

As a precaution, over 70 police officers were deployed in front of the Collectorate. Speaking to, R Adhimoolum, a resident of Thadangam said, "People have not accepted the merger with the municipality. It will cripple the livelihood of farmers and farm labourers." S Gowamma, from A Jettihalli, said, "The state government never asked us if we want to be part of the municipality.

They just passed a GO and we are opposing it. Seeing the large number of police personnel gathering makes us feel like criminals," she said. When spoke to police officials stationed in the collectorate they said, "It is merely a precaution. If more than a hundred people gather, it would affect traffic flow and disrupt the proceedings of the grievance day meeting. Usually, only five people are allowed to represent the people because of limited space in the collectorate." In A Jettihalli, the residents staged a protest outside the panchayat office condemning the merger.

Tiruchy corporation lost about Rs 7 crore clearing airport waste, shows RTI data

TIRUCHY. The Tiruchy municipal corporation has been losing significant revenue even as the Airports Authority of India shifted its burden of clearing garbage generated at the international airport here to the former in violation of rules, revealed an RTI enquiry filed by The New Indian Express. The RTI response from the Tiruchy airport authorities also revealed the municipal corporation was not paid a single penny over the years for removing the garbage. The reply also confirmed the airport has violated the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016, (SWM 2016) of the Government of India. Highly placed sources said the Tiruchy corporation lost about Rs 7 crore due to this mismanagement (from 2017 onwards). According to SWM 2016, an entity generating over 100 kg of waste per day must establish its own recycling facility. Responding to the RTI query filed by TNIE, Airport Director and Public Information Officer G Gopalakrishnan said, "Tiruchy airport roughly generates about 750 kg of waste daily.

As a stopgap arrangement, the waste is presently being cleared by the Tiruchy corporation." The director added that the airport would soon start the operation of



a solid waste plant that can handle 1 tonne of waste per day. To the RTI query, "If the Tiruchy airport is giving waste to Tiruchy city corporation, how much money is it paying per month or year," the airport director said 'NIL.' Although TNIE asked whether the airport got any exception under SWM Rules, 2016, for passing the waste to Tiruchy corporation, the airport director was unable to point out any such exceptions. Highly placed sources in the corporation said the Tiruchy corporation, from 2017 onwards, insisted the airport establish a solid waste management system, but the airport keeps on pushing this matter,

citing various excuses. "It is a major transport location and an iconic spot. Thus, the corporation avoided taking action on the airport," a source said. This generosity of the local body compelled it to take the waste burden of the airport at a heavy loss. Ironically, the Tiruchy airport is one of the most profitable airports, recording a profit of about Rs 50 crore in the 2023-24 financial year. But instead of levying tax on such profit-making entities, the local body condoned its solid waste management violations. When TNIE raised this issue with Tiruchy Corporation Commissioner V Saravanan,

Long-delayed Mulanthuruthy rail overbridge set to be opened to public soon

KOCHI. A serpentine queue of vehicles, especially during peak hours, is a common sight on the Mulanthuruthy-Chengolappadam stretch. For the key route has a railway line cutting across it. While the construction of a rail overbridge (RoB) started over a decade ago, the works got much delayed due to issues like land acquisition. Finally, the construction of the Rs 20.77-crore structure is nearing completion and is set to be thrown open to the public early next month, providing huge relief to the residents there and also the long-distance commuters travelling from Ernakulam to Kottayam and nearby regions via Chottanikkara. "Heavy traffic congestion

is a usual sight here, especially during the Sabarimala pilgrimage season. A lot of pilgrims visit the Chottanikkara temple and then proceed to the hill shrine. The railway gate (level cross 12) used to be closed at short intervals since it is located on the busy Ernakulam-Kottayam section. Frequent closures for maintenance works made things worse. Hence a RoB was a much-needed facility, the work on which incurred a long delay," said Reji A C, a local resident. Interestingly, the railways built the central structure on its land as early as 2013. However, the work on the approach roads, extending 450 m, got prolonged and the construction started only in December 2022.



"Land acquisition was a major issue. Some landowners moved the court over disparities in compensation and the estimate had to be increased. When the process was finally completed in September 2019

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Pope Francis names first woman to head major Vatican office

Rome, Jan. 07: Pope Francis on Monday named the first woman to head a major Vatican office, appointing an Italian nun, Sister Simona Brambilla, to become prefect of the department responsible for all the Catholic Church's religious orders. The appointment marks a major step in Francis' aim to give women more leadership roles in governing the church. While women have been named to No. 2 spots in some Vatican offices, never before has a woman been named prefect of a dicastery or congregation of the Holy See Curia, the central governing organ of the Catholic Church. The historic nature of Brambilla's appointment was confirmed by Vatican Media, which headlined its report "Sister Simona Brambilla is the first woman prefect in the Vatican". The office is one of the most important in the Vatican. Known officially as the Dicastery for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, it is responsible for every religious order, from the Jesuits and Franciscans to smaller newer movements. In an indication of the novelty of the appointment, and the theological implications involved, Francis simultaneously named as a co-leader, or "pro-prefect," a cardinal: Ángel Fernández Artime, a Salesian. But the appointment, announced in the Vatican daily bulletin, lists Brambilla first as

"prefect" and Fernández second as her co-leader, which theologically is necessary since the prefect must be able to celebrate Mass and perform other sacramental functions that currently can only be done by men. Brambilla, 59, is a member of the Consolata Missionaries religious order and had served as the No. 2 in the religious orders department since last year. She takes over from the retiring Cardinal Joao Braz de Aviz, 77. Francis made Brambilla's appointment possible with his 2022 reform of the Holy See's founding constitution, which allowed laypeople, including women, to head a dicastery and become prefects. Brambilla, a nurse, worked as a missionary in Mozambique and led her Consolata order as superior from 2011-2023, when Francis made her secretary of the religious orders department. Her appointment is the latest move by Francis to show by example how women can take leadership roles within the Catholic hierarchy, albeit without allowing them to be ordained as priests. Catholic women do much of the church's work in schools, hospitals and passing down the faith to future generations. But

they have long complained of second-class status in an institution that reserves the priesthood for men. Francis has upheld the ban on female priests and tamped down



hoping that women could be ordained as deacons. But there has been a marked increase in the percentage of women working in the Vatican during his papacy, including in leadership positions, from 19.3% in 2013 to 23.4% today, according to statistics reported by Vatican News. In the Curia alone, the percentage of women is 26%. Among the women holding leadership positions are Sister Raffaella Petrini, the first-ever female secre-

tary general of the Vatican City State, responsible for the territory's health care system, police force and main source of revenue, the Vatican Museums, which are led by a laywoman, Barbara Jatta. Another nun, Sister Alessandra Smerilli, is the No. 2 in the Vatican development office while several women have been appointed to under-secretary positions, including the French nun, Sister Nathalie Becquart, in the synod of bishops' office. Pope wraps up busy Christmas season by calling for culture of welcome in Christian communities: Pope Francis wrapped up a busy Christmas season on Monday by calling for the faithful to promote a culture of welcome and integration in their communities and reject discrimination. Francis presided over Mass in St. Peter's Basilica to mark Epiphany. According to the Bible, the feast marks the day that three wise men guided by a star came to visit the newborn Jesus. Francis said the star, in guiding humanity to God, doesn't discriminate among ethnic, linguistic or national groups and is there for all. "We do well to meditate on this today, in a world in which individuals and nations are equipped with ever more powerful means of communication, and yet seem to have

become less willing to understand, accept and encounter others in their diversity!" he said in his homily. God, he said, calls on Christians to reject anything that discriminates or excludes and discards people. He called instead for promoting "a strong culture of welcome, in which the narrow places of fear and denunciation are replaced by open spaces of encounter, integration and sharing of life; safe spaces where everyone can find warmth and shelter." Francis has long preached the Gospel-mandated need to welcome the stranger, applying it to migrants in particular. The Epiphany Mass marked the end of a particularly busy Christmas season for Francis that also coincided with the start of the 2025 Holy Year. The once-ever-quarter-celebration of Christianity is expected to bring more than 30 million pilgrims to Rome over the next 12 months. The 88-year-old pope has a daunting schedule ahead greeting and ministering to them, alongside his other papal duties. And while he is wrapping up the Christmas season with Epiphany, he still has a busy week ahead. He'll deliver his annual foreign policy speech to the Holy See's diplomatic corps, host a final meeting with President Joe Biden and preside over the baptism of babies in the Sistine Chapel.

Congo will execute over 170 people convicted of armed robbery

Kinshasa, Jan. 07: More than 170 inmates on death row were flown from Congo's capital to a high-security prison in the north where they will be executed, Congolese authorities said. Seventy of the convicts were transported on Sunday, Congolese Minister of Justice Constant Mutamba said, adding to 102 other prisoners who have already been sent to Angenga prison in the northern Mongala province. The men have been convicted of armed robbery and are locally known as "Kulunas" or "urban bandits". They're aged between 18 and 35, Mutamba said in a statement. He did not say when the executions would take place. Some have welcomed the measure as a means of restoring order and security in the cities, while others are concerned about the risks of abuse and human rights violations. "We welcome this decision by the minister because it will help put an end to urban crime. From 8 pm onwards, you can't move around freely because you're afraid of running into a Kuluna," said Fiston Kakule, a resident of the eastern city of Goma. Espoir Muhinuka, a human rights activist, warned of the possibility of extrajudicial executions and called for a strict respect for judicial procedures and fundamental guarantees. He fears that political pressure could lead to unjust convictions and arbitrary executions. "The situation in the DRC is complex and requires a multidimensional approach. The fight against urban gangs must go hand in hand with efforts to combat poverty, unemployment and social exclusion, which are often contributing factors to crime," he said. Congo abolished the death sentence in 1981, but it was reinstated in 2006. The last execution took place in 2003. In March 2024, the Congolese government announced the resumption of capital punishment in cases of treason by military personnel. In May, eight soldiers were sentenced to death, and in July, 25 soldiers were convicted of similar offences.

S Korea's military says North Korea fired missile into eastern sea

Seoul, Jan. 07: North Korea on Monday fired a ballistic missile that flew 1,100 kilometers (685 miles) before landing in waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan, South Korea's military said, extending its heightened weapons testing activities into 2025 weeks before Donald Trump returns as US president. The South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the midrange missile was fired from an area near the North Korean capital of Pyongyang and that the launch preparations were detected in advance by the US and South Korean militaries. It denounced the launch as a provocation that poses a serious threat to peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. The joint chiefs said the military was strengthening its surveillance and defense posture in preparation for possible additional launches and sharing information on the missile with the United States and Japan. Japan's Defence Ministry said the missile landed outside its exclusive economic zone and that there were no reports of damage to vessels or aircraft. The launch came as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was visiting Seoul for talks with South Korean allies over the North Korean nuclear threat and other issues. Blinken's visit comes amid political tur-

moil in South Korea following President Yoon Suk Yeol's short-lived martial law decree and subsequent impeachment by parliament last month, which experts say puts the country at a disadvantage in getting a steady footing with Trump ahead of his return to the White House. In a news conference with South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul, Blinken said they condemn North Korea's latest launch, which violates UN Security Council resolutions against the North, and reiterated concerns about the growing alignment between Pyongyang and Moscow over Russian President Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine. According to US, Ukrainian and South Korean assessments, North Korea has sent more than 10,000 troops and conventional weapons systems to support Moscow's war against Ukraine. There are concerns that Russia could transfer North Korea advanced weapons technology in return, which could potentially enhance the threat posed by leader Kim Jong Un's nuclear-armed military. Blinken described the military cooperation between Russia and North Korea as a

"two-way street," saying Russia has been providing military equipment and training to the North and "intends to share space and satellite technology." Blinken and



Cho both dismissed concerns about damage to the US-South Korea alliance in the aftermath of the political turmoil in Seoul. Experts had warned that Yoon's martial law decree — which lasted only hours but has rattled politics, high-level diplomacy and financial markets for weeks — exposed the fragility of South Korea's democratic system in a divided society. "We had serious concerns about some of the actions that President Yoon took and we communicated those directly to the

government," Blinken said. "At the same time we have tremendous confidence in the resilience of South Korea's democracy, in the strength of its institutions and in the efforts that it's making to work through those institutions, pursuant to the constitution and the rule of law to resolve differences and to do so peacefully." In a year-end political conference, Kim, the North Korean leader, vowed to implement the "toughest" anti-US policy and criticized the Biden administration's efforts to strengthen security cooperation with Seoul and Tokyo, which he described as a "nuclear military bloc for aggression." North Korean state media did not specify Kim's policy plans or mention any specific comments about Trump. During his first term, Trump met Kim three times for talks on the North's nuclear program. Many experts, however, say a quick resumption of Kim-Trump summitry is unlikely as Trump would first focus on conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East. North Korea's support for Russia's war against Ukraine also poses a challenge to efforts to revive diplomacy, experts say. Before his presidency faltered over the ill-conceived power grab on Dec. 3

Starmer slams 'lies and misinformation' after attacks from Elon Musk

London, Jan. 07: The billionaire Tesla CEO has taken an intense and erratic interest in British politics since the centre-left Labour Party was elected in July. Musk has used his social network, X, to call for a new election and demand Starmer be imprisoned. On Monday he posted an online poll for his 210 million followers on the proposition: "America should liberate the people of Britain from their tyrannical government." Asked about Musk's comments during a question session at a hospital near London, Starmer criticised "those that are spreading lies and misinformation as far and as wide as possible," particularly opposition Conservative politicians in Britain who have echoed some of Musk's claims. Musk often posts on X about the UK, retweeting criticism of Starmer and the hashtag TwoTierKeir — shorthand for an unsubstantiated claim that Britain has "two-tier policing" with far-right protesters treated more harshly than pro-Palestinian or Black Lives Matter demonstrators. Recently Musk has focused on child sexual abuse, particularly a series of cases that rocked northern England towns in which groups of men, largely from Pakistani backgrounds, were tried for grooming and abusing dozens of girls. The cases have been used by far-right activists to link child abuse to immigration, and to accuse politicians of covering up the "grooming gangs" out of a fear of appearing racist. Musk has posted a demand for a public inquiry into the cases. An inquiry was held under the previous Conservative government, though many of the recommendations it made in 2022 have yet to be implemented. Musk also has accused Starmer of failing to bring perpetrators to justice when he was England's director of public prosecutions between 2008 and 2013. Answering questions after a speech near London, Starmer defended his record as chief prosecutor, saying he had reopened closed cases and "changed the whole prosecution approach" to child sexual exploitation. He also condemned language used by Musk about Jess Phillips, a government minister responsible for combating violence against women and girls. Musk called Phillips a "rape genocide apologist" and said she deserved to be in prison. "When the poison of the far-right leads to serious threats to Jess Phillips and others, then in my book, a line has been crossed," Starmer said. "I enjoy the cut and thrust of politics, the robust debate that we must have, but that's got to be based on facts and truth, not on lies." Musk has also called for the release of Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, a far-right activist who goes by the name Tommy Robinson and is serving a prison sentence for contempt of court. Starmer said people "cheerleading Tommy Robinson... are trying to get some vicarious thrill from street violence that people like Tommy Robinson promote". Starmer largely avoided mentioning Musk by name in his responses, likely wary of giving him more of a spotlight — or of angering Musk ally Donald Trump, who is due to be inaugurated as US president on Jan 20. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, another target of the X owner's ire, has taken a similar approach. Scholz said he is staying "cool" over critical personal comments made by Musk, but finds it worrying that the US billionaire makes the effort to get involved in a general election by endorsing the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party. Starmer said the main issue was not Musk's posts on X, but "what are politicians here doing to stand up for our democracy?" He said he was concerned about Conservative politicians in Britain "so desperate for attention they are amplifying what the far right are saying." "Once we lose the anchor that truth matters... then we are on a very slippery slope," he said.

Biden, in 11th hour action, bans new offshore oil, gas drilling in most federal waters

Washington, Jan. 07: President Joe Biden is moving to ban new offshore oil and gas drilling in most US coastal waters, a last-minute effort to block possible action by the incoming Trump administration to expand offshore drilling. Biden, whose term expires in two weeks, said he is using authority under the federal Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act to protect offshore areas along the East and West coasts, the eastern Gulf of Mexico and portions of Alaska's Northern Bering Sea from future oil and natural gas leasing. "My decision reflects what coastal communities, businesses and beachgoers have known for a long time: that drilling off these coasts could cause irreversible damage to places we hold dear and is unnecessary to meet our nation's energy needs," Biden said in a statement. "As the climate crisis continues to threaten communities across the country and we are transitioning to a clean energy economy, now is the time to protect these coasts for our children and grandchildren," he said. Biden's orders would not affect large swaths of the Gulf of Mexico, where most U.S. offshore drilling occurs, but it would protect coastlines along California, Florida and other states from future drilling. Biden's actions, which protect

more than 625 million acres of federal waters, could be difficult for President-elect Donald Trump to unwind, since they would likely require an act of Congress to repeal. Trump himself has a complicated history on offshore drilling. He signed a memorandum in 2020 directing the Interior secretary to prohibit drilling in the waters off both Florida coasts, and off the coasts of Georgia and South Carolina until 2032. The action came after Trump initially moved to vastly expand offshore drilling, before retreating amid widespread opposition in Florida and other coastal states. Trump has vowed to establish what he calls American "energy dominance" around the world as he seeks to boost U.S. oil and gas drilling and move away from Biden's focus on climate change. Environmental advocates hailed Biden's action, saying new oil and gas drilling must be sharply curtailed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming. 2024 was the hottest in recorded history. "This is an epic ocean victory!" said Joseph Gordon, campaign director for the environmental

group Oceana. Gordon thanked Biden "for listening to the voices from coastal communities" that oppose drilling and "contributing to the bipartisan tradition of



protecting our coasts." Biden's actions build on the legacy of Democratic and Republican presidents to protect coastal water from offshore drilling. Gordon said, adding that U.S. coastlines are home to tens of millions of Americans and support billions of dollars of economic activity that depend on a clean environment, abundant wildlife and thriving fisheries. In balancing multiple uses of America's oceans, Biden said it was clear that the areas he is withdrawing from fossil fuel

use show "relatively minimal potential" that does not justify possible environmental, public health and economic risks that would come from new leasing and drilling. A spokeswoman for Trump mocked Biden, saying, "Joe Biden clearly wants high gas prices to be his legacy." The spokeswoman, Karoline Leavitt, called Biden's action "a disgraceful decision designed to exact political revenge on the American people who gave President Trump a mandate to increase drilling and lower gas prices. Rest assured, Joe Biden will fail, and we will drill, baby, drill." Biden has proposed up to three oil and gas lease sales in the Gulf of Mexico, but none in Alaska, as he tries to navigate between energy companies seeking greater oil and gas production and environmental activists who want him to shut down new offshore drilling in the fight against climate change. A five-year drilling plan approved in 2023 includes proposed offshore sales in 2025, 2027 and 2029. The three lease sales are the minimum number the Democratic administration could legally offer if it wants to continue expanding offshore wind development.

China protests US sanctions for its alleged role in hacking

Bangkok, Jan. 07: China has slammed a decision by the US Treasury to sanction a Beijing-based cybersecurity company for its alleged role in multiple hacking incidents targeting critical US infrastructure, while the Chinese cyber security agency complained Monday of attacks on Chinese networks. Asked about the sanctions against Beijing-based Integrity Technology Group, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said the country has cracked down on cyber attacks and that Washington was using the issue to "defame and smear China." "For some time now, the US side has been playing up so-

called Chinese cyber attacks and has even initiated illegal unilateral sanctions against China," Guo said. "China firmly opposes this and will take necessary measures to safeguard its legitimate rights and interests." Integrity Technology Group said the move by Washington had "no factual basis." "The company firmly opposes the US Treasury Department's unwarranted accusations and illegal unilateral sanctions on the company," the company, also



known as Yongxin Zhicheng Technology Group, said in a statement Monday to the Shanghai Stock Exchange. The China National Cyber Security Information Center said it had discovered attacks from various malicious websites and foreign IP addresses, including some in California and Florida. It also reported attacks from the Netherlands, Singapore, Mexico, Turkey and Vietnam using Trojan programs, botnets, phishing, theft of intellectual property and violations of privacy. "They pose a major threat to China's domestic networked units and internet users and some activities have been suspected of criminal offenses," the center said in a notice on its WeChat social media site. On Friday, the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control hit Integrity Technology with sanctions that block access to US property and bank accounts and

prevent the targeted people and companies from doing business with Americans. It cited alleged multiple hacks against US victims, including incidents attributed to Flax Typhoon, a Chinese state-sponsored campaign that targets US critical infrastructure. The sanctions did not appear to be related to an incident in which the Treasury Department reported that Chinese hackers had remotely accessed several of its workstations and unclassified documents in a major breach of cybersecurity. The Treasury Department said it learned of that problem on Dec. 8, when a third-party software provider, BeyondTrust, flagged that hackers had stolen a key "used by the vendor to secure a cloud-based service used to remotely provide technical support" to workers. US officials are grappling with the fallout from a massive Chinese cyberespionage blitz known as Salt Typhoon which they say gave officials in Beijing access to private texts and phone conversations of an unknown number of Americans. Late last month, officials said at least eight telecommunications companies, as well as dozens of nations, had been affected by Salt Typhoon. Integrity Technology said the sanctions would not adversely affect its business since it does not operate in the US and has no assets there.

NEWS BOX

Revenue officials thwart illegal grabbing of 300 acres in Telangana

SIDDIPET. Officials of the Revenue department prevented the grabbing of up to 300 acres of land in Ameenpur mandal of Patancheru. Noting that Ameenpur is one of the costliest mandals in the district, sources said several unidentified persons were attempting to grab the lands here by building fences around them. "There are 625 acres of government land in Bommanakunta village of the mandal. Some persons, using the name of a senior politician, erected fences around 300 acres some of which was already sold," the sources revealed. Upon learning about it Sangareddy Collector Valluri Kranthi alerted the revenue officials and directed them to remove the fence immediately. Following this, the officials reached the spot and removed it using heavy machines. "We have taken steps to remove fencing surrounding the government land and save it. In part, the police were asked to monitor the area during the nights and holidays to prevent any illegal occupations and constructions," the collector told.

This apart, about five decades ago the Revenue department issued Occupancy Rights Certificate (ORC) to about 356 farmers. However, the government took back the lands after it was learnt that some farmers were not tilling it.

When all the farmers approached the court, it said that ORCs of 242 farmers were genuine. Even after that, the farmers were not shown borders of their lands, an official informed. Exploiting the opportunity to grab the vacant lands, some persons executed sale deeds with the farmers.

Formula E race case: High drama at ACB office as police deny entry to KTR's lawyers

HYDERABAD. The ACB has summoned BRS working president KT Rama Rao to appear before it on January 9 for questioning in the alleged Formula-E race case, without his legal team accompanying him. Meanwhile, the former minister has written to the Enforcement Directorate — investigating allegations of money laundering and violations under the FEMA concerning the transfer of '55 crore to foreign companies — informing it that the High Court is set to pronounce its orders on his quash petition on Tuesday. In his letter, Rama Rao requested the ED to give him time to attend. Earlier in the day, he reached the ACB office along with his legal team but was stopped by the police who informed him that the advocates could not be allowed inside. An argument ensued and about 40 minutes later, Rama Rao handed over a written note and returned to the Telangana Bhavan, the BRS headquarters. In his note, Rama Rao told the ACB: "In your notice, you have not given details of the information and documents sought from me pertaining to the case. You are requested to give details of the documents sought from me pertaining to the case to enable me to take necessary action after being given reasonable time. Being a law-abiding citizen, I will cooperate in the matter subject to constitutional and legal rights as provided by law". According to sources, the ACB has decided to inform the high court that Rama Rao refused to cooperate with the investigation. According to sources, the ACB has decided.

Nine RSS workers sentenced to life for 2005 murder of CPI(M) worker in Kerala

KANNUR. Nine RSS workers were sentenced to life imprisonment by a court in Thalassery on Tuesday for the murder of a CPI(M) worker in this north Kerala district 19 years ago. Riji Sankaran, a 25-year-old CPI(M) member from Kannapuram Chunda, was attacked and killed near a temple in Chunda on October 3, 2005 allegedly by RSS workers during a period of political tension between the two parties in the area. Riji was walking home when the accused, armed with weapons, ambushed him and his friends near a well. Three of his friends were injured in the attack. On January 4, the Additional District Sessions Court in Thalassery found the accused guilty. There were a total of 10 accused in the case, one of whom had died in a road accident.

The convicts include Sudhakaran (57), Jayesh



(41), Ranjith (44), Ajeendran (51), Anilkumar (52), Rajesh (46), Sreekanth (47), his brother Sreejith (43), and Bhaskaran (67). The court found them guilty under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, including murder (Section 302), attempted murder (Section 307), unlawful assembly (Section 143), rioting (Section 147), wrongful restraint (Section 341).

Margazhi magic: Bhavya's Bharatanatyam performance captivates Chennai

Bhavya's guru and Padma Bhushan recipient Padma Subrahmanyam compiled the music chosen for the recital.



CHENNAI. According to mythology, Lord Krishna is believed to have said, that among the months He is Margazhi, indicating its auspiciousness. "The month of Margazhi is special to both Vaishnavites and Shaivites. Andal's Thiruppavai is recited in Vishnu temples during the month," says Bhavya Ramachandran, a performer and a public accountant in Toronto, Canada.

"During the Arudra Darshan Festival — usually held on the first full moon night of Margazhi — Lord Nataraja showed His divine dance to sages Vyagrapada and Patanjali. Thus, the music and dance season aligns with the Tamil month of Margazhi which is a very sacred month," she adds. Bhavya was in the city for the weekend to offer prayers through her dance this season. For her, Bharatanatyam is a means to

seek the divine.

The sounds of her salangai, rhythmic tapping, heartfelt expressions, and smooth transitions enthralled the 100-odd audience watching her at The Music Academy Dance Festival 2025. Bhavya performed on different songs in many genres, in the Margam sequence, a traditional Bharatanatyam Arangeetram dance performance. Bhavya's guru and Padma Bhushan recipient Padma Subrahmanyam compiled the music chosen for the recital. "I perform on what is already choreographed and researched. My guru is a living legend. To perform her well-researched choreographies, it would take decades to start doing justice. As her disciple, that is my biggest responsibility," she says. The performance started with a Pushpanjali

Tevaram in 'Nattai' ragam and 'Chatusra Ekam' talam and ended with a Thillana in 'Kannada' ragam and 'Adi' talam.

While Bhavya occupied the stage with her powerful and emotional moves, making the audience feel happiness, sadness, surprise, and sorrow, an ensemble of nattuvangam and vocal by Gayathri Kannan, vocal by Parur MS Ananthashree, mridangam by Nagai P Sriram, flute by B Gokulakrishnan, and violin by Shree Lakshmi Bhatt made a stronger impact as the audience sang along. Each of the six compositions and choreographies had "an intended meaning that aligns with my goal for a common man who has no knowledge of Bharatanatyam to understand what is conveyed," shares Bhavya.

An instrumental figure in Bhavya's performance has been her teacher Gayatri Kannan. "As a young professional and a mother of two, I only got to practice from 10 pm to 12 am EST. For this performance, the rehearsals happened during early mornings (7 am to 9 am) IST which would suit my late night schedules," she adds.

During these practice sessions, Bhavya's audience was her 8-year-old and 3-year-old sons "to tell me what they understand after I emot some lines. This is my way of still wanting to keep the art alive and take on that responsibility," she concludes.

How Mavinmoodu became statue of Thiruvananthapuram

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. Thiruvananthapuram owes much of its prominence to its heritage buildings and important government head offices. Among these, the Secretariat stands tall in the city's centre, and the place where it is situated is known as 'Statue.'

As simple logic suggests, the name 'Statue' originates after the installation of the statue of T Madhava Rao, an important figure behind the Secretariat building and a leader of Thiruvananthapuram's bureaucracy for nearly two decades. As the erstwhile Dewan of Travancore, Madhava Rao played a crucial role in the modernisation of the region. Way back, this area was known as 'Mavinmoodu'. The name Mavinmoodu is linked to a mango tree that no longer exists, explains historian Vellanad Ramachandran.

After its disappearance and the establishment of the Secretariat, the area was referred to by its new landmarks, such as Kacheri Nada or Kacheri Mookku.

With the statue's arrival, it became known simply as the 'Statue' junction. "Construction of the Secretariat started at 'Mavinmoodu' under the leadership of engineer Walthew Clarence Barton. The Secretariat was inaugurated in 1869 during Ayilyam Thirunal's reign. The statue of T Madhava Rao was installed in 1894, two decades after his tenure as Dewan, which lasted from 1857 to 1872. The statue, modelled as if he is gazing at the Secretariat, was sculpted by an Italian artist," explains historian Vellanad Ramachandran. It was since 1893, the area became known as 'Statue.' Before that, for a short period, it was known as Kacheri Nada. "The Secretariat itself had two names: it was initially referred to as Puthenkacheri, and later as Hajur Kacheri, giving rise to the name Kacheri Nada." There are similar examples of place names changing with new developments. The old name for the Medical College area was Kuzhiyathu Mukku. When an institution was established there, it took on a new name. "Another example is 'Poonthi' which means marshland. After a temple was constructed, it became Kumarapuram," Ramachandran says. According to him, old names are rare in the city nowadays. "Most place names emerged during the colonial period.

Nilambur MLA Anvar vows to join hands with UDF to take on Pinarayi Vijayan govt

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. The Thiruvananthapuram branch of the Kerala Government Medical Officers Association (KGMOA) withdrew its decision not to join State School Arts Festival duties, following talks between their representatives and the additional chief secretary. The latter gave assurance that the doctors' demand for reinstating Dr D Nelson who was transferred to Adoor General Hospital as a punishment would be reinstated.

The withdrawal of non-cooperation came as a relief for the department which was struggling to find alternative arrangements to run the camps in the festival venues. The department formed 6 to 24 medical teams to manage health care in the venues till January 8. The medical team at the venues



operates in two to three shifts, starting from 9 am. Drawing doctors and paramedics from family and community health centres to the arts festival is likely to impact the OP activities of these centres during the festival period. The

KGMOA representatives, however, said that their protest against the arbitrary action shall continue despite the agreement to become part of the medical team. "We will continue to boycott all additional duties till our demand is met. It should not have been dragged in this manner," said Dr Padmaprasad P S, district president of KGMOA.

The doctors started the protest after Dr Nelson was suspended in September last year following media reports that he was involved in private practice. Though the charge was proved wrong, the doctor was transferred to a far-off location. As a result, the protest dragged on as DHS did not heed the demand for his reinstatement though the district has six vacancies.

Human skull, bones found in fridge of an abandoned house in Kochi

KOCHI. A human skull and bones were discovered from the refrigerator of a deserted house in Chottanikkara during a police inspection following complaints by local residents of antisocial activities. The house, which belongs to a medical practitioner, had remained locked for around 25 years, police said. The discovery of skeletal remains has triggered speculation of black magic or other such illegal practices. Police said a detailed investigation will look into all possible angles. According to an officer, the house owner, Philip John, 74, who resides in Vyttila,



had not used the property, located at Palace Square, for over two decades. The abandoned house, located on 14 acres of land, had reportedly become a hideout for antisocial elements. Concerned local residents and ward councillor filed a complaint with Chottanikkara police. Acting on the complaint, police inspected the premises and uncovered the skull and bones in the refrigerator. "Preliminary examination confirmed that the remains are human. We have summoned the owner for questioning. His children live abroad. A thorough investigation is underway to uncover more details," a police source said. "A case has been registered, but further details cannot be disclosed at this time. The forensic examination is scheduled for Tuesday, and more information will emerge after that," Ernakulam Rural police chief Vaibhav Saxena said.

Kerala State School Arts Festival: Can 'brain in a jar' have your attention, please!

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. The stall belonging to Project X, a comprehensive sex education campaign, has quickly become a major attraction at the State School Arts Festival, drawing in students, parents, and teachers visiting the main venue. Breaking away from the traditional perception of sex education stalls, the one put up by Project X features an unexpected display: a preserved human brain encased in a glass jar. The exhibit introduces the fascinating concept that the brain is the largest sex organ in the human body, setting the stage for deeper discussions on relationships, consent, and decision-making. The stall's success is clearly reflected in the enthusiastic feedback shared by visitors on the feedback wall, with many noting their positive shift in perception about sex education. Comprehensive sex education aims to provide students with a thorough understanding of human sexuality, equipping them with the



knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to make informed and responsible decisions regarding their sexual health and relationships. At the same time, an analysis of the games and questionnaires presented at the stall revealed that many students still possess a limited understanding of these crucial topics. "I was initially puzzled about why a brain would be part of a sex education stall. But the volunteer

explained how the brain controls our emotions and decision-making, which is essential in understanding relationships and consent," said Ananya R, a second-year undergraduate student from Ernakulam, who visited the stall while accompanying her sister to the Thiruvathirakali competition. Project X coordinator Nimmy Augustine said the stall has attracted not just students but parents and teachers. "Parents were particularly surprised to learn that their parenting style plays a crucial role in comprehensive sex education. Parents are often the first sources of guidance on sex, relationships, and personal values. Their approach can greatly influence how children navigate and understand these important topics," she explained.

Madras HC bins detention of 18 accused in Kallakurichi hooch tragedy under Goondas Act

CHENNAI. The Madras High Court has quashed the orders for invoking the Goondas Act against 18 accused in the Kallakurichi hooch deaths on the grounds of delay of invoking the Act, non-furnishing the documents in the language the accused are familiar with and long incarceration. "The law of preventive detention is draconian. It infringes upon the liberty of a person, a fundamental right enshrined in the Constitution. Therefore, the law shall sparingly be invoked if only the detaining authority forms an opinion that there is likelihood of breach of public order," a division bench of Justices SM Subramaniam and N Jothiraman observed while quashing

the detention order. The bench said it did not find any serious lapses in invoking the Act after the incident which happened on June 18 and 19 and caused public disorder. However, it noted that there has been an "enormous delay" in invoking the Act, which, according to the Supreme Court, is a ground for setting aside the order of detention. Besides, the documents were not translated into the language some of the detainees are familiar with, thereby causing "prejudice". The bench said they have been incarcerated already for five to six months,



and quashed the order. However, it added that the investigating agency, CBI, can oppose bail when it finds it necessary. The

orders were passed on the habeas corpus petition filed by the relatives of the detainees. Advocate General P S Raman urged the court to consider whether the detainees' action caused a breach of public order or not. He enlisted the number of cases registered by the prohibition enforcement wing and the persons arrested in prohibition-related crimes. However, the bench said the police are foisting cases and proxies are made available for arrest for up to Rs 500 per day for their families' expenses, thereby helping the real culprits to roam freely.

Two museums and a visitor

THE best new year gift you could give to yourself is to keep company with Bhupen Khakhar,

J Swaminathan and KG Subramanyan. The absolutely fantastic part is you don't have to share them with anyone. A Ramachandran loiters somewhere in the back. The brilliant Nalini Malani is immersed in her own world, so you don't have to wonder about an invasion of privacy — watch where she's hung, take a step back, gaze at her from all angles, including from the back.

You'll find that all the oils on canvas are stuck on a piece of cardboard hung with twine on the wall. You feel the temptation slithering across the back of your spine, of wanting to do what you shouldn't but you know you can. You must push it away.

It's time to move on to the next modern master in the next gallery at the Museum of Fine Arts at Panjab University in Chandigarh. "How to steal a painting and get away with it" could easily be the subject of this column — except not. It's all too precious. Also, perhaps, there's something charming in the fact that most of the world has forgotten that these works even exist — they are certainly on no website — so when you come upon them in this serendipitous way, the thought crosses your mind. Yes, this could be your very own, private space where on special occasions like the new year you could break open a samosa or two. After all, Bhupen Khakhar's work that's hanging on the front wall is called 'Breakfast in Kasauli'. Foodies would certainly applaud. There's more. This building was designed by BP Mathur, an architect who worked with Pierre Jeanneret, the main architect-planner of the university. The collection of contemporary masters in the museum, about 1,200 artworks, was curated by none other than Chandigarh's beloved son and internationally acclaimed art historian, BN Goswamy, who wrote a much-read column for The Tribune until he passed away a year ago. Moreover, I am now a card-carrying member of the City Beautiful. I realise I am in the presence of both History and Culture, both H & C capitalised.

Kulwinder strides in. His angry movements disturb the cold air of the gallery — so far it's been just me and the masters. Ramachandran's brooding painting of monks in a church seems like it's part of the Andrei Rublyev school. The attendant, who prefers warming her hands on the heater in the reception area, tells me, "Bahut log aate hain museum main", at least 10-12 every day. I ask Kulwinder if there is a guide. I don't know, he replies sternly, "main technical se hon".

If Chandigarh is what Delhi was 40 years ago, then you can well imagine its museums — hidden jewels encrusted by sarkari indifference. The Government Museum and Art Gallery in Sector 10, designed by Le Corbusier himself, has that gorgeous wooden door that turns on a single pivot — you also see this large door in the conjoined Haryana-Punjab Legislative Assembly space that Corbu designed at one end of the Capitol Complex, itself a magnificent plaza that should have been teeming with happy people and moonphali-wallahs in the winter but has, instead, been turned into an exclusive zone in the name of security, which means only VVIPs and registered visitors have access — but the real experience begins when you go through the Corbu door into the Government Museum. The only available brochures are in French. (Corbusier was Swiss-French, so those folks come, it seems.) The English ones "are finished". The guide — her name is Geetanjali — walks up the ramp with me. On one wall hangs a gorgeous rope installation by Mrinal Mukherjee, except the bottom is frayed. You reach the first floor and are immediately stunned by the bronzes, the Sanghol excavations, the Gandhara sculptures and the Pahari paintings in the rooms beyond. Seems MS Randhawa, widely acknowledged as Chandigarh's First Citizen, scoured the estates of the small princelings soon after Independence and requested them to part with their treasures so they could become the heart of the Art Museum. And that's how BNG — as all of North India lovingly called BN Goswamy — revolutionised our understanding of our own heritage.

Echoes of the Shikra, the tiny bird with a lion's heart

Shikras are found everywhere — from gardens in urban centres like Delhi and Bengaluru to rural countryside, and even open forests.

I heard them for the first time on the day lockdowns began. As the world around me went silent, I had the time and the mindspace to listen to bird notes. The call of the Shikra can be quite dramatic if you hear it in silent woods. The loud 'Kekey kee' almost echoes off the tree stumps and shakes the dew off the leaves. The Shikra is a small bird of prey, one of the smallest, but with a big heart and a lot of courage, as I was to discover through the six months I spent on our farm during the lockdowns. A female Shikra is a little smaller than a house crow, but built like a warrior. Her back is rusty grey, and her belly is barred in rufous bands. Her eyes are golden yellow, the same colour as her legs. Among raptors, the females are larger than the males. A male Shikra is smaller and has a steel-grey back and barring similar to the female, but his eyes are blood red, almost demonic. Lockdowns were hard, even on a farm. My family and I were fortunate to be on a farm and hence able to wander outside the house a little. The real stress was not about being locked inside, but the anxiety of not knowing what would happen. I spent the first day thinking about it and wondering how to keep myself occupied. And just then, the Shikra answered my question. I heard their call coming from a Dalbergia tree that stood not far from our balcony. I had seen lots of Shikras over the years, but this call felt different. When I peered closely, I realised why: a female was sitting in a nest built with a ragtag bunch of sticks where two branches stuck out of the main trunk. The moment I saw her, I knew she was sitting on eggs. The call I heard was the male calling from a nearby tree. He had brought a freshly killed garden lizard. The female responded to his call and left the nest to eat the food he had brought. He passed the bloodied carcass to her on the nearby Neem tree and flew to the nest. At first, I thought he would take a turn incubating the eggs, but no — he just peeped in, made sure all was okay, and flew away. The female tore the flesh from the lizard's carcass until nothing was left — not even claws, skin, or scales. That was when I knew I wanted to know everything about the Shikra pair.

Shikras are very successful birds across the Indian subcontinent. They are found everywhere — from gardens in urban centres like Delhi and Bengaluru to rural countryside, and even open forests. They don't occur in the very deep rainforests, the high mountains, or the driest deserts, but other than that, they can be found everywhere. Still, I could hardly



find anything to read about a nesting pair of Shikras.

I started watching the nest for a few hours every day. Covid-19 spread across the country, and my thoughts went deeper into the life of the Shikra. I believed it was not healthy to delve too much into something as grim as a global influenza pandemic.

The first 'discovery' I made was that the female spent over 95 per cent of her time incubating the eggs in the nest. The rest she spent eating the food the male brought for her. It was a finding that made me uncomfortable. I did not want to talk about it with my others on the farm. It would only reinforce the stereotypes about the place of females in society.

The male was a good hunter. He brought a lizard, a squirrel, or a little bird every waking hour of the day. I named him Sheru. I thought that was a good name for a proficient hunter like him. Just when I thought the Shikras were settling into a domestic life, where the female looked after the little nestlings and the male provided for them, my perception of their life changed. A large eagle — a crested serpent eagle — made an appearance against the bright blue sky on

the horizon. It was mid-morning, and the summer sun was creating upward drafts of hot air rising from the black cotton soil of the ploughed farms. This is the eagle's forte. Like a fighter jet, this sky belonged to the eagle. Sheru saw the eagle first. He flew to the top of a banyan tree and called his trademark 'Kekey kee', but this one had a different ring to it. In a split second, there was a response — a loud response from the nest. The female, a good 20 per cent larger than Sheru, rose out of the Dalbergia tree, gave a war cry of a call, flapped her wings, and blocked the sun in my eyes for a moment. Sheru followed her. The female did not wait for him; she was directly in between the eagle and the nest. Sheru joined her, and they were a team. Pound for pound, the eagle was bigger than the two of them together, and yet it chose to steer clear. She, the Shikra, flew around for a couple of minutes and then returned to her nest to incubate the eggs while Sheru went on patrolling for longer and then headed to a wooded grove to hunt again. An image of Shikra domesticity had taken form in my mind, and now it was broken. I felt free.

Policing integrity

Punjab, Haryana act against corrupt cops

CORRUPTION and negligence in law enforcement have long eroded public trust and the rule of law. Recent actions by Punjab and Haryana to hold errant officers accountable mark a pivotal step towards restoring faith in police institutions. Punjab's dismissal of DSP Gursher Singh Sandhu for facilitating an in-custody interview with gangster Lawrence Bishnoi underscores a zero-tolerance stance. By providing a "studio-like facility" for a criminal, Sandhu not only glorified crime but also risked enabling further illegal activity. The Punjab and Haryana High Court had rightly condemned the incident, prompting the state government to act decisively. Similarly, Haryana's termination of nine police personnel for negligence in a triple murder case highlights an equally resolute approach. The Yamunanagar Superintendent of Police has sent a strong message that complacency in law enforcement will not be tolerated.

These dismissals, however, point to a larger issue: systemic



corruption within the police force. In Punjab, over 30 police officers have been arrested for graft in the past two

years. Haryana's record is equally troubling — nearly one-third of the 104 trap cases initiated by the state Anti-Corruption Bureau last year involved police personnel. Such widespread misconduct tarnishes the credibility of the entire institution.

A systemic overhaul is vital to prevent further breaches of ethics and responsibility. Strengthening accountability mechanisms, ensuring transparent internal investigations and instituting independent oversight are critical. The emphasis on zero tolerance must extend to higher ranks, leaving no room for impunity. Public perception of the police hinges on integrity and discipline. While the recent actions in Punjab and Haryana are commendable, they must evolve into sustained reforms. Only then can law enforcement reclaim its role as a pillar of justice and rebuild its image in the eyes of the public.

Supreme Court must review its order on credit cards

Setting aside the 30 per cent cap on interest rates has severely hurt the interests of millions of credit card users in the country

The recent verdict of the Supreme Court, setting aside the 30 per cent cap on credit card interest rates imposed by the apex consumer court in 2008, has severely hurt the interests of millions of credit card users in the country, in more ways than one.

First of all, the clear message from the top court was that credit card companies were at liberty to charge any rate of interest on card dues. It said, "The mere inflation in the rates of interest cannot be construed as a practice intended to cause loss or injury." The credit card companies are at present charging a whopping 42-53 per cent per annum on dues, besides penalties on late payment.

Second, it gave a clean chit to credit card companies on their contracts and disclosures, by observing that "the banks have in no manner made any misrepresentation to deceive the credit card holders" and, therefore, cannot be accused of unfair trade practices. Third, in one stroke, it curtailed the power of the highest consumer commission vis-a-vis banking services. "A policy decision pertaining to the rate of interest and trade practices carried out by the banks across the country is a regulatory function within the specific statutory domain of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and cannot come under the purview of judicial scrutiny by the National Commission," the Supreme Court said (HSBC vs Awaz, December 20, 2024).

Not just consumer justice, but also the Directive Principles of State Policy enshrined in the Constitution required that the court take into consideration the ground realities, including the usurious rates of interest being charged by banks on credit card dues, and the harm caused to consumers as a result. It was also important to take into account



how credit card companies and online marketplaces are together pushing consumers into buying more and spending more, with a number of incentives such as 'buy now, pay later' offers and instalment schemes, resulting in consumers spending beyond their means. Today, with cards 'saved' on e-commerce sites, it is so easy to buy goods anytime and anywhere that consumers are becoming habituated to spending via cards; rather, they are becoming compulsive shoppers. In the absence of consumer education and financial literacy, it is easy in these circumstances for the consumers to fall into a

debt trap. Unable to cope with such a situation, many youngsters are today suffering from depression, at times leading to suicides. The result can be seen in the increasing rates of defaults. As of June 2024, credit card outstanding dues amounted to about Rs 2.7 lakh crore, up from Rs 2.6 lakh crore in March 2024 and more than Rs 2 lakh crore in March 2023. Similarly, credit card NPAs (non-performing assets) grew by 136 per cent in June 2024 when compared with March 2020. A poignant letter written by a consumer on a website describes this situation best — he says he has a debt of Rs 10 lakh on his credit card, half of

which is interest and charges. He has been paying 90 per cent of his salary towards repayment but is unable to wipe out the debt. "Unable to cope, thoughts of suicide are constantly running in my mind," he says. Such cases are many and are increasing. In February last year, a couple in Hyderabad committed suicide, unable to pay their credit card dues. As of October 2024, the number of active credit cards in the country stood at more than 100 million. The situation vis-a-vis credit cards today is very different from what it was when the National Commission gave its judgment 16 years ago — and there is an urgent need to take a fresh look at all these factors and prevent a whole generation of Indians from becoming compulsive shoppers, incurring huge debts. Given this scenario, the Supreme Court had a responsibility to nudge the regulator to take immediate steps to reverse these trends before it was too late. It was an opportunity lost.

Certainly, fixing a maximum limit requires detailed inputs from all stakeholders and experts and the apex court could well have asked the regulator to constitute a committee and examine the issue in depth, and come up with adequate measures to protect consumers, without adversely affecting the credit card business. That would have also brought about transparency in the way the banks calculate the rate of interest. Unfortunately, this was not done.

However, it is not too late — the apex court must review its order and the Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs should file a curative petition. Consumers, in turn, should remind the RBI that it has to take their interest too into consideration while formulating policies vis-a-vis credit cards.

Hobby ideas for your Child



Choosing a hobby idea when your little one is ready for summer holidays is not rocket science. Just you need to take care of the following things:

Know his or her interest: It is very important. Not knowing what interests the most to your child may backfire if you get him or her into a wrong hobby class. So, seek their opinion first and ask them which class they want to go for.

Don't press for one:

If your child wants to enjoy some fun moments at home and is comfortable this way, let it be. It does not mean that since everybody is doing a hobby class, should your child too does it.

Make your home a

hobby destination:

Home is where most of the fun is. So during the vacation, turn your home into a camping zone at night by installing a tent and hosting a camping party in the garden. You can invite your child's friends and let them have a blast in the party.

Popular hobby ideas:

Painting, drawing, cooking, baking, musical interments like guitar are some of the popular ideas one can pursue. Also in vogue are calligraphy and the art of gift wrapping. Creative writing is also one of the sought after hobby ideas. Not only these hobbies let your child pick up extra skills, but also will let them look at things with a different perspective.

There are an array of things to choose from when it comes to picking the right hobby idea for your child.



Flexible work schedule good for workers

Flexible work schedules aren't just more convenient, they can really make a difference in the way we feel and for our long-term health, a study reiterates.



In today's fast life, our daily schedules often don't match our bodies' natural rhythms. This causes a 'social jetlag' as we lose sleep. The condition can be a particular problem for shift workers, who work into the night or on a shifting schedule. "A 'simple' re-organisation of shifts according to chronotype allowed workers to sleep more on workday nights," said Till Roenneberg of the Ludwig-Maximilian-University in Germany. "As a consequence, they were also able to sleep less on their free days due to a decreased need for compensating an accumulating sleep loss. This is a double-win situation," Roenneberg added. The researchers got the chance to implement their ideas about sleep and work schedules in a real-world factory setting. The factory workers were assigned to an early, late, or intermediate chronotype based on their normal sleep patterns. The researchers then implemented a chronotype-adjusted ("CTA") shift

schedule. Morning people were never made to work late and night owls were never forced to get up early for work. With those adjusted schedules, people felt more satisfied with the sleep they did get and experienced slight improvements in their general well-being. It also reduced social jetlag - the difference between the midpoint of workers' sleep on work versus free days - by one hour. While the new findings weren't exactly a surprise, Roenneberg said, it was still "utterly satisfying to find that theory actually works in the real and 'dirty' world". An earlier report by Roenneberg's team showed a link between social jetlag and obesity, along with other unhealthy habits, including smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol and caffeine. "We know that sleep has important implications not only on physical health but also on mood, stress, and social interactions, so that improving sleep will most probably result in many other positive side effects," said Celine Vetter, the first author of the study.

Emotional displays don't work in boardrooms

The study? a joint project between Peter Carnevale, professor of management and organization at USC's Marshall School of Business, and Celso M. de Melo, a postdoctoral research associate at Marshall, as well as colleagues at the USC Institute for Creative Technologies (ICT) and the Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences? illustrates the intricate role emotion plays in business interactions. The study indicates that what you show on your face is as important as what you say in negotiation and what you do with your negotiation offers. To test the impact that emotional expression can have on negotiations, researchers paired individuals with computer-generated images of an opposing negotiator in five related experiments. Each featured a two-person task in which the payoffs for each player depended on the simultaneous choice of both players. If both

players invested - cooperated - both earned money. If neither player invested, neither earned money. And, if one player invested and the other player did not, the non-investor outperformed the investor by taking advantage of the investment without putting in any effort or money. This task represents a classic problem in interdependence and economic decision-making. In one experiment, the image of the other player either smiled, expressing pleasure after cooperation, or frowned, signaling regret after exploitation. In other cases, it expressed pleasure after exploitation and regret after cooperation. Carnevale and colleagues found that people cooperated significantly more with a computer counterpart that smiled when cooperating and expressing sorrow after exploiting the participant. In other words, the study results indicate that context can determine the meaning ascribed to a counterpart's emotional expression and subsequent reactions.



Researchers have said that a business person in a negotiation should be careful about managing his or her emotions as the person across the table is making inferences based on their facial expressions.

95 dead, 130 injured after multiple earthquakes in Tibet; tremors felt in India

Tremors were felt in Delhi-NCR and many parts of North India on Tuesday following a 7.1 magnitude earthquake in Tibet, near the Nepal border.

NEW DELHI. At least 95 people were killed and more than 130 injured as six earthquakes, including a powerful one measuring 7.1 on the Richter scale, rocked Tibet in one hour on Tuesday. The earthquakes shook buildings in many areas in India, Nepal and Bhutan. News agency Reuters, citing local media, reported that at least 95 people were killed in the Shigatse region of Tibet in the earthquake. China's state media said that 130 others were injured. Several buildings also collapsed near the epicentre, according to Chinese media. "Dingri county and its surrounding areas experienced very strong tremors, and many buildings near the epicentre have collapsed," Chinese state broadcaster CCTV said.

Shigatse is home to 800,000 people and the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama, one of the most important figures in Tibetan Buddhism. Strong tremors were felt in Delhi-NCR and various parts of North India, including Bihar's capital Patna and multiple



locations in the northern part of the state. The earthquake was also felt in West Bengal and the northeastern states, including Assam. In Nepal's capital Kathmandu, residents reportedly ran out of their houses after strong tremors. The country's disaster management authority said the tremors were felt in seven hill districts bordering Tibet. "I was sleeping. The bed was shaking, and I thought my child was moving the bed. I didn't pay that much attention, but the shaking of the window

confirmed to me that it was an earthquake. I then hurriedly called my child and evacuated the house and went to the open ground," Meera Adhikari, a resident of Kathmandu, told news agency ANI.

According to the National Centre for Seismology, the first 7.1 magnitude earthquake struck Xizang, near the Nepal-Tibet border, at 6:35 am. This intensity is considered strong and is capable of causing severe damage. Chinese officials recorded the magnitude at 6.8 in Shigatse city, Tibet's second-largest city. Two aftershocks of 4.7 and 4.9 intensity were reported from the same Xizang area.

The epicentre was located where the India and Eurasia plates clash and cause uplifts in the Himalayan mountains strong enough to change the heights of some of the world's tallest peaks. According to China's state broadcaster CCTV, there have been 29 earthquakes with magnitudes of 3 or higher within 200 km of Shigatse city in the past five years, all of which were smaller than the one that struck on Tuesday morning.

Be alert on HMPV: Govt urges hospitals to improve preparedness

However, authorities assured the public that the situation in the country is under control

NEW DELHI. Five years after COVID-19 overwhelmed global healthcare systems, a new flu-like illness, Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV), has recently gained attention following its outbreak in China. However, Indian authorities reassured the public on Monday that the situation in the country is under control, with no reported cases of the virus so far.

Director-General of Health Services (DGHS) Dr. Atul Goel emphasized that there is no need to panic. "HMPV is similar to other respiratory viruses that cause flu-like symptoms, primarily affecting the elderly and children," he said.

"Respiratory illnesses are common during winters, and our hospitals are well-equipped to handle them," he added. The outbreak in China has seen a surge, particularly among vulnerable groups, leading to comparisons with COVID-19. Dr. Goel, however, dismissed fears of a similar scenario in India. "We have thoroughly analyzed respiratory illness data, including December 2024 trends, and found no significant rise in cases. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) confirms that there is no widespread outbreak in any part of the country," he said.

He further advised people to follow general hygiene practices to curb the spread of the virus. "Take general precautions we use against all respiratory infections. People with cough and cold should avoid crowded places to prevent transmission. Use a separate handkerchief or towel for sneezing and coughing, and take basic medicines for cold or fever if needed," he said.

Meanwhile, the Delhi government on Monday directed all hospitals in the capital to remain fully prepared to manage a potential surge. In a directive marked "Most Urgent," Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj instructed the health and family welfare department to closely monitor the situation and remain in constant touch with the Union health ministry for timely updates.

"Hospitals under the Delhi government must be fully equipped to handle any potential increase in respiratory illnesses, as advised by the Union health ministry," the directive stated.

The health secretary has been tasked with inspecting three government hospitals daily and submitting detailed reports on key parameters such as the availability of medicines as per the essential drug list, ICU beds, and the operational status of PSA oxygen plants and radiological equipment.

HMPV not a new virus, but caution necessary: Experts

NEW DELHI. Amid the Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) scare, health experts have urged people not to panic, noting that the virus has been circulating globally for decades and is not a new threat. Specialists emphasized that the situation in India remains under control, with no confirmed reports linking the cases to the strain in China. Dr. Sumit Chakravarty, Associate Director of Paediatrics & Neonatology at Asian Hospital, said that HMPV is an old virus known to cause mild infections, often manifesting as a cold or flu-like illness. "In the past, it has been associated with pneumonia in children, but in most cases, the infection remains minor," he said.

However, Chakravarty stressed the importance of further studies to shed light on the potential for different strains circulating in India. Dr. Satish Koul, Senior Director of Internal Medicine at Fortis Memorial Research Institute, clarified that HMPV has been in circulation for many years and is most prevalent during the winter months.

"The symptoms are very similar to the common flu. However, only a doctor can differentiate between flu and HMPV infection," he said. While no vaccine exists for HMPV and no definitive treatment has been established, experts recommend symptomatic care.

In terms of prevention, experts noted that the virus spreads through respiratory droplets. Simple hygiene practices, such as wearing masks and washing hands regularly, can reduce transmission.

Ajay Diggpaal and Harish Vaidyanathan Shankar appointed judges of Delhi High Court

NEW DELHI. Two advocates Ajay Diggpaal and Harish Vaidyanathan Shankar were appointed as judges of the Delhi High Court on Monday. Ashish Naithani, a judicial officer, was also appointed as a judge of the Uttarakhand High Court. Union Minister of State for Law and Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Arjun Ram Meghwal, took to the micro-blogging site X (formerly known as Twitter) to announce the decision. "In exercise of the power conferred by the Constitution of India, the President of India, after consultation with the Chief Justice of India, is pleased to appoint the following as judges," he posted, adding, "I convey my best wishes to them."

The three-member panel of the Supreme Court Collegium



consisting of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud (now retired) and Justices Sanjiv Khanna and BR Gavai — had, on August 21 last year, recommended the names of Diggpaal and Shankar, along with advocate Shwetaree Majumder, for elevation as judges of the Delhi High Court.

Prior to that, on October 25, 2023, the Chief Justice of Delhi High Court, in consultation with two of his seniormost colleagues, had recommended the names of the three advocates for elevation as judges. "In order to ascertain the fitness and suitability of these advocates for elevation to the High Court, we have consulted our colleague conversant with the affairs of the Delhi High Court. To assess the merit and suitability of the candidates for elevation, we have scrutinized and evaluated the material placed on record. We have also perused the observations made by the Department of Justice in the file," the Supreme Court Collegium's resolution said.

The three-member panel of the Supreme Court Collegium consisting of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud (now retired) and Justices Sanjiv Khanna and BR Gavai had, on August 21 last year, recommended Diggpaal and Shankar, along with advocate Shwetaree Majumder, for elevation as judges of the Delhi High Court.

Rape convict Asaram Babu gets interim bail on medical grounds

NEW DELHI. Godman Asaram Babu, who is serving a life sentence in a 2013 rape case, has been granted interim bail by the Supreme Court on medical grounds till March 31. The Supreme Court directed the 86-year-old godman not to tamper with evidence and meet his followers after his release. A bench of Justices MM Sundresh and Rajesh Bindal noted that Asaram Babu was suffering from various age-related health conditions besides a heart ailment. Babu is currently undergoing treatment at the Arogya Medical Centre in Jodhpur. He has been serving his sentence in Jodhpur Central Jail.

The godman is a heart patient and has previously suffered a heart attack. The Supreme Court has directed that security personnel be deployed during the period of his bail to ensure supervision. Asaram Babu was convicted by a Jodhpur court and sentenced to life imprisonment for raping a teen girl in his ashram. In 2023, he was convicted by a Gujarat court for raping a woman disciple on



several occasions at his ashram in 2013.

The godman has been granted paroles periodically to visit Pune, where he has been undergoing treatment. The Supreme Court relief for Babu comes days after he was granted parole for 17 days on December 18 last month. He returned to Jodhpur jail on January 1.

He was also granted parole for seven days by the Rajasthan High Court for medical treatment in August last year. The godman, in his petition, said his health was precarious and "rapidly deteriorating". Babu also said that he had already served 11 years of imprisonment, and "suffered a series of heart attacks". In February 2024, he was rushed to AIIMS Jodhpur after experiencing severe chest pain.

Delhi BJP alleges CM's bungalow cost inflated to Rs 75-80 crore, claims corruption

NEW DELHI. Delhi BJP on Monday alleged that the construction cost of the Chief Minister's bungalow, listed at Rs 33.66 crore, is only a small figure, and the actual cost is beyond estimation. The opposition party stated that to estimate the true cost of the bungalow, an audit of several departments' accounts is required, along with the inventory created by PWD on October 11, 2024. This, they claimed, would reveal that Kejriwal's residence was constructed illegally at a cost of approximately Rs 75-80 crore. "Ignoring all regulations, the then CM and officials raised the cost from Rs 7.91 crore to Rs 8.62 crore, and later inflated it by 342% to Rs 33.66 crore, as reflected in the documents presented to the CAG. To get an accurate figure, the inventory created for Arvind Kejriwal's



bungalow, which has never been presented to the CAG, must be included," said Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva on Monday. He added that the first clear revelation from the CAG report regarding the Sheesh Mahal is that, under Kejriwal's

government, PWD, which should function as a government agency, operated like a private institution for the CM. "It is worth noting that the way PWD officials broke every rule and law to construct this Sheesh Mahal makes it clear that this is a case of corruption based on a 'give and take' arrangement. It is certain that the Chief Minister and relevant ministers must have turned a blind eye to several corruption instances involving officers in this manner," he said. He also mentioned that the initial estimate for additions and alterations to the bungalow was Rs 7.91 crore. The PWD inexplicably declared this an emergency project and issued the work order on September 1, 2020, while the rest of the population was struggling with the impact of COVID-19, with employment stalled.

Delhi-bound Air India flight makes emergency landing after engine glitch

NEW DELHI. A Delhi-bound Air India flight made an emergency landing on Sunday after one of its engines shut down midair, according to airport sources. Flight 2820 took off from Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru at around 7 pm but returned an hour later after circling the city. "It happened the day before yesterday. We don't have the technical details, but the flight made an emergency landing," PTI quoted a source as saying.

The flight landed safely without any incidents, and all passengers were unharmed. The cause of the engine failure is yet to be ascertained.

In another such incident, a Turkish Airlines flight travelling from Istanbul to Colombo was diverted to Thiruvananthapuram International Airport on Tuesday due to adverse weather conditions in Sri Lanka's capital. The flight, with 299 passengers and 10 crew members, landed at 6.51 am. All passengers and crew are safe, and they will resume their journey to Colombo once the weather improves.

Where Is Atul Subhash's Son? Nikita Singhania's Lawyer Replies In Top Court

Thirty-four-year-old Atul Subhash died by suicide in December after accusing Nikita and her family members of harassing him and his parents by filing false cases against them

New Delhi. Ending weeks of suspense over the whereabouts of AI techie Atul Subhash's four-year-old son, his estranged wife Nikita Singhania told the Supreme Court today that the child is at a boarding school in Haryana's Faridabad. Nikita's lawyer added that the child would be

taken to Bengaluru where he can stay with his mother. Thirty-four-year-old Atul Subhash died by suicide in December after accusing Nikita and her family members of harassing him and his parents by filing false cases against them. Nikita, her mother Nisha, and her brother Anurag are facing an abetment to suicide case and are currently out on bail.

Atul's mother Anju Devi has approached the Supreme Court, seeking custody of her grandson. Nikita's lawyer told the court today that the four-year-old had been enrolled in a Faridabad boarding school and was there during her mother's arrest and subsequent bail. The child will, however, need to be shifted to Bengaluru because Nikita needs to be there as per the conditions of her bail. "We will take the child to Bengaluru. We have taken the boy out of school. The mother has to remain in Bengaluru to fulfill bail conditions," her lawyer told the bench of Justice BV



Nagarathna and Justice N Kotiswar Singh. The bench then directed that the child must be produced in court in the next hearing. The lawyer representing Anju Devi told the court that as the grandmother, she should be given custody of the child. The lawyer said a child below six should not be sent to a boarding school. The bench also noted that the child has barely spent time with his grandmother.

"Sorry to say but the child is a stranger to the petitioner," Justice Nagarathna remarked. Anju Devi's lawyer said they have pictures of the grandmother interacting with the child when he was two years old. Atul and Nikita married in 2019 and had a son the next year. In 2021, Nikita left their Bengaluru home after an altercation and in 2022, she filed a case against Atul and his family members. The court also stressed that Nikita Singhania is yet to be proven guilty and that it can't decide the matter based on a "media trial". The bench said that the issue of the child's custody will have to be taken up in the appropriate court where the trial is on. The next hearing on the matter is on January 20. Atul Subhash died by suicide at his Bengaluru flat on December 9. In an 81-minute video and a 24-page suicide note, the techie accused Nikita and his family members of filing false cases against him and his parents to extort money from them. He also alleged that the justice.

1. Inspired you to be the real you:

Do you ever wonder why 99% of your workforce puts up facades of themselves at work that are very different from who they are in their personal lives? Why is there this dichotomy? Your energies should be focused on the market, your employer's competition, managing your time well, the opportunities and risks at work not within yourself. When you work for an organisation that connects with your authentic self, you not only do your best, but also inspire others around you.

2. Focuses on a mission close to your heart:

The best jobs allow you to do work you believe in and enjoy. Successful start-ups in particular are often characterised by the collaboration of inspired individuals who could not imagine doing any other work. This type of environment allows people who are creatively oriented and talented to work with organisations that match their passion and push the boundaries of technology and innovation.

3. Honours merit over tenure; ideas over hierarchy:

Apple's legendary co-founder firmly believed companies that want to retain great employees have to let them make decisions. Enlightened leadership teams ask employees to contribute ideas because they recognise managers and executives don't have all the answers. Leaders should also encourage debate and action on ideas. In 2006, IBM invited 150,000 employees, family members, business partners and clients to an online brainstorming session called 'Innovation Jam'. Participants from 104 countries responded, and their ideas led to \$100 million in investments by IBM on suggested projects.

4. Offers prospects to continue your educational journey:

Look for an environment where you can challenge the status quo, even unlearn past assumptions and misplaced beliefs, and ultimately learn a set of new skills and principles that enable you to continuously stretch and raise the bar for yourself.

5. Provides a pace to enjoy the journey:

With mobile phones, a constantly connected world, a growing number of virtual offices and global teams that make collaborating across time zones critical to success, the boundaries between work and home life are now blurred. A good organisation will allow employees to



5 characteristics of a

Great Workplace

take from this the benefits and leave behind the disadvantages. You want to be able to transition seamlessly between work and home life without it seeming like you have a strained wall of defined separation from your "home you" and

your "work you". While every individual needs to strive hard to hit the upper echelon of their potential, the path to get there should always be enjoyable and fun or it will always feel like

hard work and make it even more difficult to achieve. A workplace that offers you the environment where the journey is just as exciting as the destination is a must in my book.

At every stage in your career, the decision of where to work is in many ways life-shaping beyond just the immediate tangible financial impact. Unfortunately, not many realise this until well into their career. Where you work is a choice of how and on what you want to spend your time and what you want to receive in return for that invaluable investment. While ultimately where to work is each individual's choice based on their priority and needs, in my opinion, there are five key criteria to look for in a company.

Tips on how to Impress your mom-in-law

1. Do your homework first:

Ask your fiancé what she likes and dislikes. What are her hobbies and how she likes to unwind. Once you know what kind of a person she is and what really makes her happy, then it becomes easy for you to break the ice even in the most difficult situation.

2. Dress to impress:

Whether you notice or not but your mother-in-law will notice the way you have dressed. We aren't asking you to dress like a princess but clothes that aren't ironed or clothes that are out of place and doesn't suits the occasion might not go down well with her. So put that little extra time and dress well so that she's impressed.

3. Seek her advice:

Yes, you are an independent woman and have taken all your life decisions on your own, but there's no harm in taking your mom-in-law's advice or suggestions. After all she has seen the

world more than you and who knows her advice can help you to make a better decision.

4. Meet her often:

Before and after marriage meet her often and spend time with her. Try and make a bond just like the one you shared with your mom.

5. Be open in communication:

Always keep the door of communication open when talking with her. Talk her as much as possible and keep her updated about what's going on in your life.

So he proposes you in the most romantic way ever and you have said a 'yes.' And with that you have started to think, plan and fix a lot of things in order to get the ball rolling for your D-day.

The key to success

One of the common purposes of life for most of us is to achieve success that gives rise to prosperity, peace, happiness, and a sense of inner fulfillment. In our journey to achieve success in different walks of life; some of us grow and develop, while others seem to be trapped in patterns that limit their happiness and joy. Some do extremely well in certain areas of their lives while failing miserably in others. A few may be highly successful by conventional and

Individuals with clear goals achieve far more in a given time frame than those who lack such clarity



conformist measures more so in the eyes of others, however; they are continually frustrated and disgruntled from within. One common thread defining success is to set goals and priorities for oneself and greater confusion and lack of clarity in thinking to achieve success in totality.

The first step to continually grow and develop requires an individual to set specific goals. These goals must be significant and relevant to the individual concerned and need to be absolutely clear to him/her as a part of success of life's larger intent and purpose. Accomplishment deadlines should be set and strictly adhered to. Criteria to measure the outcomes should be well-defined. Clarity about goals constitutes around 80 per cent of success, achievement and joy in life. It is lack of clarity, which results in frustration and underachievement. Individuals with clear, written goals, achieve far more in a given time frame than those who lack such clarity. The power of thought The power of thought and will, if channelised intentionally in a focused manner, generates an abundant flow of energy to overcome and respond to challenges, obstacles and difficulties that come in the way of

achievement of our goals. The basic sequence for success in different walks of life begins with desire, backed by sincere efforts and goal directed actions. A desire to do something gives us the intent, plan and purpose, but it is the 'will' that activates and energises us to act and keep pursuing till we achieve our desired goal. In our journey, even if we fail to achieve the ultimate goal, what matter the most are the lessons learnt, enjoyment derived while working and determination to keep working towards the goal. The power of commitment The power of thought and will power is to be backed by an intense sense of commitment, seriousness and sincerity to achieve the set goals. By committing ourselves to accomplish the goals, we take the most crucial and decisive step in our pursuit for excellence. The power of thoughts backed by commitment and determination transforms dreams into reality. It is dedication to work for well-defined goals that helps in taking steps towards excellence and achieving success. Thus, success is for those who use the power of thought, will power and commitment in pursuit of their well-defined goals.



Meta welcomes 3 new members to board. One is Ultimate Fighting Championship boss

New Delhi, Jan. 7: Dana White, the CEO of the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) as well as an ally to Republican candidate and the new US President-elect Donald Trump, will be joining Meta's board of directors, the company announced on Monday, January 7, 2025. CEO of the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) Dana White speaks during an election night event for Republican presidential nominee, former U.S. President Donald Trump at the Palm Beach Convention Center on November 06, 2024 in West Palm Beach, Florida. (Win McNamee/Getty Images via AFP) CEO of the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) Dana White speaks during an election night event for Republican presidential nominee, former U.S. President Donald Trump at the Palm Beach Convention Center on November 06, 2024 in West Palm Beach, Florida. (Win McNamee/Getty Images via AFP) "I've never been interested in joining a board

of directors until I got the offer to join Meta's board," White said in a statement. "I am a huge believer that social media and AI are the future." Also Read: 'I was 16, managing the person training me': Pret A Manger's CEO started his career with this popular fast food chain He further added that he was "very excited to join this incredible team and to learn more about this business from the inside. There is nothing I love more than building brands, and I look forward to helping take Meta to the next level." This comes at a time when the political leaning of Meta's board seems to be in transition, according to a Business Insider report. For example, Nick Clegg, a former leader of the UK's Liberal Democrats party and Meta's ex-president of global

affairs left the company earlier this month, being replaced by Joel Kaplan,



who is currently the company's vice president of global public policy and one connected to the Republican party. White has been a close ally of Trump, with the pair regularly having been spotted together at events going all the way back to 2001. This change in Meta's leadership is also in stark contrast to the years

of conflict seen between the company and Trump, with Meta banning Trump in 2021 for what the company claimed as praising "people engaged in violence at the Capitol on January 6." Trump then sued Facebook, Google, and Twitter, along with their CEOs, accusing them of unlawfully censoring him. However, despite his accounts being reinstated two years later, Trump had continued to publicly attack the platforms along with founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg. This all changed with Meta since pledging \$1 million to Trump's presidential inauguration fund upon his victory. Also Read: Who is Vinay Hiremath, Indian-origin co-founder who sold startup for \$975 million? Meta also included John Elkann, the CEO of Exor, which is one of the largest European investment companies, and also tech investor Charlie Songhurst. "Dana, John, and Charlie will add a depth of expertise and perspective that will help us tackle the massive opportunities ahead with AI, wearables, and the future of human connection," Zuckerberg said.

Government mulls mandatory hallmarking for silver jewellery

New Delhi, Jan. 07: Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi on Monday asked the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) to consider implementing mandatory hallmarking for silver and silver artifacts following consumer demands. "There is a demand from consumers for mandatory hallmarking of silver. You (BIS) can deliberate and take a call," Joshi said at the 78th BIS Foundation Day event. The work in this direction has already begun and the government will take a decision after completion of stakeholder consultations and feasibility assessment by BIS, the minister told reporters on the sidelines of the event. "I have asked BIS to work out feasibility and take reactions from consumers and ornament dealers. We will consult all stakeholders and start the process," he added. Silver hallmarking, which certifies the purity of the white metal, is currently voluntary. BIS Director General Pramod Kumar Tiwari told PTI that the Bureau could be ready to implement mandatory silver hallmarking within 3-6 months, adding that the stakeholder discussions were underway. "Several rounds of discussions were held with stakeholders and they are in favour of it. The discussion on printing a unique six-digit alphanumeric code is going on," Tiwari said. The move follows successful implementation of mandatory gold hallmarking introduced in June 2021, which now covers 361 districts. The existing system includes a unique six-digit alphanumeric code (HUID) certifying gold purity. According to the minister, about 90 per cent of jewellery being purchased is now hallmarked. More than 44.28 crore gold jewellery items have been hallmarked with unique IDs since the launch. Stakeholders from Gujarat, Karnataka and other states have requested the extension of mandatory hallmarking to silver, the minister added. BIS, established under the BIS Act in 1986, is an autonomous national body responsible for setting quality standards for products and services. Listing out upcoming focus areas, the minister said the BIS is also developing standards for Artificial Intelligence (AI) and is at the forefront of shaping the future of innovation and technology.

Trade Unions demand hike in minimum EPFO pension to Rs 5K

New Delhi, Jan. 07: Trade Unions on Monday pressed for increasing minimum EPFO pension 5 times to Rs 5,000 per month, immediate constitution of the 8th Pay Commission and higher taxes on super rich in the upcoming 2025-26 Budget. In their customary pre-budget meeting with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, trade union leaders also demanded an increase in income tax exemption limit to Rs 10 lakh per annum, social security scheme for gig workers, and restoration of old pension scheme (OPS) for government employees. The Budget for 2025-26 will be presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1. Talking to reporters after the meeting TUCC National General Secretary S P Tiwari said the government should stop all privatisation and corporatisation of PSUs and impose an additional 2 per cent tax on super rich to fund social security for informal workers. Tiwari also demanded that agriculture workers be extended social security and their minimum wages should also be fixed. Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh Organising Secretary (Northern Zone) Pawan Kumar said that the minimum pension under EPS-95 should be increased from Rs 1,000 per month to Rs 5,000 monthly as a first step and subsequently linked to the VDA (Variable Dearness Allowance). He also suggested that the threshold for Income Tax exemption be raised to Rs 10 lakh.

India's economy projected to grow 6.4% in FY25, the slowest in four years

New Delhi, Jan. 7: The Indian economy is projected to grow at its slowest pace in four years in the 2024-25 financial year on the back of weaker consumption and muted exports, with pressure building on the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to cut interest rates. Real or inflation-adjusted gross domestic prod-

uct (GDP) rose 6.4% in the 2025 fiscal, according to the first advance estimates released by the ministry of statistics on Tuesday, compared to a provisional estimate of 8.2% growth in the previous year. The slower expansion of Asia's third largest economy comes in the wake of higher interest rates amid elevated inflation, especially of food commodities. The central bank has kept the repo rate steady for nearly 18 months after raising it by 250 basis points to 6.5% between

May 2022 and February 2023. A basis point is one-hundredth of a percentage point, citing continued risks from food inflation. GDP, the most widely used measure of national income, is the sum of all goods and services produced in the economy. The central bank will have to look to moderate sustained higher interest rates, which tend to hurt growth, analysts said. "Real GDP has been estimated to grow by 6.4 per cent in FY 2024-25 as compared to the growth rate of 8.2 per cent in Provisional Estimate (PE) of GDP for FY 2023-24. Nominal GDP has witnessed a growth rate of 9.7 per cent in FY 2024-25 over the growth rate of 9.6 per cent in FY 2023-24," the Ministry of

Statistics & Programme Implementation said in an official release. The Centre said an expansion in agricultural and industrial activity and an uptick in rural demand in the second half of FY25 will push growth towards the 6.4-6.8% range. The agriculture sector, which contributes nearly 18% to GDP, showed a robust performance, growing 3.8% in FY25 from tumbling 1.4% in the year before. A base effect is partly responsible for the higher farm growth. The base

Samsung Galaxy S25 series launch: Date, features, details of Galaxy Unpacked 2025

New Delhi, Jan. 7: Samsung has confirmed that it will host its latest Galaxy Unpacked launch event later this month, where it will unveil the Galaxy S25, Galaxy S25+ and Galaxy S25 Ultra, according to a Forbes report. From specs, and features to upgrades, know what Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra has to offer. (OnLeaks) From specs, and features to upgrades, know what Samsung Galaxy S25 Ultra has to offer. (OnLeaks) The company has confirmed that the event will take place on January 22, 2025, in San Jose, California, having sent out invites at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) 2025. Also Read: Who is Vinay Hiremath, Indian-origin co-founder who sold startup for \$975 million? Artificial intelligence (AI) features will play a large role in the new models, with Samsung calling it a "more natural and intuitive Galaxy AI" that will "change the way Galaxy users interact with the world." The new phones are also expected to be powered by the new Snapdragon 8 Elite processors and come with an upgraded camera setup and improved charging speeds, along with Apple-like MagSafe charging, with leaks hinting at Qi2 wireless charging support, according to a Mint report. The Galaxy Unpacked event will also be streamed live through the Samsung Newsroom, the main Samsung website, and Samsung's official YouTube channel. It will start at 1 pm EST in the US, which translates to 11:30 pm IST in India. Pre-orders for the new phones will open two days after the event, or on Friday, January 24, and will remain open till Tuesday, February 4. This is despite pre-orders usually opening up immediately after the event in the past. Samsung has also started pre-reservations for the Galaxy S25 series in India through the Samsung India Store, with the company claiming that customers can benefit up to ₹5,000 by pre-reserving the phones for ₹1,999.

effect, which was at play, is a statistical outcome that makes any economic value, such as GDP or inflation, appear high if it had been compared to a previous corresponding period when the value was too low and vice-versa. The economy's gross value added (GVA) is projected to grow at 6.4% compared to 7.2% in the previous fiscal. GVA sub-

tracts indirect taxes and subsidies from output to give a more clearer picture of economic growth. The data come against the backdrop of rising economic uncertainties and geopolitical risks, which prompted some economists to already downgrade their full-year projections and call on the central bank to begin cutting interest rates.



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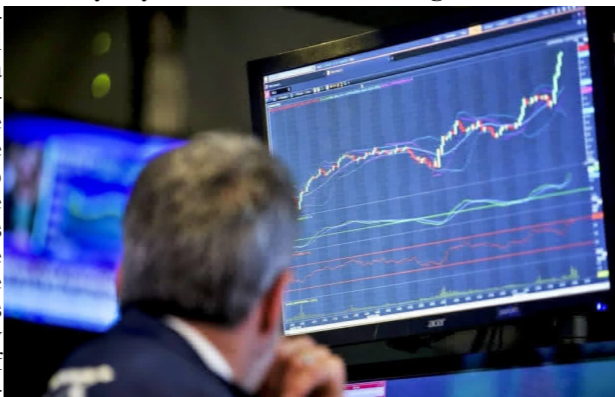
Statistics & Programme Implementation said in an official release. The Centre said an expansion in agricultural and industrial activity and an uptick in rural demand in the second half of FY25 will push growth towards the 6.4-6.8% range. The agriculture sector, which contributes nearly 18% to GDP, showed a robust performance, growing 3.8% in FY25 from tumbling 1.4% in the year before. A base effect is partly responsible for the higher farm growth. The base

Global trends, earnings, FII trading activity major drivers for markets this week

New Delhi, Jan. 7: Equity markets this week will take cues from global trends, trading activity of foreign investors and quarterly earnings, with TCS kick-starting the results calendar on Thursday, analysts said. Macroeconomic data announcements and the rupee-dollar trend would also dictate market trends, experts noted. "The Q3 FY25 earnings season will begin this week, with IT giants and leading financial institutions set to announce their results. TCS and Tata Elxsi will declare results on Thursday, January 9, 2025. Investors will closely monitor individual stock performances. "Following the earnings season, markets' focus is expected to shift towards the upcoming Union Budget and the policy decisions of the Trump 2.0 administration," Pravesh Gour, Senior Technical Analyst, Swastika Investmart Ltd, said. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) have been

net sellers, while domestic institutional investors (DIIs) have been actively buying. This ongoing tug-of-war between FIIs and DIIs is likely to play a crucial role in determining the direction of the market this week, he added. "Looking ahead to the second week of the year, several key events are likely to influence market sentiment. The earnings season begins with IT major TCS, a key trigger as any signs of improvement in Q3 numbers could reverse the ongoing trend of FII outflows. Additionally, a host of economic data, including HSBC services PMI, and IIP, will be closely monitored for further cues," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

The rupee depreciated 4 paise to close at a record low of 85.79 against the US dol-



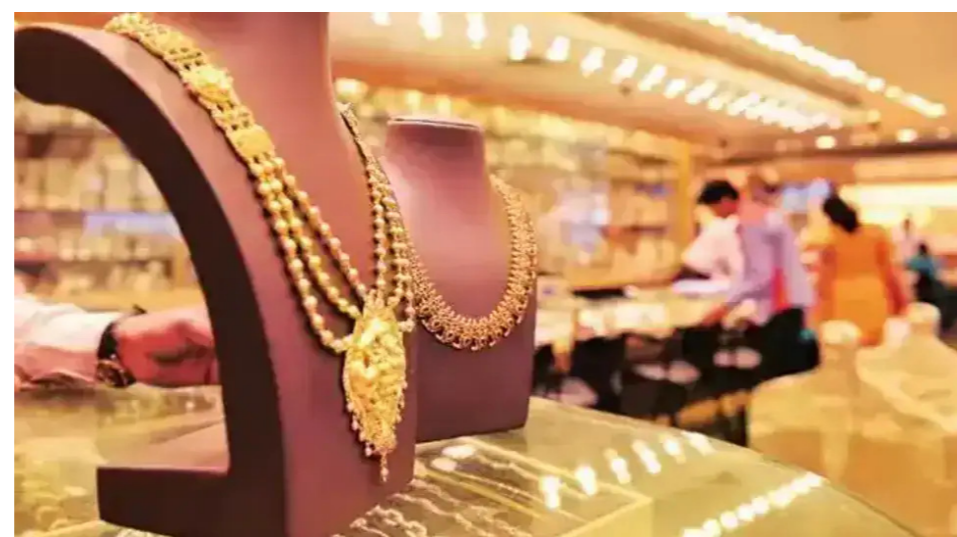
lar on Friday. Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said, "Looking ahead, the market is likely to focus on Q3 earnings, with expectations of improvement in earnings on a QoQ basis." On the global front, FOMC

(Federal Open Market Committee) minutes will be announced during the week. Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 524.04 points, or 0.66 per cent, and the Nifty climbed 191.35 points, or 0.80 per cent. On Friday, the 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 720.60 points, or 0.90 per cent, to close at 79,223.11. The Nifty tanked 183.90 points, or 0.76 per cent, to 24,004.75. "Despite the short recovery in the past two sessions, markets lost the momentum as there is still a lot of pessimism due to slowing growth, higher domestic valuations, foreign fund outflows and uncertainty over US trade policies post Trump's resumption as the country's president. "Hence, markets may see bouts of correction and investors will continue to maintain caution while keeping an eye on global developments," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

Govt should lower GST on cement at 18 per cent, frame policy to boost demand: JK Lakshmi

Patna, Jan. 07: The government should reduce GST on cement to 18 per cent from 28 per cent and take some policy measures in the upcoming Budget to boost consumption of this key building material, a senior official of JK Lakshmi Cement said. In an interview with PTI, Arun Shukla, President and Director of JK Lakshmi Cement, said there is a case to increase cement manufacturing capacity in India to meet the rising demand, which is expected to grow at an average annual rate of 7-8 per cent. "One of the long-cherished dream, or the wish for us, has been reducing GST on cement," Shukla told PTI on the sidelines of 'Bihar Business Connect 2024' meet held here recently. In India, cement is taxed at the highest rate of 28 per cent and this needs to be reduced to 18 per cent, he said while replying to a query on the Budget wishlist from the industry. "Cement is, I would say, one of the major component of driving growth in the economy," Shukla said, adding that cement is required to build world-class infrastructure that can support the growth of the Indian economy. He also emphasised on the need to enhance the consumption of cement in India. "Cement is one of the major drivers of growth, so how we

can really increase consumption of cement?" he said. Shukla said the cement concrete roads have more longevity and in



the long run and it is more cost-effective than bitumen roads. "So my wish would be to really kind of drive this (cement consumption), through maybe some of the policies and specifications..." he said. JK

Lakshmi Cement, part of the JK Organisation, is investing Rs 500 crore in Bihar to set up a manufacturing plant in

Madhubani district. The Bharat Hari Singhania family-promoted JK Lakshmi Cement had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the state government in 2023 investors' meet itself for its

proposed manufacturing unit. The company has already acquired land and is in the process of obtaining other approvals to set up the plant. "We want to cater to local demand from this plant at Madhubani in Bihar," he said, adding that the plant is expected to be operational within a year. Shukla complimented the Bihar government for fulfilling its promises, including fiscal incentives, saying "they are really walking the talk". About the company's experience in Bihar so far, Shukla said, "I think the experience has been encouraging, and the very reason I am here for the second time to attend this meeting was to express my gratitude, but to also encourage my other colleagues to set up..." "The kind of support we have got from all corners, all departments and the bureaucracy in Bihar was amazing. And this is one of perhaps the best experience which we had in setting up a new plant at new location," he said. J K Lakshmi Cement has 18 million tonnes of annual capacity. "We have set a target to reach 30 million tonnes by 2030," he said. The 12 million additional capacity expansions across various geographies are on track, Shukla said. On consolidation in the cement sector, Shukla said, "I think this is a myth. I would

say, if you really look at the statistics, top five players have been kind of holding on to about 55-57 per cent of the cement capacity, that situation is still there, it's not changing much." Although cement demand in 2024 was low due to elections and cyclic nature, he said, "going forward, I think we clearly see a CAGR of 7-8 per cent. "And if you really look at the capacity addition, which is happening is about 5-6 per cent. So still, I think the demand and supply is in favour of adding cement capacity. So consolidation in that way also is not going to impact much," he said. The prices go along with the demand and if the demand improves, prices will improve, he quipped. JK Organisation has overseas manufacturing operations in Mexico, Indonesia, Romania, Belgium, Portugal, and the UAE. It owns companies such as JK Tyre, JK Paper, JK Fenner, and Umang Dairies besides JK Lakshmi Cement. Shukla said the JK Organisation is exploring to invest in other sectors as well like tyre and paper manufacturing. "JK Organisation is quite a diversified group. And the objective was to really explore other opportunities as well," Shukla said, adding that the group will decide on further investments after studying all aspects.

NEWS BOX

Nick Kyrgios named in Australia's Davis Cup squad in surprise call-up

New Delhi. Star Australian tennis player Nick Kyrgios has received an unexpected call-up for Australia's Davis Cup clash against Sweden. Kyrgios, who has struggled with injuries in the recent past, was selected by captain Lleyton Hewitt for the clash, which is scheduled to take place at the end of January.

The 29-year-old was selected alongside world number eight Alex de Minaur, Jordan Thompson and Thanasi Kokkinakis in the Australian line-up for the clash in Stockholm on Jan. 31 and Feb. 1. Kyrgios has been picked despite struggling for fitness since 2022 due to knee, foot and wrist injuries.

Kyrgios spoke about his injury issues ahead of the Australian Open and said that he



needs a miracle to have his wrist in full fitness for the first Grand Slam of the year. The tournament begins on January 15 with the men's final scheduled on January 26. Kyrgios' inclusion in the Davis Cup squad could see him rekindle his doubles partnership with Kokkinakis, with whom he won the men's doubles title at the Australian Open three years ago. He last played in the Davis Cup in November 2019 and reached the final of Wimbledon in 2022, when he lost in four sets to Novak Djokovic. Recently, Nick Kyrgios returned to court in the men's doubles alongside Novak Djokovic. The duo played in the Brisbane International where they beat Austria's Alexander Erler and Germany's Andreas Mies. Their journey as a doubles pair ended with a 6-2 3-6 10-8 defeat by top seeds Nikola Pietrangeli and Michael Venus, who advanced to the quarter-finals.

Kyrgios played in the singles campaign in the tournament as well. Playing his first tournament since a wrist surgery in September 2023, he was beaten by Frenchman Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard in a battle of big servers.

Australia dealt blow as injured Josh Hazlewood set to miss Sri Lanka series

New Delhi. Australia have been dealt a significant blow as senior pacer Josh Hazlewood is set to miss the upcoming tour of Sri Lanka due to injury. Hazlewood, who played just two Tests in the recent Border-Gavaskar Trophy against India, will not be part of the touring squad when it is announced later this week, according to The Sydney Morning Herald.

Hazlewood has been hampered by a calf injury and a side strain, which disrupted his participation in the India series. This injury will see him sidelined for the two-Test series against Sri Lanka, which is set to begin on January 29. Hazlewood's absence adds to the list of Australian absentees, as captain Pat Cummins will also miss the tour, leaving a notable gap in the fast-bowling ranks.

With an already packed schedule ahead, including the World Test Championship final against South Africa in June and the Ashes



series next summer, Hazlewood's recovery will be crucial. However, his absence in the Sri Lanka series gives the team more time to focus on his fitness without the pressure of immediate competition. While Hazlewood's fitness will be key for future fixtures, the rise of Scott Boland, who has been outstanding, brings a degree of uncertainty over the team's first-choice attack. Even if Hazlewood were fully fit, he would face stiff competition from Mitchell Starc and Boland for a spot in the starting XI. Australia's place in the World Test Championship final has already been secured, which allows the selectors to be patient with Hazlewood's recovery. The team will likely focus on building a strong squad for the longer-term fixtures. Test in Galle three years ago, is expected to play a pivotal role in the upcoming series. Despite dealing with a hip issue, Cricket Australia is confident that Lyon will be fit for both Tests. He could be joined by off-spinner Todd Murphy or left-arm orthodox spinner Matthew Kuhnemann, both of whom are strong contenders to join the squad.

OTD in 2019: Virat Kohli's India secure maiden Test series win in Australia

Virat Kohli-led India secured their first-ever Test series win on Australian soil six years back on January 7, 2019. The draw in the fourth Test sealed India's historic win in the 2018-19 Border Gavaskar Trophy.

New Delhi. January 7, 2019, marked a watershed moment in Indian cricket history, as Virat Kohli's team achieved what no other Asian side had done before—winning a Test series on Australian soil. India's victory came after persistent drizzle washed out the final day of the fourth Test in Sydney, denying them a potential 3-1 scoreline. Despite the rain's intervention, the series showcased India's dominance, as they made Australia follow-on at home for the first time since 1988. Cheteshwar Pujara, Jasprit Bumrah,

Mohammed Shami, and Ishant Sharma were the main architects of India's landmark victory, dominating the hosts in the first (Adelaide), third (Melbourne), and fourth (Sydney) Tests. They stunned the Aussies, who were without their batting lynchpins, Steve Smith and David Warner, due to suspensions. Despite this, Australia fielded their full-strength bowling attack comprising Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood, and Nathan Lyon, yet even they couldn't find answers against the likes of Pujara, Virat Kohli, Ajinkya Rahane, and Mayank Agarwal. Pujara stood out, amassing 521 runs in the four matches at a staggering average of 74.42, including three centuries and a fifty. He was followed by Rishabh Pant (350 runs) and Virat Kohli (282 runs). While the batsmen held their own against Australia's formidable attack, it was India's fast bowlers who inflicted the most damage. January 7, 2019, marked a watershed moment in Indian cricket



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Manchester City's Rodri shares major injury return update: Everything going well

New Delhi 2024 Ballon d'Or winner and Manchester City's midfield maestro, Rodri, is gearing up to make his much-anticipated return to the pitch following a lengthy recovery from an ACL injury. The Spanish star has been sidelined since September 2024, when he sustained a ligament injury during a heated clash against Arsenal.

Rodri recently shared with Diario AS that his rehabilitation is progressing well, raising hopes of a return this season. His comeback could not be timelier, with Manchester City experiencing one of their most challenging runs in recent memory. Without Rodri orchestrating play from midfield, the reigning Premier League champions have slipped to sixth in the league, managing just two wins in their last 11 fixtures across all competitions. Yes, Yes, Yes! (On his return) Also, I know myself. I'm a person who recovers well, with a positive mentality. The issue of the head was very important in recovery. Everything is going very well now from both physical and mental points of view to return as soon as possible," Rodri said.



The Rodri-Shaped Void

City's struggles in Rodri's absence have been glaring. Opponents have exploited the lack of defensive stability in midfield, finding spaces that the Spaniard would have typically closed down. The impact of his absence was especially evident in their crushing 4-1 loss to Sporting CP, where Viktor Gyökeres exposed City's frailties with his relentless pace. Similarly, against arch-rivals Manchester United, under Ruben

Amorim, City's midfield looked vulnerable and outmatched. Pep Guardiola has attempted to plug the gap by deploying Bernardo Silva and Jeremy Doku in deeper roles, but neither has managed to replicate Rodri's unparalleled ability to dictate the tempo and shield the defense. The team's usual cohesion and tactical precision have been missing, leaving them looking uncharacteristically disjointed.

Hope on the Horizon

Rodri's return could be the catalyst City needs to reignite their season. The midfielder's presence brings not just defensive solidity but also an attacking edge, with his ability to launch counter-attacks and contribute crucial goals. For City supporters, his recovery offers a glimmer of hope amid a turbulent campaign. With key players returning to fitness, Guardiola will look to steer his side back to the form that has defined their dominance in recent years. Rodri's comeback could be the turning point in a season hanging precariously in the balance.

Jasprit Bumrah rues missing out on spiciest pitch of series: Cannot fight my body

New Delhi Sir Alex Ferguson, David Beckham, and other Manchester United icons paid their respects on Monday at the funeral of Kath Phipps, a legend in her own right and the club's beloved former receptionist. The ceremony was also attended by a host of Manchester United legends, including Ryan Giggs, Paul Scholes, Nicky Butt, Roy Keane, and Bryan Robson.

Current manager Ruben Amorim and his squad—fresh from their spirited 2-2 draw with league leaders Liverpool at Anfield on Sunday night—also attended the funeral service held at Manchester Cathedral. Phipps, who dedicated 56 years of her life to Manchester United, was described as a "one-woman institution" when the club announced her passing at the age of 85 on December 5. In his eulogy, Ferguson reminisced about Phipps' unwavering dedication and warm personality. "Kath was more than an employee; she was the heart and soul of Manchester United. Her love for people and her infectious joy left a lasting impression on everyone she met," he said. Reflecting on a recent visit, he fondly recounted her cheeky humor, even joking about enjoying a Baccardi and Coke. David Beckham, who attended alongside his mother Sandra, described Phipps as "the heartbeat of Manchester United." He recalled her as the first and last face he saw on matchdays, always ready with a smile and his tickets.

Kath Phipps joined United in 1968 as the club's first switchboard operator during Sir Matt Busby's tenure. Over the years, her role evolved, but her commitment remained steadfast. From managing the directors' entrance at Old Trafford to welcoming visitors at the Carrington training ground, Phipps epitomized the family spirit that defines Manchester United. In May 2022, she was honored with a Service to Football Award, recognizing her remarkable contributions to the sport. Manchester United's statement on her passing highlighted her unmatched legacy: "For over five decades, Kath was an omnipresent figure, embodying the club's culture with warmth and dedication."

The service saw tributes from both former and current players, emphasizing Phipps' influence across generations. Phil Jones, who joined the club as a teenager, described her as "the first face you would see in the morning, always full of positivity."

Kath Phipps leaves behind an indelible legacy, celebrated by a Manchester United family that spans eras. The club's cherished receptionist will be remembered not just for her service, but for the warmth and humanity she brought to every corner of Old Trafford.

Has Border-Gavaskar Trophy surpassed popularity of Ashes Ponting explains

New Delhi. The Border-Gavaskar Trophy saw a record crowd attend all five matches of the series. The bilateral series shattered the records to become the most attended non-Ashes series in the history of Australian cricket. A total of 837,879 people attended the games in the stadiums, which awed the commentators during the tenure of the series. The BGT was the fourth most attended series in Australian cricket history, behind the 1936-37, 2017-18, and 1946-47 Ashes series. Former Australia captain Ricky Ponting was asked about the growing popularity of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy and whether it had surpassed the Ashes. Ponting said that there was no doubt that the BGT was growing by leaps and bounds, but the fans will get to know which series is more popular when England visit Australia later in 2025. "I had a look at the numbers yesterday, it was something like 837,000

people came to watch the Test matches, which is unheard of here in Australia," Ponting told The ICC Review. "So now that this series has happened, Australia



have England coming out next summer so we'll get a better idea then. If the numbers aren't the same, then there'll be no doubt that the (Border-Gavaskar) rivalry (is bigger), certainly from the fans' point of view," Ponting added.

"There's two separate parts to this: There's what the fans want to see and the rivalry that they want to make of it, but it's also how the players view the rivalry between the three teams now," Ponting said. Ponting rightly pointed out the series figures could have been even bigger if the Test matches went all 5 days. Only the Boxing Day Test match in Melbourne went to the final day in the entire series. Matches in Adelaide and Sydney finished in just 3 days. "Perth only went four days, Adelaide only went three days, Sydney only went three days," Ponting continued.

"Those numbers would have been astronomical if those Test matches all went five days. So exactly this time next year, we'll have a great idea of the biggest rivalry in world cricket," concluded the legendary cricketer.

Shubman Gill is highly overrated, India should pick Gaikwad or Sudharsan: Srikanth

Former India captain Kris Srikanth slammed Shubman Gill for his performances in the Border Gavaskar Trophy, questioning him for his below-par contribution.

New Delhi. Former India captain and chief selector Kris Srikanth has slammed Shubman Gill for his poor performances outside Asia, labelling the Indian No. 3 batter as a "highly overrated cricketer." Apart from Yashasvi Jaiswal, no Indian batter has consistently met the demanding standards required to succeed in Australia. While Nitish Kumar Reddy, Rishabh Pant, and KL Rahul have shown flashes of brilliance, they have

struggled to perform collectively when the team needed them the most. Among them, Shubman Gill, often hailed as the next big thing in Indian cricket, has been given substantial support from the selection committee. However, his performances, especially in overseas conditions, have fallen short of expectations, raising concerns about his ability to deliver on the big stage. Gill, who had a breakout debut series in Australia in 2020/21, has struggled to score runs outside Asia since then, averaging just 17.64 across 18 innings. He has failed to cross the 40-run mark even once during this period and endured a disappointing 2024/25 Border Gavaskar Trophy, managing scores of 13, 20, 1, 28, and 31. "I've always maintained that Shubman Gill is an overrated cricketer, but nobody listened to me. He is a highly overrated cricketer," Srikanth said on his YouTube channel. Srikanth questioned the selectors for persisting with Gill for an extended period while denying similar



opportunities to players like Suryakumar Yadav. Suryakumar was dropped after a single outing against Australia in Nagpur and has since been confined to white-ball cricket. "When Gill is getting such a long rope, some people might wonder why even players like Suryakumar Yadav couldn't have been given

a longer run in Tests," the former India captain remarked. "Suryakumar didn't have the best start in Tests, but he has the technique and ability. Yet, the selectors and management have boxed him into being a white-ball specialist. So now, fresh talent needs to be looked at." Srikanth urged the team management to consider players like Ruturaj Gaikwad and Sai Sudharsan, who, in his opinion, deserve opportunities ahead of Gill. "Ruturaj Gaikwad, for instance, has been performing brilliantly in first-class cricket, but he hasn't been picked. Similarly, Sai Sudharsan has been outstanding on 'A' tours. These are the players who should be promoted. Instead, the selectors are stuck in a loop with Gill." Srikanth said. "Gill is surviving because he gets ten chances and scores on the tenth after nine failures.



Kiara Advani's

Denim Dress Is A 'Game Changer', We Are Not Joking

Kiara Advani continues to leave us in awe with her impeccable style. Whether it's elegant ethnic wear, glamorous ensembles, or trendy dresses, the actress knows how to make a statement effortlessly. Recently, the 33-year-old, currently busy promoting her upcoming film *Game Changer*, was spotted at a luxurious Mumbai hotel, turning heads in a chic denim outfit. Kiara Advani stepped out in a stunning denim midi dress that was a mix of comfort and style. The sleeveless outfit featured golden button detailing along the front and practical pockets. What truly set the dress apart were the intricate denim braids accentuating the front pockets, armholes, round neckline and midriff.



For the accessories, Kiara opted for delicate golden earrings and a few rings. She kept her makeup minimal and left her hair open in loose curls, further complementing her facial features. To add a contrast to her look, the *Satyaprem ki Katha* actress wore white pointed heels. In the video shared by a paparazzo page, Kiara can be seen briefly posing for the photographers at the hotel entrance. She said, "Thank you" to the paparazzi with folded hands before proceeding to the event inside.

Speaking of Kiara's work front, the 33-year-old is gearing up for the release of her Telegu-language movie *Game Changer*. Starring Ram Charan, the upcoming political action thriller follows the story of an honest IAS officer who takes on a corrupt political system that destroyed his father's dream of a corruption-free nation. The South superstar will be playing a triple role in the film, whereas Kiara will portray the character of Charan's wife. The much-awaited action thriller, directed by S. Shankar, is all set to hit theatres on January 10, 2025.

Apart from *Game Changer*, Kiara will appear in *War 2*, which will star Hrithik Roshan and Jr. NTR. Directed by Ayan Mukerji, the film is scheduled to be released in the second half of 2025. A sequel to the 2019 action-thriller film *War*, *War 2* is the sixth movie of the YRF Spy Universe. On the other hand, Kiara is also filming for *Toxic*, co-starring Yash, Nayanthara, Huma Qureshi and others. Kiara's recent appearance comes days after reports surfaced in the media claiming that the actress was hospitalised.

Yuzvendra Chahal Spotted With Mystery Girl Amid Divorce Rumours; Blake Lively's Viral Intimacy Video With Justin Baldoni Sparks Row



Amid his divorce rumours with wife Dhanashree Verma, cricketer Yuzvendra Chahal was recently spotted with a mystery girl in Mumbai. A video shared by The New Indian shows Chahal in a Mumbai hotel with a mysterious girl. The cricketer is seen dressed in a casual white oversized t-shirt paired with baggy light blue jeans. On the other hand, the girl is seen sporting a dark green oversized sweatshirt.

The ongoing feud between Blake Lively and *It Ends With Us* director Justin Baldoni has quickly become the latest celebrity scandal captivating social media. Following Lively's formal lawsuit against Baldoni, accusing him of harassment and orchestrating a campaign to tarnish her reputation after she spoke out about her treatment on set, Baldoni is reportedly preparing to counter with legal action of his own. Baldoni, who has already filed a \$250 million libel lawsuit against The New York Times over its coverage of Lively's allegations, has denied the claims and released screenshots of messages between him, Lively, and the team to refute her accusations.

Sriram Raghavan's forthcoming movie, *Ikki*, is set to captivate audiences with a compelling narrative while introducing movie-goers to two promising newcomers—Agastya Nanda and Simar Bhatia. Ahead of Simar's Bollywood debut, her uncle, Akshay Kumar, has penned a heartfelt note for her.

Ajay Devgn, his nephew Aaman Devgn, Raveena Tandon's daughter Rasha Thadani recently attended the trailer launch of their upcoming film '*Azaad*'. This film marks the debut of Aaman, and Rasha. During the trailer launch, Ajay Devgn expressed his deep connection to the project, and said that the film is 'extremely special' to him. He opened up about his bond with his nephew, and said that Aaman is not just like his son, he is truly a son to him.

Katrina Kaif, Vicky Kaushal Twin In Black, Get Papped Post Attending Isabelle's Birthday Bash



Katrina Kaif and Vicky Kaushal are one of the most adorable couples in Bollywood. They often impress fans with their chemistry. Recently, the couple was spotted in the city celebrating Katrina's sister Isabelle's birthday. The video of their outing has gone viral on social media. In the video, shared by Voompla, we can see Vicky and Katrina twinning in black and looking very cool. Both walked hand in hand, navigating the crowd outside the restaurant. Both also smile for the paps. Many fans dropped heart emojis in the comment section. Katrina and Vicky have also shared photos on their Instagram stories to wish Isabelle on her birthday.

Recently spotted at the Mumbai airport after their New Year celebration, the duo charmed fans with their effortless style and a particularly sweet moment that left netizens gushing. In a video shared by paparazzi on January 3, the Chhaava actor was seen escorting Katrina to their car, ensuring she safely got in before closing the door for her. This thoughtful act earned Vicky the title of the "greenest flag" from fans, who showered the couple with love in the form of red-heart, heart-eye, and nazar amulet emojis on social media. The couple posed graciously for the paparazzi, their smiles lighting up the airport. Fans couldn't get enough of their chemistry, with comments ranging from "Katy cute lag rahi hain" to "Perfect pair."

Style-wise, Katrina kept it chic and casual in a breezy blue maxi dress with white prints, complemented by minimal makeup, a ponytail, and crisscross sandals. She completed the look with a pair of black sunglasses that added an understated edge. Vicky, on the other hand, matched her effortless vibe in an off-white sweatshirt paired with cargo pants and white sneakers. He accessorised with a black cap and matching sunglasses, delivering a perfect mix of comfort and style.

On the work front, Vicky has an impressive lineup ahead. He will star in *Chhaava*, a biographical period drama alongside Rashmika Mandanna, as well as *Love & War* and *Mahavatar*. Meanwhile, Katrina Kaif recently appeared in *Sriram Raghavan's Merry Christmas* and is likely gearing up for more exciting projects.



Sara Ali Khan

Begins 'Saal Ka Pehla Somvaar' With Visit To Srisailem Mallikarjun Jyotirling Temple

Sara Ali Khan loves to explore the world but she is also spiritual at the same time. The actress has often shared photos from her temple visits. This year she also started her year with a visit to Srisailem Mallikarjun Jyotirling Temple. In no time the photos went viral with fans reacting to it. Many also dropped heart emojis in the comment section. Taking to her Instagram handle, Sara shared photos in which she is seen wearing white colour ethnic wear and seeking blessings. "Sara ke Saal ka pehla Somvaar. Jai Bholenath," read the caption. One of the fans wrote, "You are blessed by Shankara." Another wrote, "All the best for Skyforce." Sara will be next seen in *Skyforce* with Akshay Kumar, Veer Pahariya and Nimrat Kaur. Recently, the trailer was also released.

The trailer reveals that *Sky Force* is set against the dramatic and patriotic canvas of the 1965 India-Pakistan Air War. In the movie, Akshay Kumar will be seen in his intense avatar once again. Veer Pahariya will also be making his acting debut with this film. The two will be playing the role of Indian Air Force officers in *Sky Force*. In the trailer, Akshay Kumar gives a stern warning to Pakistan when he decides to go ahead and launch

India's first air strike. While he manages to teach the neighbouring country a lesson, Veer Pahariya goes missing during the strike. Akshay believes that Veer was left in Pakistan during the strike and is still alive. However, the Indian government fails to find him.

Sara Ali Khan will be playing the role of Veer's lover in the movie. Among others, Nimrat Kaur and Sharad Kelkar will also be seen playing prominent roles in the movie. Directed by Sandeep Kewlani and Abhishek Kapur, *Sky Force* is



produced by Dinesh Vijan, Amar Kaushik, and Jyoti Deshpande. The film is set to release globally on January 24, 2025, during the Republic Day weekend.

Sara Ali Khan will also share the screen space with Ayushmann Khurrana for the first time in an upcoming action comedy film. This fresh pairing has generated a lot of buzz. Dharma Productions and Sikhya Entertainment will produce the film. The film, yet to be named, will be directed by Aakash Kaushik and is expected to be a unique spy comedy. However, this is the first time Ayushmann Khurrana is working with Karan Johar.